

# THE AFRICAN LEADERSHIP LETTER

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## THE TRUE MANIFESTATIONS OF BEING FILLED BY THE HOLY SPIRIT

### INTRODUCTION

Of the three persons of the Holy Trinity, the subject of the Holy Spirit, in terms of his person, his work, and evidence of his presence in the church in general and in individuals in particular, draws more debate and controversy than those of the Father or Son respectively. Consequently, it is inevitable for this paper, in its intention to address the true manifestations of the Holy Spirit, to get caught up into such debates. This is because we cannot competently state what is true without exposing what is false. For this reason, this paper seeks first, to establish the place of the Holy Spirit in the life of a Christian with a highlight of His initial and continued presence and work in a person by considering the Biblical perspective of such manifestations. Second, we will refute the argument of the spectacular, that is, miracles, power manifestations, tongues and prophecies as evidence of being filled by the Holy Spirit. Third, we will consider the non-negotiable proof of being filled with the Holy Spirit in order to establish the relationship between His presence in and the Practice of a person so filled.

### THE PLACE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT IN THE LIFE OF THE CHRISTIAN

By place here, we are referring to the function, the task or responsibility of the Holy Spirit in the individual. As such, we are looking at something much more than just an ecstatic experience that one may have when they encounter the Holy Spirit. An understanding of these terms of

reference will underline the role of the Holy Spirit over the lifetime of the individual and in the redemption of their soul.

Recently, I listened to a sermon by Steven Furtic on this subject and his illustration of the role of the Holy Spirit in our lives impressed me. Steven Furtic used the computer language of Operating Systems, Hardware and Software to drive home his argument on the necessity of the Holy Spirit in the Christian. He argued that the Holy Spirit is “The Operating System” in every Christian, and just as a computer cannot function without an Operating System, one cannot effectively be a Christian without the Holy Spirit. No matter

*Just as a computer cannot function without an Operating System, one cannot effectively be a Christian without the Holy Spirit.*

how well embellished the computer hardware and modernized its software maybe, these are utterly useless without the computer’s operating system. Similarly, an individual may have all the convincing looks of a good Christian but they cannot manifest genuine Christianity without the Holy Spirit. It is with this in mind that the Lord Jesus outlines in John 16:5-14 what the major preoccupation of the Holy Spirit would be when he came. This task is both to the sinner and the believer. The work of the Holy Spirit in the non-believer is similar to that of a prosecutor or judge to the criminal. He convicts the unconverted of sin, of righteousness and judgment on the one hand, while to the

Christian he guides into truth, reveals about the future and brings glory to the Lord Jesus Christ on the other. So here we see a job description which first exposes one's guilt, how far short one has fallen by revealing God's righteousness and the consequences of such short coming, and then how in one who acknowledges their shortcomings and accepts the prescribed remedy are then led into that required lifestyle. We can say here is that the initial works that lead to conversion and the continued process of maturing us into effective disciples of Jesus Christ are the Holy Spirit's major responsibility. To both therefore, he is that all-important operating system that makes it possible for one to live a transformed kingdom life. All this he does by applying scriptures to the human conscience of the non-believer and believer respectively and as the songwriter penned:

*"By God's word at last my sin I learned  
Then I trembled at the law I had spurned  
Till my guilty soul imploring turned to Calvary"*

*Chorus:  
Mercy there was great  
And grace was free  
Pardon there was multiplied to me  
There my burdened soul found liberty  
At Calvary*

And to the believer he is that teacher of the word who shows us the things of Christ with a view of glorifying him in and through our lives, just as we have often sung:

*More about Jesus let me learn  
More of His holy will discern  
Spirit of God my teacher be  
Showing the things of Christ to me*

*Chorus  
More, more about Jesus  
More, more about Jesus  
More of his saving fullness see*

*More of his love who died for me*

## **REFUTING FALSE UNDERSTANDINGS ABOUT TRUE MANIFESTATIONS OF BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

In this section, I will discuss the most commonly recognized "manifestations" of the Holy Spirit that unintentionally contribute to an erroneous understanding of His true manifestation in a person. These are: tongues, miracles, and prophecies. All these are in the class of the spectacular and they tend to attract large crowds as is evidenced today. Even in Jesus' time the spectacular works of Christ were crowd pullers and were one of the reasons for the Pharisees' plot to kill him (Jn 12:19). Their disciples had stopped following them and Jesus was the preacher of the day; raising the dead, feeding the hungry, opening blind eyes and many other miracles! And he also noticed that. Jesus could have seized the moment and enjoyed the popularity but knowing the shallowness of the spectacular seeking rather than Holy Spirit driven "converts", he exposed their real motives and in the process, lost the entire congregation except the twelve (Jn 6:60-69). The presence of these in a person is not proof of one being filled with the Holy Spirit because they are not pervasive, they lack Biblical mandate, they can be counterfeited and are not Christ's standard for Kingdom citizenship as elaborated below:

*The presence of the spectacular is not proof of one being filled with the Holy Spirit because they are not pervasive, they lack Biblical mandate, they can be counterfeited, and they are not Christ's standard for Kingdom citizenship.*

### **Lack of universality.**

Scriptures are very clear that these are gifts and they are not universal—not every one of us has all of them. As they are called gifts, they are given at the giver's discretion (1 Cor. 12:1-12). He gives to each one of us as he wills. The fact that not all are prophets or speak in tongues or miracle workers (1Cor 12:29,30), is indicative that the presence or absence of them in a person is neither denial nor confirmation of the presence of the Holy Spirit in them because as we will further observe, these can also be counterfeited.

### **Absence of Biblical Mandate**

While the Holy Spirit will give gifts to his children as he wills, including those gifts above, there is no biblical mandate to possess them in order to ascertain that one is filled with the Holy Spirit. All the scriptures used as arguments to make tongues or any other gift mandatory for proof of being full of the Holy Spirit do not meet the test of their being imperative evidence of believers being full of the Holy Spirit.

### **Easy to Counterfeit and hence no standard for Kingdom Citizenship**

The strongest argument against using the manifestation of these gifts as proof of being filled with the Holy Spirit is in the enemy's ability to reproduce them. For this reason Jesus warns against considering one's ability to do these as evidence for being his servants and hence filled by the Holy Spirit because one can still be disqualified (Mt 7:21- 23) and even enemies of the cross are able to "perform great signs and miracles to deceive..."(Mt24:24).

### **IRREFUTABLE EVIDENCE OF BEING FILLED WITH THE HOLY SPIRIT.**

Almost all the Acts accounts cite speaking in tongues as evidence of the fullness of the Holy

Spirit (2:1-4; 10:44-46; 19:1-6). However, as pointed out above, the non-pervasive nature of tongues and other spectacular gifts and the fact that they can be counterfeited disqualifies them as evidence. Scriptures distinguish power to witness for Jesus, and the fruit of the Spirit as the evidence of being filled. These cannot be missed whether one speaks in tongues and does the other spectaculars or not.

**Power for witness:** Jesus' injunction in the book of Acts for the apostles to tarry until the Holy Spirit comes was so they could receive power to be his witnesses globally (1:8), and the subsequent outworking of their encounter gives strength to this position (2:4,11; 4:31; 6:5-8; 8:19; 13:52; 19:8). In addition, Paul's assertion in 1 Cor12:3 illustrates this point further.

**Fruit of the Spirit:** I have heard some preachers argue that the fruit of the Spirit Paul talks about in Gal 5:22-23 are the fruits of the "spirit " of the regenerated person and not evidence of being filled. But this view ignores the fact that both regeneration and the actual spiritual life are superintended over by the Holy Spirit (Tit 3:5;). In addition, the Lord Jesus pointed out that every seed produces its own kind hence you will know them by their fruits (Mt 7:15). So, the true evidence of being filled with the Holy Spirit is the fruit that follows that event. Jesus teaches that people will not pick grapes from thorn bushes or figs from thistles. This is also Paul's argument (Rom 8:8,9; Gal 5:22-6:7,8; Eph 5:18-21). Returning to Steven Furtic's illustration therefore, the fruit of the Spirit is the evidence that Holy Spirit is the operating system in the Christian. Consequently, we as his children indwelt by him, should inevitably manifest those qualities that confirm his presence. Herein lies the basis for the our teaching on sanctification—simply the Holy Spirit manifesting his qualities in the people he indwells or fills.

## WHAT IS GOD LOOKING FOR?

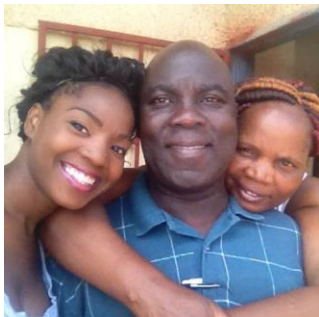
From the foregoing, we can deduce in simple terms, that God is looking for a people through whom he can express or manifest himself through their speech and day to day life. Their

*God is looking for a people through whom he can express or manifest himself through their speech and day to day life.*

lives will show that they function only under the control of the Holy Spirit and it will be evident as His ideals become our lifestyle. Peter's message to the Christians in the diaspora was simply "Let them see your God through what is manifested in your day to day journey with him." (1Pet2:9-12) In this we see that the call to holiness is not some legalistic list of dos and don'ts, but a willing and happy submission to the Holy Spirit's leadership, just as in modern times, we, as computer software and hardware must become effectively functional at the bidding of the operating system.

But it will be noted that this is not today's message. That is not what we are teaching from our pulpits, because it is unattainable or out of touch with the modern age in which we live and

we must be relevant to survive as a faith. Today's preacher is peddling a Christianity that is compromising on its biblical pillars for existence and embracing the spirit of the age. Like the beneficiaries of Jesus' "ministry", the spectacular as our evidence of being used of God is at the core of our message. Our message has ceased to invite the church to a life that bears testimony of God's presence and control in our lives and the church. It is for us to recognize and accept that the church operates well when the Holy Spirit is our operating system and that his presence is influencing the fruit we are producing. That is Paul's premise when he declares to the Romans that "For as many as are led by God's Spirit are indeed sons of God," (8:14-16). Benson's commentary puts it well as it asserts that "For as many as are led, guided and governed, by the Spirit of God—as a Spirit of truth and grace, of wisdom and holiness, they are sons of God—That is they stand related to God, not merely as subjects to their king, or servants to their master, but as children to their father...being spiritually begotten to him and partaking in his nature."(www.biblehub.com/commentaries/romans8-14htm). In this therefore, is the true manifestation of being filled by the Holy Spirit when our lives demonstrate his existence in and control of our lives.



**Rev. Alex Mbewe,  
District Overseer, Eastern Mission District  
and Jesus Film Country Director  
Pilgrim Wesleyan Church of Zambia.**

Email: [alematty3@gmail.com](mailto:alematty3@gmail.com)

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## HOW BIBLICAL IS THE PHENOMENON OF BEING “SLAIN IN THE SPIRIT”?

### INTRODUCTION

The phenomenon of being slain in the Spirit is very controversial in Christian circles today. Being slain in the Spirit is mostly common in charismatic and Pentecostal churches. Interestingly, many Evangelical churches are toeing the line. We need to critically assess this phenomenon in light of the scriptures which are our yardstick.

The advocates of being slain in the Spirit also connect the phenomenon to several accounts of historic revivals. Among these are accounts from the Great Awakening, especially in some of the accounts of John Wesley, George Whitefield, and the Quakers in England and the Shakers in America.

### THE MEANING OF BEING SLAIN IN THE SPIRIT

This phenomenon of being slain in the Spirit is also known as “falling under the power of God,” being “under the power,” or “resting in the Spirit.” It is difficult to find specific scripture passages which describe this experience which occurs in churches where believers and non-believers are prayed for and in the process fall to the floor and remain unconscious for a time. This phenomenon in its modern expression is associated historically with what is called “The Toronto Blessing” which originated at Toronto Airport Vineyard Church in 1994. The proponents of this manifestation of the Spirit see it as an authentic sign of the Lord’s presence.

George A. Maloney, a critic in his book “How to Understand and Evaluate the Charismatic’s Newest Experience: Slain in the Spirit” (1981), defined being “slain in the spirit” as follows: “It is the release of God’s energy that flows out from one person usually touching another, that causes the receiver to ‘fall’ under this so-called power of the Holy Spirit. A ‘floating’ effect

accompanies the falling to the earth, filling the receiver with a sense of deep peace and joy. The whole body, soul and spirit seem to ‘let go’ under an invisible power”

Promoters of this phenomenon believe God uses it to minister in personal ways. It has been associated with the new birth through the Holy Spirit to bring spiritual, emotional or physical healing or deliverance. My candid opinion is that being slain in the spirit should not be made an expectation for all believers or a sign of spiritual maturity. In addition, spiritual discernment needs to be sought since many use it as a mere emotional expression which mimics legitimate spiritual experience.

### SCRIPTURE PASSAGES IN SUPPORT OF BEING SLAIN IN THE SPIRIT

Those who promote this phenomenon prove their position from passages in the Old and New Testament. At Ezekiel’s commissioning by God, he fell on his face before the glory of God (Ezekiel 1:28). In Ezekiel 3:23 again in response to God’s glory, Ezekiel fell on his face. However, in v.24, the spirit sets him on his feet and spoke with him. Daniel also fell prostrate [face to the ground] in response to having seen the angel Gabriel. He later fell into a trance. But then the angel touches him and sets him on his feet, and proceeds to speak to him (Daniel 8:16-18). Again in Daniel chapter 10 he falls into a trance, face to the ground. Then at the touch of the angel’s hand, Daniel is set on his feet, in order to hear a word from the Lord. It is good to note here that the falling was in response to a Divine presence, not in response to a human being.

In the New Testament, Matthew 28:4 records that the guards at the tomb of Jesus shook and became like dead men, due to fear of the angel positioned at the tomb entrance. In the Garden of Gethsemane, the group of soldiers accompanying Judas to arrest Jesus step back

and fell to the ground, upon Jesus identifying himself (John 18:5-6). Saul [Paul] fell to the ground on his way to Damascus in response to the light surrounding him—the presence of the risen Christ (Acts 9:3-4). Further on in Acts, the Philippian jailer fell down trembling at the sight of Paul and Silas still inside the jail—even though the prison doors were wide open. Finally, in the book of Revelation, John fell at the feet of the One like the Son of Man as though dead (Revelation 1:10-19).

There are other references to “falling” and similar words in the scriptures. It is interesting to note that those who fell, fell as a response to divine judgment/manifestation

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE CHURCH IN AFRICA**

With the upsurge of prosperity Gospel in the continent of Africa, we need to be careful not to be carried away by every kind of teaching. It is not the will of God to seek spiritual experience for the sake of experience. God’s will is that we seek Jesus Himself by faith and in accordance with the word of God. He is our only source of genuine spiritual experience, satisfaction, and fulfilment (Phil3:10-14,

*God is our only source of genuine spiritual experience, satisfaction, and fulfilment.*

Psalm16:11). There is a widespread practice of “blowing” a person or whole groups of people over. The church in Africa should concern itself



with the centrality of preaching the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Preaching should not become second billing to the experience of being slain in the Spirit. This tendency seems to put the emphasis in the wrong place.

How can we recognize a Spirit prompted and controlled manifestation? Does it bring glory to Jesus and edify the Body? The confirmation that a spiritual experience is real and biblical lies in the spiritual growth of the believer. Is there a humility that lifts up Jesus? Is the believer becoming more and more like Jesus? Is the fruit of the Spirit—love, joy, peace, patience, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control—increased after a personal experience in the presence of our Lord? What makes it truly Christian is what follows this experience. It is not the falling down, it is about what the person becomes and what he/she does when he/she gets up. This fruit will have a direct effect on one’s testimony and will ultimately draw others to Christ

### **CONCLUSION**

A move of God which includes manifestations of the Holy Spirit must always be welcomed in the Church. Yet we must be careful to keep our focus and desire on Jesus Christ rather than on any manifestations. In our seeking we must willingly obey God’s Word in everything we do. We must also realize that when God creatively pours out His Spirit on a person in a way that is not recorded in Scripture, it is not intended to be a normative experience for either the individual or the church.

**Rev. Maurice Bangura,  
Principal,  
Wesleyan Christian College  
Gbendembu, Sierra Leone**

**Email: [banguramaurice@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:banguramaurice@yahoo.co.uk)**



EDITORS' NOTE: An article by the title, "Can the African Church Support Itself?" was published in the last issue of the African Leadership Letter. Former National Superintendent of Sierra Leone, Rev. S. D. Kanu wrote the following article in response. It's is presented here in the interests of furthering dialogue on this critical subject.

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## A RESPONSE: CAN THE AFRICAN CHURCH SUPPORT ITSELF?

A previous writer in answering this question gave us a spiritual prescription.

"..... the African church will first of all depend on the full knowledge, direction and power of God Almighty; have a change of mind set; trustworthy leaders, visionary spirit-filled leaders and the sense of ownership."

This writer will attempt an analysis of the economics of the church based on his understanding of the situation. The aim is to help readers see the proverbial 'other side of the coin'.

So, let's ask the question again. "Can the African church support itself?"

My answer is "Yes" and "No".

1. It is a "Yes" if the question concerns the local church or district in the urban or semi urban setting.

A significant number of urban local churches currently fully support themselves in Sierra Leone. They pay the wages of and provide housing for pastors and their ancillary staff, build impressive local church edifices and parsonages. Some have budgets for scholarships, the sick and blind and the needy. Higher disposable incomes make this financial support possible. In fact, a handful of urban church members own cars, live in better housing and look healthier and better fed etc.

The incomes come from well-paying jobs in the public and private sector or from micro businesses.

2. But it is a "No" for the village church. This is why:

A village church faces two grave economic challenges – i.e. sparse population and extremely low levels of poverty of that population. Let me explain further using the Sierra Leone context that I am most familiar with.

a. Sparse Population

The vast majority of villages with Wesleyan churches typically have less than 300 inhabitants.

If we assume on average that in one of these villages, 50% of the inhabitants are Wesleyan, this amounts to 150 persons. Of this figure, seventy percent (70% or 105 persons) are children, youth and old people. Therefore, only 45 persons are economically active. These will typically be peasant farmers – growing rice, cassava, peanuts etc. With miserable disposable incomes.

In business, a market size of 45 customers with a purchasing power of 2.5 dollars/person per day or 112.5 dollars a month is NOT an attractive business location. A business set up in this location is not economically viable. It cannot support itself and make a profit. The

investor typically moves to another location where the investment will be financially viable.

In contrast, the church stays and plants a church hoping such a village church will thrive economically. BUT it won't. The "market size" is simply too small to make the unit viable.

b. Extreme Poverty.

This is the second challenge of the village church. Members of the village church are extremely poor. The Sierra Leonean poverty level is 1.90 dollars per day on average. In the village church the poverty level is less than 1.90 dollars per day.

In a 100-member village church, typically seventy percent (70%) are children, youth and the aged. The remainder 30 (30%) are the economically active members.

Assuming 90% or 27 people tithe - this amounts to a weekly tithe of 36 dollars or 144 dollars per month.

In a fifty-member (50) church, the monthly tithes are halved i.e. 72 dollars. In a twenty-five (25) member church, the monthly tithes are thirty-six (36) dollars - (all things being equal).

These paltry tithes can hardly support a pastor and family. For instance, a pastor who lives on 1.90 dollars per day needs 57 dollars a month. If he lives on two (2) dollars he needs 60 dollars per month.

The Wesleyan church in Africa is characterized by dozens and dozens of financially non-viable village churches. In Sierra Leone, for example, of the one hundred and forty-seven (147) organized local churches only twenty-one (21) or fourteen percent (14%) are urban or peri-urban. The rest (126 or eighty-six percent (86%) are financially non-viable units. They cannot support themselves.

And forty-two (42) more non-viable units categorized as "unorganized churches" are in the pipeline. When organized, they will be adding to the pool of the financially non-viable.

How did we arrive here? The answer lies in our evangelism and church planting strategy. We have majored in village church planting. Even as I write, the Wesleyan Church in Africa is probably planning on planting more village churches.

And as long as our evangelism and church planting emphasis is the village we should not expect the African church to support itself! It will not and it cannot. This is economic reality.

If the village church - the building block of the church economy is not financially viable, can a district or national church be viable financially?

*As long as our evangelism and church planting emphasis is the village we should not expect the African church to support itself! It will not and it cannot. This is economic reality.*

Not to mention, additional resources required to run a bible school or health facility etc.?

It's going to take miracles  
However, it's a "Yes"! when the church is, ready and willing to do some short and long term work

### **Short-term work**

Here are some short-term work assignments.



## 1. Financial transparency - strengthening

Transparency means that those who handle church funds are not actively hiding any income or expenses either by omission (not recording) or commission (i.e. under-recording, inflating figures, manipulating financial data, misappropriating funds)

To strengthen financial transparency, we must continuously ensure that:

i. Income – A receipt is written and issued to each person who gives us money in two copies. The original copy is given to the giver. The duplicate or carbon copy is kept by the receiver.

If there is no one who can read or write – a witness should be present.

ii. Expenses – at least 3 persons should know about each expense.

1. Treasurer - who keeps the money
2. A senior person - to authorize the treasurer pay out
3. The person receiving the money

(Note: Best practice requires that one person cannot be custodian of funds, purchaser, and authorizer of an expense at the same time.)

A document for each expense should be prepared and signed by the three persons and kept in a safe place for later reporting to the boards or partners

## 2. Financial accountability:

i. Accountability means the recording, reporting, explaining and or justifying of income and expense actions to the local, district, national boards and their respective conferences. It is not a lack of respect for or lack of trust in a person to be asked to account. That's the way institutions operate across the world. Willingness and preparedness to be

accountable inspires a lot of confidence in the hearts of those who give money. Be it in the local, district and national conferences, or with international partners. The more we are accountable, the more givers are encouraged to give us additional money.

ii. Audit by audit committee.

Before the financial report can be trusted fully, an Audit Committee should examine the receipts and expenses documents prepared by

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the treasurer to ascertain that the records are true and correct and that the closing balances are not only mathematically correct but are true in fact.

## 3. Vision casting

The motivational phrases used in my local church each Sunday just before the ushers receive the tithes and offerings go like this

Worship leader: Giving time!

Response by congregation: Blessing time!

Worship Leader: Giving time!

Response: Blessing time!

In another local church the motivational song is:

“You can't beat God's giving

No matter how you try

The more you give, the more he gives to you ...”

While it's true that giving brings blessing from the Lord and we can't beat God's giving, the motive for giving is “me - centered” not “others-centered”.

It's worthy to note in the above two examples, the goal of giving is not focused on meeting needs, solving a problem or spreading of the gospel of Jesus Christ. If there are no needs to meet, problems to solved or objectives to be accomplished, church members may be tempted to reason that there is no point in giving money each Sunday.

Therefore, in fund raising we need to marshal the thoughts and hearts of church members towards goals or objectives to be achieved. Generalities hardly inspire anyone.

I believe that if local, district and national leaders, heads of bible schools/colleges, health centers and hospitals commit themselves to practicing transparency and accountability and

*In fund raising we need to marshal the thoughts and hearts of church members towards goals or objectives to be achieved. Generalities hardly inspire anyone.*

broad vision casting we will see a significant growth in finances in the African church within 3-5 years.

#### **Long term work:**

Let's now consider some long-term ideas for financial viability.

#### **1. Urban church planting strategy - emphasis**

I stated earlier that the village church was not financially viable, but that the urban church was. Therefore, if we are concerned about the financial viability of the African church, urban church planting should be a new emphasis. Not that we discontinue village evangelism. No. Not at all. For all people need to hear the good news

of Jesus. However, with so many financially non-viable churches in villages across Africa it's about time we shift focus from village to urban church planting. Given time, these units will form a strong giving base of the church in Africa.

#### **2. Partnerships: Urban church - village church**

Urban church -village church partnerships have the potential to strengthen both parties. The urban church extends its evangelism outreach by means of the village church. The village church does the leg work and the urban church does the financial work. A well thought out plan including goals, responsibility of each partner should be developed to guide the partnership.

#### **3. Growth of African economies.**

The ability of the African church to support itself is largely dependent on the growth of the African national economies. As a national economy grows, per capita income rises. A rise in per capita income puts more money in the pockets of citizens including church members. This will result in higher giving to the church thereby increasing the ability of African church to support itself.

The church is a subset of the nation. As the nation prospers so does the church. The church economy cannot outpace the national economy. No way.

This brings to an important point. I believe it's incumbent on the African church to show active interest in the economic development of our countries. We need to take our civic responsibilities seriously. To actively participate in community development activities, the electoral process (not divisive politics) and support the fight against corruption. If for nothing else but for the financial viability of the church.

'Can the African church support itself?' I say, "yes it can". But not immediately. The present

economic conditions are too dire to make financial self-sustainability possible. And quick fixes are extremely scarce or non-existent.



**Rev. S. D. Kanu**  
**National Superintendent Emeritus,**  
**The Wesleyan Church of Sierra Leone**

Email: [kanu.sd@gmail.com](mailto:kanu.sd@gmail.com)

## THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP AND SECULAR LEADERSHIP

John Wesley said, “To imagine none can teach you but those who are themselves saved from sin, is a very great and dangerous mistake. Give not place to it for a moment.” (*A Plain Account of Christian Perfection*)

In other words, Christians need to be able and willing to learn from unbelievers. This is especially true for Christian leaders. There is much good that can be gained from the writing and teaching of secular leaders that can help strengthen our leadership practices in the church. Many of the tasks and responsibilities of a leader are the same whether one is a leader in the church, in a secular business, or in the governmental sector. If they have learned ways of doing things more effectively and efficiently, we would do well to learn from them.

At the same time, Christian leaders should be warned not to simply accept secular business principles and practices uncritically. Since secular leaders begin with a worldly mindset, we should carefully examine what they say to

Meanwhile, both short and long term work is needed to reach the goal of financial sustainability. That takes time!

see to what extent it is in harmony with or contrary to Biblical principles.

Actually, much of what secular leaders are “discovering” about effective leadership reflect Biblical principles. For example, recently leadership literature has been emphasizing the importance of integrity as an essential characteristic of contemporary leaders – hardly something new for Biblical Christians. For a while the secular world was highly praising the concept of “servant leadership” – a concept that can be pulled directly from the pages of Scripture.

Given that there is much good that can be gleaned secular leadership, what is different about spiritual leadership? Four ways that spiritual leadership usually is starkly different from secular leadership are as follows:

### **1. Spiritual leadership flows out of a deep dependence and relationship with God.**

Paul said, “Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ.” (I Co. 11:1) That is, Paul sought to lead others out of his own relationship with the Lord. If we study the great leaders of the Bible, we will discover that they often have two things in common: a) Prior to

*Christian leaders should be warned not to simply accept secular business principles and practices uncritically.*

assuming leadership they were led by God to a deepening relationship with Him, often in a wilderness experience – think for example of Moses, David, Elijah, John the Baptist, Jesus, and Paul. b) Their time of leadership is frequently marked by periods of withdrawal from the demands of leadership to spend time alone in the presence of God – think again of Moses, Elijah, and Jesus.

Unfortunately, it is common to hear church leaders report that the demands of leadership tend to pull them away from their communion and dependence upon God. Busyness gets in the way. When that happens we decreasingly become spiritual leaders and increasingly become to rely on our own abilities. If Jesus himself felt the need to regularly withdraw for communion with the Father, how much more will that be true for us?

Unlike secular leadership, spiritual leadership is concerned with spiritual results as described in Ephesians 4:11-13.

*If Jesus himself felt the need to regularly withdraw for communion with the Father, how much more will that be true for us?*

*“So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”*

These results cannot be achieved by human effort or by making use of the latest leadership methods. This can only be accomplished through leaders empowered and enabled by

the Holy Spirit – by leaders who place a priority on their own personal walk with and dependence on God.

## **2. Spiritual leadership is more dependent on the character of the leader than his/her competency.**

It is significant that when Paul lists the qualities of spiritual leaders (I Tim. 3; Titus 1) most of what he lists are character qualities rather than skills and abilities. “In the place of intelligence, initiative, self-assurance, determination, visionary capacity, ability to influence, ability to see the big picture and so on, he lists traits like humility, holiness, hospitality, and being free from the love of money, as conditions for Christian leadership.” (Tobie van der Westhuizen, *The Difference Between Christian and Secular Leadership*.) What a contrast between the essentials of secular leadership and spiritual leadership!

In secular society it seems people are increasingly willing to overlook character flaws and integrity issues in leaders, so long as their leadership produces results. But it even extends to the church. As Henry and Richard Blackaby note, “The godliness of a minister may not be enough to satisfy a congregation looking to keep up with the church down the street. Likewise, Christians seem willing to overlook significant character flaws, and even moral lapses, as long as their leader continues to ‘produce.’” (*Spiritual Leadership*)

That does not mean that leadership ability is unimportant. Indeed, Paul includes a few in his lists of qualities, most notably the ability to teach. But, an abundance of leadership ability cannot take the place of personal godly character. Spiritual leadership demands godly character.

### **3. Spiritual leadership is committed to a shepherding style of leadership.**

If there is a leadership style taught in Scripture, it is a shepherding style. In both the Old and New Testaments God repeatedly calls leaders to shepherd his people (Ezek. 34:2-6; Jer. 23:1-6; John 21:1; Acts 20:28; I Peter 5:1-4) Shepherding is the overwhelming model/metaphor of leadership found throughout Scripture.

The overwhelming characteristic of a shepherding leader is that he/she places the interests of his “flock” above his/her own interests. “The Good Shepherd lays down his life for the sheep.” (John 10:11) The welfare of the sheep is the primary concern of a shepherd. It is the tendency in secular leadership to view people as human resources to be used to reach organizational or personal goals or objectives.

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Even leadership models that stress people development, the motivation behind their development is that they become more productive in meeting the organization’s objectives. However, within spiritual leadership people are valued within themselves and not merely for their value in reaching the mission. In spiritual leadership the people are the mission.

### **4. Spiritual leadership is ultimately judged by faithfulness rather than fruitfulness.**

Secular leadership is evaluated by results. The greater the results, the greater the leader is deemed to be. For example, watch the careers

of football coaches. As long as the team is winning and victorious the coach is hailed as great, but after a few losses people begin calling for him to be fired. Success is determined by the numbers of wins and losses.

This attitude frequently enters the church in evaluating the effectiveness of church leaders. A pastor whose church is growing, whose offerings are increasing, and who has seen more converts is seen as a success. But the minister who labors faithfully feeding a small flock in a rural community but whose church shows little sign of numerical growth is looked down upon or even viewed as a failure.

Jesus seems to place much more emphasis on faithfulness than he does on fruitfulness. In the parable about servants who had been left in charge of different amounts while the master went away, the master commended those had done well for their faithfulness. (Matthew 25) “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” Those servants had been fruitful – to varying degrees in proportion to the amount that had been entrusted to them. Yet the master’s commendation was the same for all of them despite varying degrees of fruitfulness.

This does not mean that fruitfulness is not important. An important characteristic of faithfulness is that we are concerned about and make every effort to be as fruitful as possible. The wicked servant in the parable was the one who showed no concern for fruitfulness, but simply buried what had been given to him. A faithful spiritual leader is one who is constantly seeking ways to increase the fruitfulness of his/her ministry. But when all is said and done, our Master will reward us according to our faithfulness to Him and His call.

As John Wesley advises, we as leaders should be looking to learn from wherever we can to improve our leadership effectiveness. But in so doing we must not lose sight of what it means to be a spiritual leader who brings glory to God and helps to advance His Kingdom.

**Recommended Reading:**

Blackaby, H. T., & Blackaby, R. (2001). *Spiritual leadership: Moving people on to God's agenda*. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman.



**Dr. Bob Bagley**  
**Africa Area Director,**  
**Global Partners**

Email: [rbagley112@gmail.com](mailto:rbagley112@gmail.com)



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