

## Creative ideas:

### For praying for leaders and leadership

*These ideas were first developed from focusing on the characteristic of our God as LEADER when it came up on our prayer rhythm focus again during September 2017 alongside passages from Proverbs considering the importance of wisdom and taking time...*

*You could use them individually, or all together – on your own, in a small group or adapt them to led activities in a larger congregation. They could also be quite easily developed into a series of prayer stations if you wanted to set up a more extended, or drop-in, time of prayer around this subject at a leadership seminar or conference.*

#### 1. What an amazing leader...

##### You will need:

- pens and paper
- a Bible per person

- a) Take some time to jot down what you think is so brilliant about God's leadership - in theory and in the way you experience it in your life. Think especially how the Spirit leads and also just how surprising the way Jesus led – and interacted with other leaders – so often was in the gospel accounts... and let both the divine and incarnationally human aspects of God's leadership speak together to you about his idea of good leadership.

*(Don't look until you've made your own list, or unless you're really struggling with this exercise, but we have included a few first thoughts from the Sanctuary's collective on this in a footnote at the end of this document that you might also like to have a look at.)*

- b) Praise and thank our brilliant God for being the best - as well as the greatest - leader to follow. And for also being the best mentor to look to as we each seek to be faithful in the different kinds of leadership and/or influence he has called us to as well...
- c) Surrender to God any bad experiences you have had of earthly leaders – or followers – that jar with God's model of good leading and following and are potentially getting in the way of how you relate to him as a follower under his leadership...
- d) Ask God to show you more and more what good leadership looks like, and to help you grow in your trust of him and your development into who he has created you to be as both a follower (of him and others) and a leader and/or influencer of others.
- e) *(optional) If you want to think more about godly/biblical models of leadership, you could also spend some time jotting down figures from the Bible that demonstrate/model healthy and wise leadership too and let this further inform your thinking and prayer... but remember each time to also note their humanness, flaws and failings – they have strengths and weaknesses!*

## 2. My leadership, their leadership

### You will need:

- paper
  - (optional) circular objects to draw round
  - pens or pencils in at least four different colours
- a) With your first colour pen, draw a series of circles to represent the different areas of your life – home, neighbourhood, church, work, family, friends, clubs or other activities, school etc – label each one.
  - b) In a second colour, jot down the names of people you lead or influence in each area.
  - c) In a third colour, jot down the names of people who lead or influence you in each area.
 

*(Some people might be written twice as you mutually influence – or appear in more than one circle – that's fine; put them in every time they're relevant...)*
  - d) Move from circle to circle consciously, lifting each area to God and praying blessing on every leadership, following, mentoring or influencing role in turn. Ask the Holy Spirit to bring to mind a word or phrase for each and/or simply bless their leading and following to move closer and closer to his best design and redemptive plans for every person involved.
  - e) Use the final colour available to jot down any particular specific words of blessing or insight God leads you to that you think it would be helpful to remember... or to make a note of any actions or further prayer you feel led to take.
  - f) Keep your 'map' of influence somewhere safe so you can refer to it again.

## 3. Leaders in the public eye

### You will need:

- images of your local church and community leaders, together with national and international leaders or figureheads (whether in the political, financial, business, religious or creative spheres) that feel particularly relevant at the current time
 

*(You could use websites and/or Google images to find these and/or newspaper articles)*
- a clock (preferably one that ticks out loud)
- a number of Bibles (ideally in a range of different translations)
- headphones (if possible, use noise cancelling ones)
- sunglasses
- a floor cushion
- a crown or other symbol of authority

***(NB – You can also adapt this activity personally, to pray more about your own leadership role/s)***

a) **Listen up...**

We all know that leaders need wisdom to lead... it trips of the tongue as we pray for them without us even thinking about it. But what does it really mean?

- Look up 1 Kings 3 and read verses 3-14. What stands out to you today?
- Solomon doesn't actually ask for 'wisdom' – although that is what God defines what the king asked for, and what he is giving him in answer to his prayer – he asks for a 'listening', 'understanding' or 'discerning' heart.
- Put on headphones – or cover your ears – to block out any background noise and as a symbol of *focused* listening.
- Pray for one, several, or all of the leaders in front of you to have *listening hearts*, softened by God to be open to his Spirit's outlook, emphasis and ideas – so they listen to him who always has a creative or third way through seemingly impossible situations, pressures and/or decisions... and can reveal the best way to negotiate, finance, mediate or anything and everything else they need to do or understand. With a heart listening to him, any one has the capacity to receive and reveal plans way beyond their natural abilities or experience.
- Pray also for leaders to have hearts that listen to those around them, those following them and the balanced insight provided by weighing up information, intuition, reflection, expert opinion and experience.

b) **Take your time...**

To develop a listening heart – and even to use one – so that you can lead wisely, kindly and humbly clearly takes time!

- Look up Proverbs 8, thought to have been written by Solomon, which personifies wisdom and voices her advice. What stands out to you today?
- Look again at verse 34 in particular – if possible in a number of different of translations. In *The Voice* it says:

*'The one who listens to me  
who carefully seeks me in everyday things  
and delays action until my way is apparent, that one will find true happiness.'*

In today's instant culture, waiting until the right way forward becomes apparent can be deeply difficult and counter-cultural.

- Clock watch for just two or five minutes – try not to use the time for anything but waiting... how long does even this feel?
- Pray for the leaders in front of you to take their time... to delay action until wisdom's way forward becomes apparent wherever this is possible and/or appropriate. The more responsibility and pressure they face, the harder this will be... and arguably the more important, as the consequences of their decisions and words will be complex and far-reaching.

c) **See what matters in the right way...**

Leaders need to be able to cast vision, and keep the big picture in perspective, but they also need to be balanced

when it comes to detail and the practicalities of getting there. Godly leaders need to do this all in love too – not becoming so tunnel visioned even on a God-given vision that they forget the relationships or individuals involved...

- Look up Proverbs 29:18.
- Put on the sunglasses and notice how they change the colour and brightness of everything you look at... but don't stop you from making out the practical details of your surroundings.
- Pray for the leaders in front of you to receive God-given vision for their purpose and people and to have their perspective on everything they look at coloured – but not obscured – by big-picture thinking.
- Pray for their perspective to be loving as well as visionary, shaping and motivating their characters, behaviour, decisions, communication and interactions with people, and flavouring them all with mercy, justice and all the fruits of the Spirit.

**d) Recognise God-given authority and God-given limits...**

Leaders need to be secure in what they are called to – but also to recognise where their calling, ability, strength, energy and responsibility ends...

- Look up Proverbs 15:33 and reflect on it in conjunction with the example of Jesus' earthly ministry and C.S. Lewis' illuminating quote, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less"...
- Put on or hold the crown or other symbol of authority in front of you and pray for the leaders you're looking at to have confidence in their calling. Pray too for God to strengthen any of them who are feeling weak or insecure and ask for a release of godly confidence-generating encouragement towards them from those around them.
- Take off or put down the symbol of authority and pray for good boundarying around the appointed time they are in leadership, the expectations they and others put on themselves and the time they take off to rest.
- Kneel on the cushion and pray for the selflessness of true humility – ask God to help these leaders prize serving God and people, not building up kingdoms for themselves and or falling into pride, envy, control, power-lust or any other self-serving ways.
- Finally, pray also that they would have a deeper and deeper revelation that they are a son or daughter of God and how deeply valued and beloved they are aside from any achievement, role or responsibility they carry.

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<sup>i</sup> *List of just a few brilliant leadership attributes – in no particular order and definitely not exhaustive! - observed by the Sanctuary's collective to get you started and/or compare with your own list/s completed under the 'What an amazing leader...' activity:*

- *obedience and growing initiative are both asked for – it's not just Simon says, we're free to partner and have responsibility delegated to us*
- *intrigue, rhythm, invitation, revelation all leads you to active not passive following, to grow up and to lead others*

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- *proactive and initiating – in creation, in redemption, in relationships*
  - *genuinely cares for his followers*
  - *inspires rather than manipulates or coerces*
  - *releases and nurtures in perfect balance*
  - *timely and never in haste or reaction*
  - *playful - delighting in the shared joy of work, relationship and rest*
  - *faithful, healthily present and consistent - not distant or abdicating, not push-pull, not micromanaging*
  - *intimate and partnering - he discusses his heart and plans with us*
  - *responds to your seasons, personality and circumstances*
  - *finds your love languages and processes and communicates through them specifically*
  - *is always there to help!*
  - *doesn't mind questions and understands off days and imperfections - grace, grace, grace!*
  - *has your back and takes the rap for you*
  - *doesn't minimise you or your struggles*
  - *secure and not looking to his leadership role and achievements, or your following or affirmation, to give him worth or define him*
  - *never exploits*
  - *challenges bad behaviour and motivation*
  - *celebrates, rejoices and affirms you and your achievements and growth really well*
  - *tailored - compare Jesus' leadership and responses to disciples, crowd and religious leaders, Pilate and individuals in different circumstances to each other, or within different seasons in their own lives*
  - *able to go very personal and deep but also to motivate and communicate to the many*
  - *well-bounded and not a push-over*
  - *sets and enforces good rules and boundaries for others*
  - *not afraid of necessary confrontation and challenge, but always motivated in this by a desire to bring conviction, repentance, freedom and true shalom peace and rest*
  - *slow to anger and patient with those who are struggling*
  - *and so, so much more...*