

Hello and welcome to the Vineyard Children's Ministry training series. This is module number three on the topic of leadership within the Children's Ministry. In this session, we will talk about what defines a leader within the Children's Ministry. We'll also talk about the importance for maturity and character qualifications for leadership.

Hi, I am Roger Wilson, Children's Pastor at Vineyard. Thank you for taking a moment to listen to this audiocast on the topic of leadership. Most of what we are about to cover comes straight from the Vineyard 301 manual. On a side note, all leaders within the Children's Ministry should make progress to move through the full Vineyard discipleship track – Meaning Vineyard 101, 201, and 301.

I'll give you forewarning, this may be the longest of our training modules, but it is an important topic. Well, let's jump right in to the topic by discussing what defines a leader. A Biblical Definition of Leadership is :

Someone with God-given calling, ability, and responsibility to influence a group of God's people to accomplish God's purposes for that group.

By this definition, we understand that anyone with a responsibility to influence children directly is considered a leader. This includes Staff members, coaches, teachers, and small group leaders, to name a few. Typically, leaders within the ministry are directing, coaching, training, and leading discussion and lessons for children or for other volunteers.

As leaders, it is important to understand that in places of influence, we represent God's Kingdom, and the Church. Therefore, it is important for us to have an agreed upon standard for life.

Let's explore this a little further

For starters, I think it is important for Children's Ministry leaders to strive for maturity in life. As a church, we understand maturity in several ways:

For instance just as Jesus came to serve and give Himself, so then, Godly church leadership is committed to bringing God's people to a God-given goal. In Children's Ministry, our main goal is to see children draw closer to Jesus

Godly mature leadership is also committed to making others successful. This type of mature leadership is not something demanded; it is something one does in Jesus' name, with the same mercy and Grace that Jesus showed.

Let's explore a few ideas about what maturity IS and ISN'T:

Spiritual maturity IS using your gifts to advance the Kingdom... It is NOT getting "fatter" spiritually by taking in, but not giving out. This includes actively contributing through tithes and offerings... It is NOT self-fulfilling consumerism.

Spiritual maturity IS character-building around core life values and goals... It is NOT just more un-applied Bible head knowledge

Maturity It is NOT tearing others down through gossip or disloyalty

Spiritual maturity IS, however, self-discipline, moral stability, and freedom from addictions

It is NOT living a self-centered life of doing whatever feels good. It is NOT focusing on “what’s in it for me”. It is caring for others and thinking about the good of the team...

Spiritual maturity IS regularly experiencing God intimately... It is NOT depending on special events or religious activities to sustain us

It is NOT an attitude of hoarding and having tight fists. Spiritual maturity IS being committed to Christian community... It is NOT living in isolation or looking out for what benefits me alone

So, maturity is the goal, especially in modeling life for children.

Let’s shift gears and talk about another facet for leadership - CHARACTER QUALIFICATIONS. As leaders we need to pay close attention to the example we set. Christ-like character should be reflected in the lives that we lead.

At Vineyard, leaders are expected to grow personally through embracing, in a developing way, the following qualifications:

First, A Growing Relationship With God

- You should know and love Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord (1 John 4:19)
- You should seek God and worship Him freely (John 4:23)

Secondly, leaders should strive for Godly character (1 Timothy 3:1-7)

- This includes a daily life in the Spirit and dependence upon the Spirit. As a result, you should experience good fruit, a good attitude, and integrity (Galatians 5:16-25; Corinthians chapters 12-14)

Third, A Relationship With Others

- This means being a person of love and encouragement with a positive, restoring spirit (1 John 4:7; Hebrews 3:13; Galatians 6:1)
- You should have an ability to work as part of a team (Philippians 1:1) and demonstrate and encourage others.
- You should strive for small group involvement (Acts 5:42; 20:20)
- You should have a healthy marriage (if not single) pulling together with your spouse and be able to function as a team (Timothy 3:2-5) In fact I strongly encourage couples to serve together.
- You should be teachable, not defensive (Proverbs 12:1; 13:18)
- You should have an ability to train others to relate to the Word of God

Fourth, A Relationship With The Vineyard

- This includes a sense of calling to Vineyard Church as your church family (2 Thess. 1:1-2)

- A Commitment to and personal ownership of our church's vision, mission, and goals, including specifically a heart for worship, outreach, healing the hurting, small groups, and reaching younger generations (1 Corinthians 1:10)
- Prayerful unity and loyalty to the pastors and other leaders at Vineyard Church (Ephesians 4:3; 6:18-19)
- Demonstrating consistent, generous giving of time, energy, and money (Colossians 3:23-24; 2 Corinthians 8:7)
- Commitment to continued growth in servant leadership and Vineyard's training opportunities (Romans 15:1-6)

Finally A Relationship With yourself

- Living a life consistent with Jesus and the Christian faith in a growing way (Matthew 5-7)
- Freedom from ungodly ambition (Philippians 2:3-8)
- Demonstrating ability to manage time and responsibilities well (Romans 15:24-25; 28-29)
- Willing to develop people skills such as being a good listener, reconciler, and reproducer (James 1:19; 2 Corinthians 5:19-20; 2 Timothy 2:2)
- Demonstrating determination and endurance, fueled by consistent times of fellowship with God through the Word and prayer.

I know that is a lengthy list, a complete transcript of this audiocast will be posted on the Web site so that you can come back to any portion of this talk, and review at your leisure. In the transcript there are also supporting scripture references for everything mentioned.

Lastly, I want to talk about the boundaries that we put in place to protect ourselves and one another from situations that can permanently damage lives. We have all heard terrible stories about how children's lives are scarred because of the actions of a leader. The worst story could be one of sexual violation or abuse. However, leaders can also damage a child by the way that they treat them. A child's perception of church and God are often defined by the way a leader treated them. In order to protect our relationships with children, we use a system of accountability. We use the two to one rule, meaning that you should never have circumstances where you are engaging a child alone. There should always be another volunteer present. Utilize your ministry coordinator or children's pastor to assist you with situations where you need to interact with a child away from others. If we stick to this rule, it should keep us safe. Also, I know that dealing with disruptive behavior can also make for difficult interactions. Please refer to the Discipline audio cast, for the process that we use to diffuse difficult situations surrounding a child's behavior.

Now, another area where we should be on guard, is with interpersonal relationships. As leaders, we should have well thought out boundaries that we stick to, in order to avoid bad situations. Another important element of character relates to the boundaries that we set with respect to relationships the following is the 10 COMMANDMENTS FOR LEADERS taken from Saddleback Community Church

1. Thou shalt not visit the opposite sex alone at home.
2. Thou shalt not counsel the opposite sex alone at the office.
3. Thou shalt not counsel the opposite sex more than once without that person's mate. Refer

them.

4. Thou shalt not go to lunch alone with the opposite sex.
5. Thou shalt not kiss any attender of the opposite sex or show affection that could be questioned.
6. Thou shalt not discuss detailed sexual problems with the opposite sex in counseling.

Refer them.

7. Thou shalt not discuss your marriage problems with attender of the opposite sex.
8. Thou shalt be careful in answering cards and letters from the opposite sex.
9. Thou shalt make your secretary your protective ally.
10. Thou shalt pray for the integrity of other staff members.

I know this has been a lot of content to cover, and I hope you will take this content to heart and prayerfully consider your role and influence as a leader. The influence of your maturity and character directly affects children's perception of God and church. What a wonderful opportunity and important responsibility.

If you have questions about this topic or would like further clarification on any of the content, please feel free to talk to your ministry staff member or myself. I hope you have a great week, and God bless.