



## Christian Leadership In The Midst Of Secular Life

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**Abstract.** A Christian leader is someone whom God has called as a leader. Christian leaders should be people who are called by God and have qualifications that continue to grow in personality and Christ-like character. Christian leadership is a form of leadership that is based on Christian values and teachings, such as love, humility, service, integrity, and justice. In this context, Christian leadership not only aims to achieve organizational or community goals, but also to bring positive impact in the lives of individuals and society through a compassionate and ethical approach. The success of a leadership is due to the cooperation between the leading and the led generations. As a leader, one must know which principles to follow and uphold them in their leadership. A Christian leader should embrace the leadership principles of the successful leaders recorded in the Bible. Here are the principles of Christian leadership today. Secular comes from the Latin word *saeculum*, which means space and time. Space refers to the worldly sense, while time refers to the present age. Secular life principles are views or values that are not associated with a particular religion or religious belief. These principles often include concepts such as freedom of thought, tolerance, equality and the separation of religion from public affairs. Secular life emphasizes the importance of rationality, science, and individual freedom of decision without religious interference. Secularism is broadly speaking an ideology that states that a state institution or body should stand apart from religion or belief. Secularism also refers to the notion that human activities and determinations, especially political ones, should be based on what is considered to be concrete evidence and facts, and not on religious influences. In political terms, secularism is the movement towards the separation of religion and government, one example being the replacement of religious law with civil law. This is said to promote democracy by protecting the rights of religious minorities.

**Keywords:** Christian Leadership, Secular Leadership

## INTRODUCTION

A Christian leader is someone whom God has called as a leader. Christian leaders should be people who are called by God and have qualifications that continue to grow in personality and Christ-like character. Christian leadership is a form of leadership that is based on Christian values and teachings, such as love, humility, service, integrity, and justice. In this context, Christian leadership does not only aim to achieve organizational or community goals, but also to bring positive impact in the lives of individuals and society through a compassionate and ethical approach.

The application of Christian leadership faces significant challenges in secular life. Secular life is often characterized by values of materialism, individualism, and pragmatism that can conflict with Christian principles. In the world of business, government, education

and various other sectors, Christian leaders are often faced with situations where they have to compromise with these values to achieve success or maintain their positions. Pressure to compromise, lack of understanding of the secular environment and potential isolation are the main challenges faced by Christian leaders. Christian leaders must be well versed in the Bible and be able to monitor the teaching being carried out in the body (His people).

The relevance of Christian leadership in the modern context is increasingly important to explore. With the growing complexity of global challenges, such as social injustice, climate change, and moral crises, there is an urgent need for leadership grounded in ethical and spiritual values. Christian leadership offers an approach that can address these issues by providing concrete examples of integrity, justice, and love in daily actions. This article aims to identify and analyze the basic principles of Christian leadership, explore the challenges faced in secular life, and offer strategies that Christian leaders can use to overcome these challenges. In doing so, it is hoped that this article will provide valuable insights for Christian leaders and make an important contribution to understanding how Christian principles can be applied in contexts that often oppose these values, as well as how Christian leaders can remain steadfast in their faith while making a positive impact in a rapidly changing world.

## **RESEARCH METHODS**

The method used in this research is descriptive qualitative research method in which the author collects descriptive data through literature research including literature studies, books, journals that have been published and of course the Bible as the main library material.

## **DISCUSSION AND RESULTS**

### **Christian Leadership Definition**

There are many figures who give the definition of leadership, one of them is John C. Maxwell who wrote that leadership is influence. The true measure of leadership is influence; nothing more, nothing less. Similarly, Myles Munroe (*The Spirit Of Leadership*) writes: leadership is the capacity to influence others through inspiration motivated by a passion, awakened by a vision, generated by a conviction, ignited by a purpose. Simply put, leadership can be defined as a person's way of influencing others. But leadership is not that simple because it is not only related to position or ability, but also character, style, attitude, power, situation and many other things that affect it. So it can be understood that leadership is the ability to lead followers to achieve a vision or goal. Then, what about Christian Leadership? We do not have to dissect these two words separately and then combine them again because Christian leadership already contains the meaning of a leadership model that refers to the

person of a leader who in his leadership imitates the entire life of Jesus Christ as the Great leader. Christian leadership is also defined as a leadership model that is carried out based on the principles or exemplary leadership taught by Jesus Christ. Thus the author concludes that Christian Leadership is leadership that uses God's leadership model, serves God, is based on the Bible and focuses on serving others (followers).

### **Principles of Christian Leadership**

The success of a leadership is due to the cooperation between the leading and the led generation. As a leader, one must know which principles to follow and uphold them in his or her leadership. A Christian leader should embrace the principles of leadership as the successful leaders recorded in the Bible. Here are the principles of contemporary Christian leadership:<sup>8</sup>

1) Be an Example. Exemplary living is an important principle in leadership. Be an example to others through words, behavior, love, faithfulness and holiness. When leaders live according to their values and show integrity in all aspects of life, it will certainly inspire and influence others to follow their example; 2) Self-respect. Having self-confidence and self-respect is the ability to lead and influence. By having a healthy sense of self-worth, it will be able to inspire others to see the values and follow in the footsteps of leadership like Jesus. Having a clear self-image is a strength for every leader because it is the key to self-respect; 3) Be respectful. A leader should practice respect towards elders or experienced people. Appreciate the wisdom and experience possessed by others. When interacting with elders, it is good to listen attentively, respect their perspective and learn from their experiences. Successful leadership always focuses on the advice of seniors who have had more experience and excelled in leadership before. Just as David respected Saul as king, even though David was anointed, David did not take power in a bad way. David still gave respect to Saul as king over Israel at that time; 4) Building relationships. A leader must learn how to communicate effectively, empathetically and collaboratively. Listen well, understand the needs and expectations of others and communicate clearly and openly. By building strong relationships this leader can gain the support and trust of the led because no one wants an authoritarian leadership. Good relationships will lead to complete trust to build a great work in a leadership; 5) Turning on Religious Values. The importance of religious values can be used as the basis for making a decision. In practice, a leader needs to combine these principles with relevant situations and contexts. Every leader has a unique leadership style, but by applying these principles, can positively influence those around and achieve greater goals in leadership. Christian leaders are thus able to be inclusive leaders who always act on biblical

truth.<sup>10</sup>

### **Secular Life Definition**

Secular comes from the Latin word *saeculum*, which means space and time. Space refers to the worldly sense, while time refers to the present. *Saeculum* means the present or the present time. Historically, the term secular emerged with the rise of the Enlightenment in medieval Europe, which promoted human freedom, upheld rationality, and believed in the idea of progress, the cornerstone of Western liberalism. Since then, efforts have been made to separate religious and nonreligious matters (the secular sphere). Little by little, secular affairs gained independence from the influence of the church, and eventually the church no longer had the right to intervene in politics, economics and science.

Secularization, as used in Indonesian, comes from the English word *secularization*, which is derived from the Latin *saeculum* which is usually interpreted as the temporal world as opposed to the Kingdom of God. C. William interprets *Saeculum* with the term of this age. Even clearer is the understanding conveyed by Backer who says the term secular is not only something related to the profane, but also connotes something unholy, godless and so on. From the above meanings, it can be concluded that secular means related to the current time, the present time, profane or worldly and not the world to come.

Secularization as a historical process has changed the way humans view nature, from religious dogmatism to critical rationalism. There is a change and replacement of things that are supernatural and theological into things that are scientific and all-around argumentative. Secularization as reported by Paul H. Landis "The trend towards a secular and rational way of interpretation is known as 'secularitation'. It means the detachment of the world from sacred notions, or from all supernatural myths. Then humans turn their attention away from that world towards the here and now. In Max Weber's view, the process of secularization is the liberation of nature from religious taints. Secularization does not only cover the political and social aspects of life, it has even entered the cultural aspect, because this shows the loss of religious determination of culturally integral symbols. Secularization implies a historical process in which societies and cultures are freed from the guardianship of religious control and closed metaphysical worldviews. Secularization becomes a liberating development, and the end result is historical relativism. Secularization as a process is more open when compared to secularism as an ideology. Secularization still recognizes human freedom of activity in the historical process including the freedom to vary within it, whereas secularism is more closed, meaning that it is no longer a process, it is already an ideology. Secularism is an ethical system

based on natural moral principles and independent of religion revelation or supernaturalism. Modern science and technology replace the position once occupied by religion and the church. As explained by Oemar Bakri, "in secularism the influence of religious organizations must be reduced as far as possible, and moral education must be separated from religion". From the various explanations above, it can be concluded that secularism is an understanding that separates the life of the world from the afterlife in all aspects of life, both in terms of religion, economics, education, politics, social and so on. In addition, secularism also fights for the right to be free from various rules of religious teachings, while also providing unlimited tolerance, including between religions. In other words, secularism refers to the belief that all activities and decisions that are entirely located and made by humans, should have no role and interference from religion in it.

### **Secular Principles of Life**

Secular principles of life are views or values that are not associated with a particular religion or religious belief. These principles often include concepts such as freedom of thought, tolerance, equality and the separation of religion from public affairs. Secular life emphasizes the importance of rationality, science, and individual freedom of decision without religious interference. Secularism is broadly speaking an ideology that states that a state institution or body should stand apart from religion or belief. Secularism also refers to the notion that human activities and determinations, especially political ones, should be based on what is considered to be concrete evidence and facts, and not on religious influences. In political terms, secularism is the movement towards the separation of religion and government, one example being the replacement of religious law with civil law. This is said to promote democracy by protecting the rights of religious minorities. In religious studies, western societies are generally regarded as secular. This is because of the almost complete freedom of religion without legal or social sanction, and also because of the general belief that religion cannot determine political decisions. People with strong religious convictions are considered narrow-minded, dogmatic, even fanatical. In many countries, we witness a growing ignorance, or lack of interest, in God and religion. Most people no longer seek God because they don't believe He exists or are unsure about it. Theories such as 'God is just a product of human imagination', 'Religion is the opium of society', and 'God is dead' sound so new and exciting compared to the boring and incomprehensible dogmas and traditions of the church. It seems that many people have finally found a way to channel their pent-up doubts and suspicions. For many, religion has simply become a historical relic, only to mark historical

moments in one's life, births, marriages, deaths. Many have almost stopped searching for the true God. The concept of secularism is contrary to the principles of the Bible. It starts with creation. If the universe is governed by laws, there must be an intelligent lawmaker who formulated or established those laws. Moreover, since the laws that govern the operation of the universe seem to be made in order to establish life and life-sustaining conditions, this suggests that there is an intelligent Creator. This is in accordance with Romans 1:20 "Although God is invisible, they can clearly see what he is like from the creation of the world. His eternal power and position as God were clearly seen, because these things could be understood from his creation."

The tug-of-war between religion and secularism has led to long debates among sociologists and theologians. Supporters of theology or opponents of secularism consider that there has been a judaization of divine authority on earth which has been replaced by a secular authority based on rationality. Rationality is limited, weak and tends to follow lust so that it gives freedom to reason, which will ultimately threaten the sustainability of humanity itself. Therefore, humans must be controlled by an absolute authority, namely only God is the absolute and the real source of sovereignty. Therefore, absolutism is a necessity because absolute authority is established to make human beings obey and submit to God. Secularism is an ideology that openly rejects the existence of all forms of supernaturalism on human earth. The logical consequence is that it is very difficult to determine the exact time limit when the process of disengagement from religion stops, as well as when secularism begins. For the proponents of secularism, human beings are self-governing creatures and at the same time can develop in the direction of liberalism and pluralism. Liberalism views human beings not as sincere and selfless and thinking of others, but as deceitful, ambitious and self-interested. It is on the basis of this suspicion that liberalism institutionalizes control and surveillance of power. So designing a system that accommodates belief in human goodness, institutionalizes suspicion of human nature, and recognizes that humans are fallible but can learn from their mistakes is a given. So secular life is a life that is not influenced by religion or religious beliefs and focuses on worldly and materialistic aspects.

### **Challenges Faced in Secular Life**

The rapid growth of secularism around the world presents a series of complex challenges for Christian leadership. In the 21st century, scientific advances have created many problems for humanity. Science has a growing impact on human life as the world becomes increasingly secularized. The church, as a religious institution based on moral principles, is facing an

increasingly worrying phenomenon as secularism emphasizes worldly matters and pushes aside religious principles. This phenomenon raises doubts and questions about the identity and role of the church in the midst of contemporary society. One of the biggest challenges is how the church can maintain its theological teachings and values while adapting to social and cultural changes. Christian leaders must find ways to communicate and interact with a society that has different perspectives and values. Secularism in Christianity is like a time bomb. Addressing these issues requires a collective effort and strong commitment from all parts of the church. These things come out of the blue and appear in various complex and interrelated forms. One example is the significant decline in the number of people attending church services and activities. Today, the seats in the church look empty and deserted. This shows that people's commitment and involvement in church life is declining. Bible reading and prayer, which are important parts of spiritual life, are being neglected. Instead, watching TV, playing electronic devices, or interacting with social media are some of the other activities favored by people today. According to Alex Djuang's research, the spirituality of God's people was completely undermined by secularization in the Netherlands. As Christians abandoned it, large and magnificent church buildings gradually became empty. Meanwhile, young people have left the church because of worldliness and their parents are the only members.

An excessive focus on worldly success disrupts spiritual values. Church sermons and teachings focus more on worldly success and happiness rather than building character and holiness. As a result, materialism becomes the preferred lifestyle, where wealth and social status become symbols of happiness and success. Church life is trapped in a culture of materialism, where material achievement and social status become the benchmark of happiness and success. This is contrary to Christian values that emphasize simplicity, love and care. Freely interpreted and adapted to secular values, religious teachings cast doubt on the authority of the Bible and church teachings. As a result, so-called progressive Christianity has emerged, which seeks to understand the Bible with logic.<sup>19</sup> because people influenced by secular views may question the doctrines and beliefs of the church. This creates doubt and uncertainty among church members. Christian customs and values are at odds with secular lifestyles. Behaviors that were once considered taboo, such as casual sex, same-sex marriage, and abortion, begin to be accepted and practiced by some. Scandals, moral transgressions and criminality committed by some church leaders caused people to lose their faith. Church rules were loosened to attract people's attention and keep up with current trends. As a result, the church's unique identity and characteristics as a holy institution were lost. People's views on

religion and theology are affected by a lack of knowledge about how the use of diverse media and information technology can influence people's perceptions of the church and complicate the dissemination of accurate theological messages.

### ***Challenges of spiritual leaders in application in a secular world***

#### **Self-development vs. self-denial**

Spiritual leaders must deny themselves and place themselves under the supremacy of God. The self-development undertaken boils down to the belief that what is enhanced is in support of such self-denial. This causes the spiritual leader to keep a low profile. The leader in Christ allows Christ to manifest through and in him. In the secular world, self-improvement is an attempt to add advantages over subordinates, to be preeminent. Secular leaders rely on their own strength. Secular leaders are individual, exalting me (self).

#### ***Heavenly authority vs earthly authority***

Heavenly authority places the spiritual leader in the position of servant and the one being led is the recipient of blessings. The Bible tells us that service to others must be self-sacrificing, compassionate, willing, self-giving and persevering (Jerry C. Wofford. 2001). Self-sacrifice. Jesus' life-giving death was his sacrifice for humanity. When Jesus taught his disciples the concept of leadership, he used himself. He said, "For the Son of Man also came not to be served, but to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

#### ***Examples of Christian Leadership in Secular Life***

Leadership is the ability to gain followers while a leader is a person who has skills and advantages, especially skills and advantages in one field so that he is able to influence other people to jointly carry out certain activities for the achievement of one or several goals. A leader is a person who has skills and advantages - especially skills and advantages in one field, so that he is able to influence others to jointly carry out certain activities for the achievement of one or several goals.. In this case, the leader is the one who knows and shows the way, and walks the path. Christian leadership is the God-given ability of a person or group to guide, direct and mobilize in accordance with God's design and purpose of being a blessing to the world and its environment.<sup>23</sup>

### **Christian Leadership and Secular Leadership**

#### ***Aware of weaknesses and shortcomings***

Good leader realizes his identity as a human being with limitations and shortcomings in addition to his strengths. Leaders who hold self-centered values will destroy their

organizations (Jerry C. Wofford 2001, p. 45). Therefore, these limitations encourage good leaders to continue to improve and add to what is lacking.

### ***Effective, Task Delegation***

A good leader is not an executor of the entire task load, and places subordinates as mere helpers or assistants. The ability to break down tasks into parts is crucial and determines the success of task execution. The division of tasks allows the leader to determine the time of implementation as well as the way to control each part of the task so that it goes according to plan.

### ***Appreciate Another form of appreciation is by promoting subordinates who have advantages over others.***

An Example of Hard Work Ki Hajar Dewantara conveyed a guidance for leaders: *ing ngarso sung tulodo, ing madyo mangun karso, tut wuri handayani*. Broadly speaking, it can be interpreted that a leader will always have duties and responsibilities at any phase in the implementation of a job. While in front will be an example, when together build and move and when behind act as an encourager. The Indonesian education figure implicitly states that a good leader must always work hard wherever and in whatever phase the task is carried out. Not only receiving and enjoying the work of subordinates. Waiter Christian leadership is humble service, as Jesus demonstrated when He washed the feet of His disciples. Jesus modeled true service, humility and true greatness. (John 13:12-15, Luke 22:24-26). Servant leaders put aside their personal interests for the sake of the people they serve.

### ***Hearing the Voice of God***

The voice of God, not just praying diligently, talking to God, but listening to the voice of God. (1 Chronicles 14:10 (TB) David asked God: "Shall I go up against the Philistines and deliver them into my hand?" The Lord answered: "Go forth; I will deliver them into your hand." ) By its very nature, association means two-way communication. Listening to God's voice means being willing to be silent to reflect on God's voice. (Exodus 19:5-6 (TB) So now, if you truly listen to my word and keep my covenant, then you will be my favorite possession among all the peoples, for I am the possessor of all the earth. You will be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel. Secular leaders emphasize, among other things: Power, a leader must have power. Authority, and legality to influence and mobilize subordinates. Authority, leaders must have advantages, excellence, virtue in order to be able to organize others to perform certain actions. Ability, leaders must have power, strength, excellence, skills, technical and social that

surpass their subordinates. Some think that leaders must have superior qualities such as high thinking ability, wisdom, responsibility, fairness, honesty, sense of humor and others. Others think that the leader must have a relationship with his innate, conceptualized and elaborated goals. According to the secular view, the superiority of the leader in terms of character is not absolute because good character may not be found in the most prominent and successful world leaders.

### **Spiritual leaders are relevant to apply in a secular world Spiritual & secular contradictions**

Spiritual leaders have character: Believes in God and also knows God, seeks God's will, is selfless, seeks and follows God's ways, loves to obey God. Driven by love for God and man, dependent on God. A true and trustworthy leader may very well be a person who does not want to lead, but is forced into leadership by the inner prompting of the Holy Spirit and the pressure of external circumstances. In contrast, secular leaders are more self-confident, only know people, make their own decisions, ambitious, create their own ways, like to order others, prioritize work results, driven by their own personal considerations. Leaders in the secular world are target-oriented and obsessed with them. By all means, they strive to accomplish the target even if it has to be in a way that is less pleasing to God.

### **Christian Leadership and Secular Leadership Aware of weaknesses and shortcomings**

A good leader realizes his/her identity as an ordinary human being with limitations and shortcomings in addition to his/her strengths. Leaders who hold self-centered values will destroy their organizations. Therefore this limitation encourages a good leader to continue to improve and add to what he lacks. In addition, he will be forced to voluntarily and happily learn and continue to learn to increase his abilities. Good leaders also use their limitations to subjugate themselves to the absolute power, God, and prevent them from exalting themselves. The subjugation of oneself to God makes a person not take the risk to get out of the corridor set by God, maintain a harmonious personal relationship with God and put God as the main foundation of his life as a leader (compare the lives of David and Solomon, 1 Chronicles 14:2 (TB) Then David knew that the Lord had established him as king over Israel, for the dignity of his reign was raised high because of Israel, or the life of Solomon (1 Kings 11:11-12 (TB) Then the Lord said to Solomon: "Because you have not kept my covenant and my statutes which I have commanded you, I will surely tear the kingdom from you and give it to your servant. Only in your lifetime I have not wanted to do this because of David your father; it is from your son's hand that I will tear it.

### **Effective, Task Delegation**

A good leader is not an executor of the entire task load, and places subordinates as mere helpers or assistants. The ability to break down tasks into parts is crucial and determines the success of task execution. The division of tasks allows the leader to determine the time of implementation as well as the way to control each part of the task so that it goes according to plan. The parts must be controlled for harmonization so that they support each other and synergize. After task division, delegation of tasks to subordinates becomes an important point. Nehemiah did not carry the entire responsibility of supervising and working on the construction project on his own shoulders. He appointed trustworthy people for parts of the job by dividing responsibilities according to their respective skills. Appreciate a good leader will not waste the opinions or proposals of subordinates. When the proposal can not be implemented, it will be stored and will be used at the right time. This will encourage subordinates to be motivated to do creatively to complete the tasks assigned. Another form of appreciation is by promoting subordinates who have advantages compared to others. The form of promotion can be structural (promotion) or by promoting to do more important work (Hiram's appointment in the construction of the temple, 2 Chronicles 2: 12-14 (TB) Then Hiram continued: "Blessed be the Lord God of Israel, who made heaven and earth, for he has given king David a wise son, full of understanding and discernment, who will build for himself a house for the Lord and a royal palace! And now I have sent a skillful and understanding man, Hiram Abi, the son of a woman of the sons of Dan, and his father was a Tyrian. He is skillful in working with gold, silver, bronze, iron, stone, wood, mauve, purple, fine linen, and scarlet, and in making all kinds of carvings and all kinds of designs that are assigned to him, assisted by your experts and by the experts of your father, my lord David) A leader who respects his subordinates will gain the respect and loyalty of his subordinates, even if they are outside the structure or other parts.

### **Spiritual leadership standards vs Secular leadership standards**

Jethro, Moses' father-in-law set the standard for the spiritual leader to help Moses as a man of integrity (servant-hearted) so that it can be said that: "The servant leader is capable (Intellectual Integrity); the servant leader fears God (Spiritual Integrity); the servant leader is trustworthy (Social Integrity); the servant leader is a person who hates the pursuit of bribes (Economic Integrity); and the servant leader is humble and knows how to lead (Work Integrity)". The competency standards of secular leaders are broadly speaking a person's ability to master a job/expertise, firm in action, high integrity, visionary and persistent in trying.

### **CONCLUSIONS**

The application of Christian leadership faces significant challenges in secular life. Secular life is often characterized by values of materialism, individualism, and pragmatism that can conflict with Christian principles. In the world of business, government, education, and various other sectors, Christian leaders are often faced with situations where they have to compromise with these values to achieve success or maintain their positions.

A good leader will not waste the opinions or proposals of subordinates. When the proposal can not be implemented, it will be stored and will be used at the right time. This will encourage subordinates to be motivated to do creatively to complete the tasks assigned. Another form of appreciation is to promote subordinates who have advantages compared to others.

A good leader is not an executor of the entire task load, and places subordinates as mere helpers or assistants. The ability to break down tasks into parts is crucial and determines the success of task execution.

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