



“ Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

— Matthew 28:18-20

”

There are overlaps in leadership descriptions between the Old and New Testaments. The Greek word *prōtos* means first in a series involving time, space or set.²⁰ In terms of leadership it denotes prominence, influence, and importance.²¹ As such, it has similarities with the Hebrew *ro'sh*, indicating first or best. This word can be seen in English words such as prototype or protocapitalism.

Ro'sh and *prōtos* also have a connection with the Greek word *kephalēn*, meaning “head,” which is used in verses such as Acts 4:11 to denote “first or chief” and in Ephesians 1:33 to describe Christ as the “head of the church.”

Prōtos also has similarities with the Greek *archon*. This word for leader shares its root with the Greek *arche* used to begin the Gospel of John: “*In the beginning [En archē] was the Word.*” Like *prōtos*, *archon* indicates primacy: a high official, ruler, commander, chief.²²

The Greek word from which we get our English hegemony is *hegéomai*. The definition of hegemony is (1) preponderant influence or authority over others, (2) the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group.

Interestingly, the Greek root has a very different overtone. It does mean to lead, or to have authority, but is associated with wisdom resulting from deep consideration.²³ *Hegéomai* refers to leadership through guidance as a culmination of deliberation of facts and context.

Another interesting, but rare, word for leadership is *kathegetes*. This word appears only twice in the New Testament — both in Matthew 23:10 — and most English translations do not render it as “leader.” Other translations are “instructor,” “teacher,” and “master.” However, “leader” is an additional possible translation.²⁴ The *New American Standard Bible* translates *kathegetes* in this way: “Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.” If this word is to be included in our understanding of leadership, it would most closely resemble *hegéomai*, as a wise guide.

Contrast this with the term *dynatos*, which, in many ways, mirrors the modern cultural flavor of a leader as someone who possesses power and influence. *Dynatos* is linguistically connected to the Greek word for power and strength, *dynamis*. This is leadership created and maintained through strength and influence.²⁵ *Dynatos* speaks to the ability — the capacity — to lead.

There are other “leadership” words in the New Testament — such as *archisynagogos* (ruler of a synagogue), *krinó* (κρίνω, to rule over people), *basileus* (to rule as a king with complete authority), or *exousiazó* (to rule or reign by exercising authority) — but the above terms give a good, quick overview of the available Hebrew and Greek words which we translate wholesale as “leader.”

QUESTION:

Which (if any) of these do you think might work well as a definition of leadership in the church? Why?

NOTES