A strong way to approach this is to make **self-government the first ministry of leadership**: before a leader attempts to direct people, institutions, teams, or communities, the leader learns to direct his or her own thoughts, emotions, words, desires, habits, and decisions.

A useful biblical foundation is:

“He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city.” — Proverbs 16:32

The R.S.G. Model — Rule Self Before Governing Others

I would structure this as a practical **7-stage leadership discipline**:

Spirit → Mind → Emotions → Words → Desires → Actions → Influence

The principle is:

I cannot consistently lead what I have not first learned to govern within myself.

1. Rule Your Spirit — *Who governs me?*

Before asking, *“How do I influence people?”*, ask:

“Who or what is influencing me?”

For a Christian spiritual leader, this means deliberately submitting one's leadership to God rather than allowing ego, anger, fear, pride, money, popularity, ambition, or resentment to become the real governing authority.

Daily questions:

- Am I seeking God's will or my own recognition?
- What is controlling me today?
- Am I acting from conviction or emotion?
- Would I make the same decision if nobody praised me?
- Is my leadership producing service or self-exaltation?

Leadership discipline:

Pause → Pray → Examine → Submit → Act

2. Rule Your Mind — *Govern your thinking before governing decisions*

A leader's external decisions usually begin internally.

Train yourself to distinguish:

FACT → INTERPRETATION → EMOTION → RESPONSE

For example:

Fact: A staff member did not complete an assignment.
Interpretation: "He doesn't respect me."
Emotion: Anger.
Possible response: Publicly humiliate him.

A self-governing leader interrupts the chain:

Fact → Verify → Understand → Correct → Restore

Instead of assuming disrespect, the leader asks:

"What prevented this assignment from being completed?"

That small mental discipline can prevent an unnecessary conflict.

The 10-second mental rule

Before responding to something provocative, ask:

Is it true?
Is it necessary?
Is it wise?
Is it the right time?

If not, **delay the response.**

3. Rule Your Emotions — *Feel deeply without being controlled by feelings*

Self-government does **not** mean becoming emotionless.

It means:

I acknowledge my emotions without allowing my emotions to become my commander.

Scenario: Someone challenges your authority

An employee says:

"I don't agree with your decision."

An uncontrolled leader thinks:

"He is challenging my authority."

A self-governing leader thinks:

“I feel challenged. Let me determine whether there is actually a leadership problem.”

Then responds:

“Tell me specifically what concerns you about the decision.”

The leader has transformed a potential confrontation into an opportunity for information.

The E.A.R. discipline

E — Experience the emotion.
“I am angry.”

A — Analyze the emotion.
“Why am I angry?”

R — Respond deliberately.
“What response serves truth, justice, and the mission?”

4. Rule Your Tongue — *Do not let your mouth outrun your wisdom*

Leadership authority is often destroyed by uncontrolled speech.

Develop a discipline of:

Listen → Think → Verify → Speak

Especially when angry.

The three-gate test

Before speaking:

Gate 1 — Truth: Is it accurate?

Gate 2 — Purpose: Why am I saying it?

Gate 3 — Consequence: What will my words produce?

If your words are true but unnecessarily destructive, **choose a better method of communicating the truth.**

Scenario

A subordinate makes a serious mistake.

Uncontrolled leader:

“You always mess things up. I can't trust you with anything.”

Self-governing leader:

“This error created a serious problem. Let's establish what happened, what caused it, and what needs to change so it does not happen again.”

The second response maintains **authority without humiliation.**

5. Rule Your Desires — *Do not become controlled by ambition*

A spiritual leader must continually examine:

What do I want—and why do I want it?

Leadership becomes dangerous when:

Mission → becomes ambition → becomes ego → becomes domination.

Ask:

- Do I need recognition?
- Do I need to be right?
- Do I need people to praise me?
- Do I become defensive when someone else succeeds?
- Am I building people—or building dependence upon myself?
- Would I still serve if nobody knew my name?

This is particularly important for spiritual leadership.

The leadership test

If recognition disappeared, would I continue doing the work?

If the answer is yes, your motivation is becoming healthier.

6. Rule Your Habits — *Your private discipline determines your public reliability*

Leadership is not primarily demonstrated during major public events.

It is demonstrated through ordinary habits.

Create a personal **Rule of Life**.

For example:

Every morning

1. Prayer
2. Scripture/meditation
3. Examine priorities
4. Establish the day's mission
5. Identify one character challenge

Ask:

"Where am I most likely to lose self-control today?"

Then prepare for it.

Every evening

Conduct a **Leadership Examination**:

What did I do well?

Where did I lose control?

Where did pride appear?

Did I hurt anyone unnecessarily?

Did I tell the truth?

Did I keep my commitments?

Where did I see God at work?

What must I correct tomorrow?

7. Rule Your Actions — *Character becomes visible through behavior*

Eventually self-government must become observable.

The leader establishes personal standards.

My five non-negotiables

For example:

1. **I will not make major decisions while emotionally agitated.**
2. **I will not intentionally humiliate another person.**
3. **I will not knowingly distort the truth to protect myself.**
4. **I will admit mistakes quickly.**
5. **I will treat people with dignity regardless of their position.**

Now your internal values become external leadership behavior.

The S.P.I.R.I.T. Leadership Model

For a spiritual-leadership curriculum, you could develop this into a memorable model:

Letter	Discipline	Question
S	**Surrender**	Who governs me?
P	**Perception**	How am I interpreting reality?
I	**Inner emotions**	What am I feeling and why?
R	**Restraint**	What must I refuse to do impulsively?
I	**Integrity**	Am I consistent privately and publicly?
T	**Truthful action**	What is the right thing to do now?

The cycle

SURRENDER → PERCEIVE → EXAMINE → RESTRAIN → ALIGN → ACT → REVIEW

Then repeat.

That makes leadership a **continuous process of self-correction**, rather than a one-time achievement.

Practical Scenario 1 — Anger

Situation

A team member publicly criticizes you.

Natural reaction

“Who does he think he is?”

Self-government process

STOP

Don't answer immediately.

EXAMINE

“I feel embarrassed and angry.”

SEPARATE

“My emotional reaction is not necessarily evidence that he is wrong.”

INVESTIGATE

“What specifically do you believe is wrong with the decision?”

RESPOND

Listen before ruling.

Leadership result

You retain authority **without becoming authoritarian**.

Scenario 2 — Someone disrespects you

A subordinate says:

“You don't know what you're doing.”

Instead of immediately retaliating:

Internal dialogue

“I don't need to defend my identity immediately.”

Then:

“If there is a legitimate criticism, I need to hear it. If there isn't, I can address the inappropriate manner separately.”

You could respond:

“I am willing to discuss disagreement. But we need to do so respectfully. Tell me specifically what you believe is incorrect.”

That is **controlled authority**.

Scenario 3 — A leadership opportunity

You are offered a prestigious leadership position.

The uncontrolled question is:

“What will this position do for me?”

The self-governing question is:

“What responsibility will this position place upon me?”

Then ask:

- Can I serve these people effectively?
- Do I have the necessary competence?
- What sacrifices will be required?
- Is this consistent with my calling?
- Am I pursuing the position because of service or status?

This changes the psychology of leadership from:

POSITION → POWER

to:

RESPONSIBILITY → SERVICE → STEWARDSHIP

Scenario 4 — Financial temptation

Suppose a leader controls organizational resources and discovers an opportunity to personally benefit.

The internal battle is:

“Nobody will know.”

Self-government says:

“My integrity does not depend upon whether someone is watching.”

The leader establishes controls that protect everyone—including himself.

This is important because mature leaders don't merely trust their character.

They create **systems that make integrity easier and misconduct harder.**

Scenario 5 — Spiritual leadership

Suppose people begin praising you:

“You are an amazing spiritual leader.”

The dangerous internal response is:

“Yes, I really am.”

The self-governing response is:

“Thank God. But I must never confuse God's work with my identity.”

The leader deliberately practices humility:

Receive appreciation → give appropriate credit → remain accountable → continue serving.

The 5-Minute Daily Self-Government Exercise

Every morning, write five answers:

1. Spirit

What must I surrender to God today?

2. Mind

What truth must govern my thinking today?

3. Emotion

What emotion could control me today?

4. Character

What virtue must I practice today?

5. Leadership

Whom can I serve rather than control today?

Then establish one sentence:

"Today I will govern myself by _____."

Examples:

"Today I will govern myself by patience."

"Today I will govern myself by truth."

"Today I will govern myself by humility."

"Today I will govern myself by disciplined speech."

The Evening Accountability Test

At the end of the day, score yourself:

Area	1–5
Spiritual discipline	___

Emotional control	___
Thought discipline	___
Speech	___
Integrity	___
Patience	___
Humility	___
Service	___
Accountability	___

Then ask the most important question:

“Where did I fail to govern myself today?”

Don't merely feel guilty.

Identify → Confess → Correct → Learn → Repeat.

That turns failure into leadership development.

The Leadership Ladder

The entire philosophy can ultimately be represented as:

RULE YOURSELF
↓
CONTROL YOUR REACTIONS
↓
GOVERN YOUR HABITS
↓
DEVELOP YOUR CHARACTER
↓
SERVE ONE PERSON WELL
↓
LEAD A TEAM
↓
LEAD AN ORGANIZATION
↓
INFLUENCE A COMMUNITY

↓

TRANSFORM INSTITUTIONS

The crucial principle is:

Influence should be the overflow of character, not a substitute for character.

And for a Christian spiritual leader:

Authority begins with submission to God; leadership begins with self-government; influence begins with service; and transformation begins with truth and integrity.

This could become a strong foundation for an **ORPE Transformational Leadership Development curriculum**, especially alongside your Truth-Driven Decision-Making framework: the leader first governs the *self*, then applies truth to decisions, then exercises authority in service of human dignity.

Part II

For the kind of leadership you are describing, I would make **"ruling one's own spirit" the first level of a larger doctrine of spiritual stewardship**.

The central principle is:

Before God entrusts a leader with greater influence over people, the leader must continually submit his own spirit, character, emotions, desires, words, body, resources, and authority to God.

This does **not** mean that a leader has absolute spiritual authority over family, an organization, a community, or a nation. In Christian leadership, authority is **delegated, accountable, and servant-oriented**. The leader protects rather than possesses people.

A foundational text is:

"He that ruleth his spirit is better than he that taketh a city." — Proverbs 16:32

THE S.P.I.R.I.T. GOVERNANCE MODEL

I would develop your concept into a model called:

S.P.I.R.I.T. — Spiritual Protection & Integrity Through Responsible Inner Transformation

The progression

GOD

↓

MY SPIRIT

↓

MY CHARACTER
↓
MY FAMILY
↓
MY LEADERSHIP
↓
MY ORGANIZATION
↓
MY COMMUNITY
↓
MY NATION / WORLD

The order matters.

You should not try to **control the world while failing to govern yourself.**

I. S — SUBMISSION TO GOD

First question:

Who has authority over the person exercising authority?

Before beginning the day, the leader deliberately places his authority under God.

Daily declaration

"Lord, my authority does not originate in myself. Whatever authority I possess is a stewardship. Govern my spirit before I attempt to govern anything entrusted to me."

Then examine:

- Am I pursuing God's will or my own ambition?
- Am I seeking service or recognition?
- Am I protecting people or controlling them?
- Am I willing to be corrected?
- Would I make this decision if nobody knew my name?

Biblical principle

Jesus connected leadership with servanthood:

"Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." — Matthew 20:26

Therefore:

Authority without submission becomes domination.

Authority under God becomes stewardship.

II. P — PROTECT YOUR INNER TEMPLE

Before protecting other people spiritually, the leader must establish discipline over his own inner life.

Think of yourself as having several internal gates:

The five gates

Eyes → Mind → Heart → Mouth → Actions

What enters through the eyes can influence the mind.

What occupies the mind can influence the heart.

What fills the heart eventually influences the mouth.

What comes from the mouth influences actions.

Therefore:

Guard the gates before attempting to guard the territory.

Daily examination

Ask:

Eyes: What am I allowing myself to consume?

Mind: What thoughts are dominating me?

Heart: What desires are developing?

Mouth: What am I speaking about others?

Actions: What am I actually doing?

III. I — IDENTIFY WHAT IS RULING YOU

A leader must be able to identify his internal enemies.

Not necessarily external enemies.

Seven common internal rulers

1. **Anger**
2. **Fear**
3. **Pride**
4. **Greed**
5. **Sexual temptation**
6. **Need for recognition**

7. **Desire for control**

The critical question is:

“What can make me abandon truth when I am under pressure?”

That is where your spiritual discipline must become strongest.

IV. R — RESTRAIN BEFORE RESPONDING

This may be the most concrete component of the entire model.

The S.T.O.P. Rule

When emotionally provoked:

S — Stop

Don't immediately answer.

T — Take the matter before God

Pray before reacting.

O — Observe

What actually happened?

Separate:

FACTS from **ASSUMPTIONS**.

P — Proceed according to truth

Then act.

This creates a space between:

provocation → reaction

and replaces it with:

provocation → discernment → response.

Scenario 1 — Your family challenges you

Suppose your spouse or child says:

“You are being too controlling.”

A leader who has not ruled his spirit may immediately respond:

“I am the head of this family. You need to respect my authority.”

But spiritual self-government asks:

“Could God be using this person to reveal something about me?”

Then you listen.

You might discover that your intention was protection, but your behavior became control.

Mature response

“My responsibility is to protect this family, but I also need to examine whether my method is producing fear rather than security.”

That is **spiritual authority under self-government.**

V. I — INTEGRITY BETWEEN PRIVATE AND PUBLIC LIFE

A spiritual leader must eliminate the division between:

Public leader
and
Private person.

The question is:

“Who am I when nobody is watching?”

Your private life becomes the laboratory where your leadership character is tested.

Test yourself in five areas

Area	Question
Integrity	Do I tell the truth when it costs me?
Purity	Do I govern my private desires?
Money	Can financial opportunity corrupt my judgment?
Anger	Can I disagree without becoming destructive?
Accountability	Can someone safely correct me?

A leader who cannot be corrected eventually becomes dangerous.

VI. T — TRUTH-DRIVEN DECISION MAKING

Your spiritual leadership should not operate merely on feelings, impressions, or claims of divine direction.

Use:

PRAY → VERIFY → DISCERN → CONSULT → DECIDE → REVIEW

1. Pray

Ask God for wisdom.

2. Verify

Establish the facts.

3. Discern

Consider Scripture, conscience, ethics, consequences, and circumstances.

4. Consult

Seek trustworthy and competent counsel.

5. Decide

Act according to truth.

6. Review

Ask afterward:

“What did I learn?”

This is particularly important when exercising leadership over an organization or community.

THE SPIRITUAL PROTECTION PYRAMID

Your responsibilities can be understood in five levels.

LEVEL 1 — SELF

Protect your spirit.

Your first responsibility is:

My relationship with God.
My character.
My integrity.
My emotional discipline.

↓

LEVEL 2 — FAMILY

Protect the household.

This includes:

- spiritual formation
- physical safety
- emotional security
- financial responsibility
- education
- moral example
- healthy relationships

But protection should not become domination.

↓

LEVEL 3 — ORGANIZATION

Protect the mission and people entrusted to the organization.

The leader protects:

- organizational integrity
- vulnerable people
- resources
- reputation
- legal compliance
- ethical standards
- staff
- beneficiaries
- institutional mission

↓

LEVEL 4 — COMMUNITY

Protect human dignity and community wellbeing.

This includes addressing:

- poverty
- injustice
- violence
- exploitation
- discrimination
- homelessness
- lack of access to services
- institutional failures

↓

LEVEL 5 — NATIONS AND WORLD

At this level the leader's responsibility becomes:

justice + peace + human dignity + truth + good governance + protection of vulnerable people.

But the leader must recognize the limits of personal authority.

You may **advocate, serve, educate, organize, influence, and build institutions** without assuming that God has given you unilateral authority over other people's lives.

THE PROTECTION PRINCIPLE

I would make this one of your core leadership doctrines:

“Protect without possessing. Lead without dominating. Correct without humiliating. Serve without seeking worship. Exercise authority without becoming controlled by authority.”

That is a powerful distinction.

SCENARIO 2 — Someone in your organization is vulnerable

Suppose an employee tells you that another person is exploiting them.

The spiritual leader should not immediately say:

“God has shown me that this person is guilty.”

Instead:

Spiritual + institutional process

Listen
↓
Protect the vulnerable person from immediate harm
↓

Document facts
↓
Verify allegations
↓
Follow appropriate organizational/legal procedures
↓
Seek qualified counsel where necessary
↓
Make a fair decision
↓
Restore and protect

Spiritual discernment should **strengthen truth and justice**, not replace evidence or due process.

SCENARIO 3 — Someone attacks your reputation

Someone publicly accuses you of something false.

Your first instinct may be:

“I must destroy this person's credibility.”

Self-government says:

“I don't have to become unjust simply because someone has treated me unjustly.”

Then ask:

1. Is the accusation true?
2. Is it partially true?
3. Is it false?
4. Do I need to respond?
5. What response protects truth without creating unnecessary destruction?

Sometimes the correct response is vigorous defense.

Sometimes it is silence.

Sometimes it is correction.

Sometimes it requires formal legal or organizational action.

Self-government determines the method.

SCENARIO 4 — You have power over money

Suppose you control organizational funds.

The test isn't:

“Can I take advantage of this?”

The test is:

“What safeguards should exist so that neither I nor anyone else can misuse this authority?”

Therefore establish:

- separation of duties
- financial records
- approvals
- audits
- receipts
- transparent reporting
- conflict-of-interest rules
- independent oversight

This is an important principle:

A mature spiritual leader does not merely trust himself; he creates accountability around himself.

THE 24-HOUR SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP CYCLE

You could make this a daily discipline.

MORNING — CONSECRATION

“God, govern me today.”

Pray.

Read Scripture.

Identify responsibilities.

Identify temptations.

Establish your character objective.

MIDDAY — GOVERNMENT

Stop for 2–5 minutes.

Ask:

“Am I still being governed by God, or have circumstances taken control of my spirit?”

Check:

Spirit — Mind — Emotion — Speech — Action

Correct course.

EVENING — EXAMINATION

Ask:

Spirit

Did I remain spiritually grounded?

Character

Did I act with integrity?

Family

Did my family experience protection or unnecessary control?

Leadership

Did I serve people or manipulate them?

Truth

Did I make decisions based on facts?

Justice

Did I treat people fairly?

Humility

Where did pride appear?

Correction

What must I change tomorrow?

THE "RED LIGHT" SYSTEM

Establish circumstances in which you **do not make major leadership decisions immediately**.

RED LIGHT

Do not make major decisions when experiencing:

Rage
Fear

Humiliation
Extreme fatigue
Ego injury
Financial temptation
Sexual temptation
Desire for revenge

Instead:

STOP → PRAY → WAIT → CONSULT → VERIFY → DECIDE

This single discipline can prevent enormous leadership failures.

THE 5 QUESTIONS BEFORE EXERCISING AUTHORITY

Before giving an order, disciplining someone, terminating someone, spending significant resources, confronting a person, or making a major organizational decision, ask:

1. Is it TRUE?

What evidence do I have?

2. Is it JUST?

Am I treating the person fairly?

3. Is it NECESSARY?

Does this action actually need to occur?

4. Is it LOVING?

Am I seeking the person's genuine good rather than revenge?

5. Is it ACCOUNTABLE?

Would I be comfortable explaining this decision to God, my governing board, competent advisors, and the people affected by it?

If the answer to one of these is **no**, pause.

THE LEADER'S SPIRITUAL CHAIN OF COMMAND

Your model can ultimately be expressed as:

GOD
↓
TRUTH
↓
CONSCIENCE
↓
CHARACTER
↓
RESPONSIBILITY
↓
AUTHORITY
↓
SERVICE
↓
PROTECTION
↓
INFLUENCE

Notice that **influence comes last**.

That is intentional.

You don't begin with:

“How can I influence people?”

You begin with:

“How can I become trustworthy enough to responsibly exercise whatever influence has been entrusted to me?”

THE 30-DAY SELF-GOVERNMENT CHALLENGE

For practical implementation, keep a journal for 30 days.

Every day record:

1. What tested my spirit today?

2. How did I initially want to respond?

3. What did I actually do?

4. Did I act from fear, pride, anger, love, truth, or wisdom?

5. Did I protect or control?

6. Did I serve or seek recognition?

7. What must I correct tomorrow?

At the end of 30 days, identify your three greatest recurring weaknesses.

For example:

Weakness #1 — Anger
Weakness #2 — Need for control
Weakness #3 — Defensive reaction to criticism

Then develop specific disciplines against each.

THE ULTIMATE LEADERSHIP TEST

At the end of the day, don't ask merely:

“How many people did I influence?”

Ask:

“Did my presence make people safer, wiser, stronger, freer, more truthful, more dignified, and closer to what is good?”

And ask an even deeper question:

“If the people I lead became exactly like me, would I be comfortable with what I have reproduced?”

That question exposes the quality of leadership.

The complete model

RULE YOUR SPIRIT
↓
GUARD YOUR HEART
↓
DISCIPLINE YOUR MIND
↓
GOVERN YOUR EMOTIONS
↓
CONTROL YOUR TONGUE
↓
MASTER YOUR DESIRES
↓
DISCIPLINE YOUR HABITS
↓
ESTABLISH ACCOUNTABILITY
↓
PROTECT YOUR FAMILY
↓

SERVE YOUR ORGANIZATION
↓
PROTECT HUMAN DIGNITY
↓
SERVE YOUR COMMUNITY
↓
ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE
↓
INFLUENCE NATIONS THROUGH TRUTH, SERVICE, AND INSTITUTION-BUILDING

The governing principle

“Before I seek authority over a territory, I must permit God to establish government within me. Before I seek to protect others, I must become disciplined enough not to endanger them through my own pride, anger, fear, ambition, or uncontrolled desires. My authority is stewardship; my people are not possessions; my leadership is service; and my ultimate accountability is to God.”

E