

IF YOU WANT TO LEAD 7/26/99

The need for godly leadership in the Lord's church today is an issue which never goes away. Every generation of leaders must be constantly maturing and training others to take their place. Each new generation must be brought to the place of recognizing their own need for change and development if they would desire the rich responsibility of serving the flock of God. Some of the most tragic errors I've seen in the body of Christ have come about when both generations have ignored their God given responsibility to do these things.

When a generation of leadership leads in such a way that all decisions and responsibilities are carried on their own shoulders and no younger leaders are developed then they are setting up the church for future problems. There will come a time when the church will feel pressured to appoint leaders and that is when men unqualified by the Holy Spirit's standards will try and fill the breach. More problems are right around the corner. God doesn't bless His competition. He will never give His blessings to those who are not following His will. Disobedience has no right to expect the same blessing as obedience.

Likewise, when a man thinks he has earned the right to lead by reason of His age instead of His spirituality then problems are right outside the door. One who doesn't order his life and become "God's Man" first and foremost has no business trying to lead others to change. One who is set on defending his attitude and actions instead of improving them is in no position to help anyone else improve. God's leader is a servant (Mt. 20:28; Jn. 13:16), and the humility of a servant is not something that one finds in the "natural born" leader, the crowd pleaser, or the party-guy. It is a trait that must be developed.

DISCIPLESHIP JOURNAL recently carried a small article about finding and growing new leaders that I believe was quite insightful. It gave some common sense ideas on both who to look for, and who to become, depending on your perspective. Consider the following excerpt...

"Resist the tendency to choose the 'natural-born' leaders over the less obvious ones. Natural-born leaders are sometimes too controlling to be effective..., while the quiet person may have the gentle spirit and sense of pacing that are essential. Set aside leadership stereotypes and look instead for

- 1) ***The conscientious.*** *Who is always on time? Who is always prepared? This person is committed and takes the group seriously;*
- 2) ***The sincere.*** *Who demonstrates the ability to apply spiritual lessons to their own life? They will be able to lead others to do the same.*
- 3) ***The transparent.*** *Does your potential leader demonstrate a willingness to share openly and honestly?*

4) ***The receptive.*** *A leader must let others speak. Who demonstrates good listening skills?*

5) ***The respected.*** *Look for the person that others seek out for advice and counsel.*

Every one of the above would fall into the Spirit's list of qualifications for leadership (1 Tim. 3:2-13; 4:12; Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Pet. 5:3). And yet, how often are these very traits overlooked and/or ignored.

Brethren, there have been far too many congregations that ignored the Spirit's qualifications for leaders and simply looked for gray hair and baptized children. These groups have been surprised when later these men without the "character" of leadership became the source of contention and quarrels. Likewise, there have been numbers of men who expected to be trusted with the service of leadership who were sorely disappointed when they were not chosen, because they had not been willing to change themselves over the years into effective leaders.

If you want to lead, there are things people will and should be watching for. Are they part of your character? If not, are you working on changing yourself? If you're choosing leaders, ignore any of these at your own peril and that of the congregation that submits to such unqualified leadership.

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