



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

THE NEED FOR STRONG LEADERS

Dave Rogers

As an Ethiopian nobleman read from Isaiah 53 in Acts 8:28-30 he was accosted by Philip, who asked a simple question; *Do you understand what you are reading?* The nobleman’s reply speaks volumes in verse 31; *How can I, except some man should guide me?*

The word “leader” appears only six times in our KJV bibles (five times in the old testament;¹ only once in the new testament²) and these contexts are evenly divided between praiseworthy and condemnatory settings. Going back to the Ethiopian treasurer, the word he used – *guide* – stems from the same root as our Master’s reference to “blind leaders of the blind” in Matthew 15 (*hodegeo/hodegos*) where it refers to a leader or teacher of the ignorant or unexperienced. The nobleman recognized something many twenty-first century denizens overlook; he needed help to understand God’s will for his life!

In itself, the word “leader” expresses a neutral concept. It speaks to the relationship between one who guides or directs others, but it tells nothing about the leader’s character. “Strong” leadership can be a great blessing OR an abominable curse among God’s people, as the word strong likewise offers only a relative measure of the leader’s impact on those he leads. It tells nothing of the direction or the moral qualities of the leader. A “strong” leader may direct others toward salvation or away from God altogether.

In the context of this issue of The Christian Worker a “leader” is someone tasked with the responsibility to

guide or direct others within a very distinctly-defined moral horizon. God established the boundaries of morality for all of humanity, and in this setting a “strong” leader must be someone who not only instructs others in the path the Lord prescribed, but also models the qualities of that path in his or her own daily life.

A leader may exert a powerful influence in the lives of others, but leadership is not domination. Although many people in this new century don’t seem to realize that there is a difference between leading and dominating, the goal of domination is mastery and control of others (even against their wills), by force if

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1 1 Chron. 12:27 & 13:1; 2 Chron. 32:21; Isaiah 9:16 & 55:4

2 Matthew 15:4

Editor

Cody Westbrook



"We are workers together with Him..." (2 Cor. 6:1)

THE CHURCH AND ITS LEADERS

God's wisdom is vividly seen in the organization of the church. Man-made religious bodies are organized in a variety of ways, but each one has an organizational structure that is designed by men and run by men. Not so with the church of Christ. The church is a divine institution of which Christ is head (Col. 1:18; Eph. 1:22). It is composed of numerous individual congregations, which operate autonomously under the Headship of the Savior. God knew, however, that the organizational structure of the church required that there be men who occupy positions of leadership in local congregations, to carry out His work in a proper and organized way. Thus, God created the offices of elder and deacon (Phil. 1:1).

First Timothy chapter one deals with the church and its doctrine. Chapter two deals with the church and its worship. In chapter three we learn about the church and its leaders. The content of the chapter that deals with leadership outlines neatly into two parts: the qualifications of elders (vss. 1-7) and the qualifications of deacons (vss. 8-13). More detailed consideration of these two sections appears in other articles in this Christian Worker. For our purposes, let us consider some observations by way of overview.

Consider the identity of elders and deacons. There are six terms in the New Testament that are used synonymously in reference to the same office—Elder, Presbyter, Pastor, Shepherd, Bishop, and Overseer. These terms refer to a plurality of men who oversee a local congregation. They are charged with feeding the flock (Acts 20:28), overseeing, or superintending, the congregation (Heb. 13:17), and protecting the sheep (Titus 1:9-11). This they do, not according to their own will, but under the Headship of Christ, who is the "Chief Shepherd" (1 Pet. 5:4). Likewise, the term

"deacon" refers a servant. Deacons are "special servants" who work under the elders and serve to meet specific needs so that God's work can carry on. Consider the principle set forth in Acts 6:2 as an illustration.

The New Testament specifies elders and deacons as men who serve in very special capacities, but not just any man may fulfill those roles. Only men who meet the qualification standard set by God may serve as elders and deacons. These qualifications are listed in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 and fall into three general categories. First, there are personal qualifications. An elder must desire the office. He must be blameless, temperate, and sober-minded. He must be characterized as one of good behavior, who practices hospitality and is not given to wine, violence, or greed. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome. He must not be covetous and he must have a good testimony, or, honorable reputation. Deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, and not greedy. Second, there are family qualifications. Elders and deacons must both be married men who rule their homes well. Third, there are church qualifications. An elder cannot be a novice and he must be able to teach, while a deacon must have doctrinal integrity and a proven faithfulness and work ethic. These qualifications, while lofty, are not unattainable, and they are certainly not optional.

It would be impossible to list the number of congregations that have been negatively impacted by unqualified men serving as elders and deacons. In every aspect, from the qualifications to serve to the manner in which service is carried out, the church must insist that God's instructions on leadership be taken seriously. Every man should carefully consider the list of qualifications and strive to meet them in his own life. Every elder and deacon should

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regularly think about how God has legislated their office to be sure that they are in step with His will. Every congregation should emphasize developing and training future generations of leaders. And every Christian should make it their business to respect, pray for, and build up godly leaders. God's wisdom is clearly seen in the organizational structure of the church. It is a perfect design, and when we respect and follow His guidelines, the church and her leaders will thrive, as He desires. May God help us to that end.

CW



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The Qualifications of Elders

Rob L. Whitacre

The scripture clearly teaches that a congregation is immature (not fully organized) if it does not have an eldership (Tit. 1:5), but this does not mean it is unscriptural. An unscriptural congregation would be one that either rejects an eldership to maintain their own organizational structure, or places unqualified men into the eldership and thus ignores the divine precepts. In both I Timothy 3 and Titus 1, Paul sets forth an inspired recipe for forming the office of the eldership. We do not have the space in this short article to cover all the qualifications, but we will mention and expound upon a few.

“This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work” (I Tim. 3:1). It is easy to read past this short introduction to the eldership, but it contains an important word. “Desire”

is translated from two different Greek words that mean “to stretch oneself out” and “to have one’s heart set upon.” A man must have his heart set on the eldership with the willingness to stretch himself out to meet its demands. A man should never be constrained to serve but should do so willingly (I Pet. 5:2).

Key to all the qualifications is the word “blameless.” It is listed first in each list (I Tim. 3:1; Tit. 1:6). The Greek word for “blameless” is the source of our English word “epilepsy.” It literally means “to seize up.” It means that “no charge can be sustained against the man that would affect his character or reputation.” It does not mean that no charge can be made. A charge that does not have scriptural merit is overruled by God.

In both accounts an elder must be “*the husband of one wife*” (I Tim. 3:2; Tit. 1:6). This means an elder must be a man, a husband, and of one woman. The Greek construction literally says, “a one woman man.” An elder cannot be a polygamist or a bigamist. Notice that a number is given with a wife but not children! The wife serves an important role as his helpmeet; therefore her prescience is a requirement for him to serve. What if he has been scripturally divorced and remarried? If God recognizes the marriage and recognizes the husband/wife relationship, then so must we.

In addition to being a husband, an elder must also be father. In both lists the word “children” is used (I Tim. 3:4; Tit. 1:6). How many children must a man have to qualify? Although the term children can include more than one, it does not necessitate it. Sarah gave her children suck, but she only had Isaac (Gen. 21:7). In 1 Timothy 5:4, 10 and Titus 2:4, Paul used the word to describe one or more. Consider the problem that would exist if the Lord used the term child instead of children. We would have men argue against a man who had more than one. In addition, although it is true that a father who has two children has more experience than a father who has one, the number of children does not disqualify him.

An elder must not only be a father, but also his children must be “faithful.” There are four personal pronouns used in I Timothy 3:4-5; “his, own, and his own (2).” When children leave father and mother they make their own home (Gen. 2:24). How much authority would a father have over the home of his daughter’s husband? To make a man accountable for things out of his control is to place a weight upon him that God never intended. It is just as sinful to take

away from God's word as to add to it. If children fall away from the faith after leaving home, it does not always make a man unqualified. Would God Himself be qualified, held accountable, or still be blameless because Adam and Eve fell away? Would God be qualified, held accountable, or still be blameless because Israel had fallen away (Isa. 1:2)? Would a Father be qualified, held accountable, or still be blameless if his son fell away (Eze. 18:5-6,20)? Was Mary accountable, or still blameless even though her children did not believe in Jesus (John 7:5)?

It is important to remember that these are qualifications and not disqualifications. We need to have the mindset to qualify brethren to serve in this position. We must be very careful not to place any burden upon a man that God has not authored. Binding where God has not bound can actually keep good men from leading the church in a time when such leadership is lacking and desperately needed.

CW

THE QUALIFICATIONS OF DEACONS

Mel Hutzler

Far from being a minor office, the deaconship is a work that will make or break a congregation. Deacons, like elders, belong to the structure of the local congregation. The word deacon means "servant, minister." Every Christian is a servant. However, the text speaks of those who "use the office of a deacon"; certain qualifications are given for those who serve. The church at Philippi consisted of elders (bishops), deacons, and saints (Phil. 1:1).

I. The Work of Deacons

Good deacons work hard. The seven men in Jerusalem who were appointed to look after the needs of certain widows are generally regarded as men serving as deacons (Acts 6:1-6). The word "deacon" is not applied to them, but in v. 2 the Greek word *diakoneo* (translated "serve") is used with reference to their work. Their work was seeing that certain widows' needs were met; their work was spoken of as "to serve tables." Their service would enable the apostles and elders to continue teaching the word of God without interruption (v. 2). From this, it has been

concluded that deacons execute the material matters of the congregation under the authority of the elders. Every congregation does have numerous physical needs, in addition to looking after the needy, continual building maintenance, equipment and supplies, ushers, treasury, etc. The fact that their work frees the elders and preachers for more time in "the ministry of the word" contributes to the saving of others. Also, the statement "will purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (2:13) has reference to their standing in the Lord, rather than to their exaltation and promotion among men.

II. The Qualifications of Deacons

A deacon is to be a man of good reputation and respected. Verse 8 begins with the word "likewise" which means, just as elders are to be men with certain qualities and abilities, the same is true with deacons.

1. Grave (*Semnous*): "august, venerable, reverend; to be venerated for character, honorable" (Thayer). English Translation: "grave, serious, honorable, serious demeanor, dignified." Webster: "sedate, dignified, solemn vs. frivolous, trivial, light." This quality is, of course, relative.
2. Not doubled-tongued (Gk. *Me dilogous*): me, "never at any time"; *dilogous*—"double in speech, saying one thing to one, another with another" (Thayer). English translation: "not a tale-bearer; straight forward man; not deceitful in speech; no gossip; sincere in their talk."
3. Not given to much wine (Gk. *me oino polio prosechontas*): me, "not, never at any time"; *oino*, "wine"; *polio*, "abundant, plenteous, much"; *prosechontas*, "given, addicted to." Literally, "not addicted to much wine, not under the influence of strong wine."
4. Not greedy of filthy lucre (Gk: *me aischrokerdas*): me, "never at any time"; *aischrokerdas*, "eager for base gain; sordid." Other English translations: "no lover of money; not addicted to dishonest gain."
5. Hold mystery of the faith in a pure conscience: "stability in that which was once for all delivered to the saints (Jude 3), hold this with a clear conscience." Three things are involved; (1) a pure conscience, (2) centered in the faith, (3) continually hold through life.
6. Blameless. Two different Greek words are translated blameless. In 1 Tim. 3:2 the word *anepilamptōn* is used, which means "one against whom no evil charge can be sustained," while in Titus 1:6 the word *anegklatos* is used, meaning "not open to accusation, blameless." English translations: "blameless, without reproach; irreproachable;

live so no charge of guilt can be proved against.”

III. The Family Qualifications of Deacons

These and other qualities have been tried, tested, and strengthened in his experiences as head of the house. 1. Husband of one wife. A scripturally married man is to be selected. According to v. 11, wives also have a responsibility. 2. Rule children/house well. “Rule,” in the Greek, means “stand before, attend to.” Children: “off spring-custody.” House: “wife and children.” Well: “according to God’s will.” He is properly standing before and managing his family. The matter of how long is not suggested. If a man has the character, wisdom, and ability to do the work of a deacon, and is properly standing before and managing a family, he is in a position to serve well as a deacon and should be appointed. 3. Proved. Verse 10 says, “Let these also (as with elders) first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon.” The word “first,” in the Greek, is *proton* and means “at the first” or before they serve in the office of a deacon. The word “prove” means “to test, examine, prove, scrutinize.” There are numerous ways of doing this. Time is one way, but this is relative and no one has the right to set a certain time limit. We will have more dynamic, growing churches as soon as we have more qualified deacons.

CW

THE PILLAR AND GROUND OF TRUTH

Justin Guess

Volumes have been written about the “one true church” and its nature. There is a beautiful concept seen throughout the New Testament that obedient believers are placed into Christ (Acts 2:47; Gal. 3:27) and belong to Him (Eph. 1:22). When the church is considered in Scripture, it is seen as the “church universal” (Eph. 4:4) and the “local church” (Eph. 1:1-2). The “universal church” refers to the global collection of the saved. The “local church” refers to the local collection of the saved in an area, community, or city. It is the responsibility of the local church to assemble together and get to work (Tit. 2:14). In 1 Timothy 3:15, Paul presents two images of the local church and its nature.

The first image is the “household of God”. The obedient believer is a part of the family or household of God (John 1:12-13). The household of God is another name for the church (Gal. 6:10; Eph. 2:19). Paul’s letter to Timothy is a book of instruction of how one should act as a member of God’s family. Chapters 4 through 6 contain various instructions to the church on how to preach and practice the truth of the gospel. If the church does not conduct itself appropriately, then the world will not be able to know that we belong to the household of God (John 13:35).

The second image of the church, is the “pillar and ground of truth”. This description speaks of the spiritual architecture of the church. The “pillar” is a support structure, while the “ground” is the foundation. The very foundation of the church is Jesus and His saving message (Luke 19:10). A message that was spoken by the prophets, presented by Jesus, and preached by the apostles. That message of truth is the foundation which the church is able to stand upon while performing good works (Eph. 2:10, 19-20). The church builds the walls of the spiritual house of God (Eph. 2:21-22). The pillar holds something up. It is a load bearing post. The church is the pillar, or the support for the message of truth. While the body of Christ is grounded in the truth, the church also lifts it up to the world. It is the responsibility of the saved to preserve, proclaim, and practice the truth.

The local congregations of the Lord’s people are vital to showing a lost world the way to salvation. The members of the church stand upon the truth of the

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Scriptures and hold it by their words and conduct. The body of Christ is only as strong as its weakest member. The unfaithful member of the body is weakening and harming the very foundation of God's truth in the world. Therefore, it is our individual responsibility to grow in knowledge (2 Pet. 3:18) and strength (Eph. 6:10) to help the efforts Christ in our communities and beyond.

And whatever you do in word or deed, do all in the name of the Lord Jesus, giving thanks to God the Father through Him. - Colossians 3:17

CW

THE MYSTERY OF GODLINESS

Jon McCormack

In the first epistle to Timothy Paul instructs on the magnitude of the mystery of godliness. The Spirit confirms,

And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the Spirit, seen of angels, preached unto the Gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory (1 Tim. 3:16).

Paul includes this important truth at the end of his instruction on leaders in the Lord's church. An intelligent conclusion demands that we see the requirement of church leaders to have a firm grasp on the mystery of godliness. In their qualifications Paul demands that deacons have the ability to hold, "the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1 Tim. 3:9). This mystery is not referring to something that cannot be understood, but rather refers to something once concealed but has now been made known. It is a direct reference to the revelation of God's scheme of redemption. It is the revealing of God's plan to save man with the blood of Calvary's Lamb. Give attention to each aspect of this mystery that Paul reveals. Likewise, give consideration to how each aspect of this revealed mystery impacts our salvation.

God Was Manifest in the Flesh

The first chapter of John is an encouragement for every child of God. Our God, seeing us in the bondage of sin, continued His plan that He had set

in motion before the very foundations of the Earth (Tit. 1:2). John reveals, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God" (John 1:1). Later in the same chapter some of the most beautiful words ever penned are affirmed, "And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). For the salvation of mankind it was essential that the Creator (John 1:3) live like His creation. Without the Word becoming flesh He would have been unable to be in a situation where he was, "all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin" (Heb. 4:15).

Justified in the Spirit

Jesus was vindicated by the Spirit. While the Savior of the world hung on the cross, his enemies mocked Him. Some that walked by Him teased,

Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross (Matt. 27:40).

Others on that same day challenged,

He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him (Matt. 27:42).

Such was not absence of power for our Lord, but rather the abundance of humility. His vindication would come three days later with the angelic words, "He is not here: for he is risen" (Matt. 28:6). The Word confirms the Spirit's role in the raising of Jesus. Paul told the Roman Christians,

But if the Spirit of him that raised up Jesus from the dead dwell in you, he that raised up Christ from the dead shall also quicken your mortal bodies by his Spirit that dwelleth in you (Rom. 8:11).

Peter additionally confirms that Christ Jesus was, "put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit" (1 Pet. 3:18).

Seen of Angels

These ministers of heaven were frequently employed in the life of our Lord. A multitude of them sang praises at His birth (Luke 2:14). They ministered to the Christ after His temptation in the wilderness (Matt. 4:11) In the garden, He was only a stone's cast from His best friends and yet, because of their current immaturity, He felt alone. It was one of heaven's friendly faces that gave Him strength (Luke

22:43). It was an angel that announced the empty tomb (Luke 24:6) and an angel that questioned a weeping Mary at the same tomb (John 20:13).

Preached unto the Gentiles

How thankful this writer is to know that part of the mystery that has been made clear is that the Gospel of Christ is for the whole world. God affirms His love when He declared,

For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

In declaring His love He identifies the object of His love, the world. Human love is often narrow and focused while divine love goes out to the whole world.

Believed on in the World

The same world that God loves is filled with individuals that have reciprocated that love with their obedient faith (John 14:15). While the majority of the world rejects this great mystery of godliness (Matt. 7:13-14), there are many that have answered that Gospel call. History is filled with faithful men and women who, in hearing God’s word (Rom. 10:17), produced a saving faith (Jas. 2:26).

Received Up into Glory

Forty days after the magnificent resurrection of our Lord we learn that He “was parted from them, and carried up into heaven” (Luke 24:51). It was at this time that Christ, His suffering done, took His place “on the right hand of God” (Col. 3:1). The King had humbled Himself in service to the Father and as such has received what was due to Him,

Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth; And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father (Phil. 2:9-11).

The mystery of godliness is no longer obscured but fully realized and viewable to every student of the Word. Praise God for Jesus Christ!

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necessary. In contrast, the leader’s goal is to persuade others of the superior value of his direction, by means of both teaching and through his own example.

Leadership is necessary because sin is present in our world, and the echoing words of Judges 17:6 and 21:25 emphasize just how profoundly human society is affected by the absence of godly leaders! Our society is moving steadily toward the belief that each person is justified in doing what is “right” in their own eyes: As we drift away from God and righteous living, the need for leaders who can and will direct people back to His righteous path becomes ever more urgent. Merely shaking our heads in disgust and grumbling about how our nation, our communities, and even the church have “changed” will not move people away from sin and condemnation. Like the noble eunuch, our neighbors, friends, coworkers and even our own families and congregational members need guidance in “the good way” of Jeremiah 6:16. Every Christian bears the responsibility to think, speak, and act as a “light” in our sin-darkened world (Matt. 5:16).

Though we sometimes describe people as “born” leaders, the truth is that strong leaders *learn* their leadership abilities. Leading requires the leader to be “out in front,” actually walking the path he urges others to follow (note the warning of Matthew 23:2-3), and Peter cautions those who serve as shepherds to remember that they are examples to those who follow, not lords over them (1 Pet. 5:3). Leading others does not mean “bossing” them, but instructing and motivating them to appreciate the value of choosing God’s way. Effective leaders are focused on the task of guiding others to know the Lord (consider Paul’s words in 1 Thessalonians 2:9); like the men of Issachar in David’s day, they are aware of and alert to the challenges of their surroundings (1 Chron. 12:32) as well as dangers that threaten the safety of those they guide (e.g., Tit. 1:9). A strong leader not only knows the goal (Heb. 12:2), but the path that will lead to it safely; like the Good Shepherd, a strong leader cares for those who follow (cf. Heb. 4:15) and seeks their benefit and eternal welfare with determination and conviction.



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