

Qualifications for Leadership

by Keith Malcomson

The sermon emphasizes the importance of character, specifically Christ-likeness, as the great mark of New Testament leadership.

Scripture: Titus 1:5

Topics: "Church Leadership", "Christian Character"

Description

Keith Malcomson emphasizes the importance of character in New Testament leadership, defining Christian character as Christ-likeness. He delves into the qualifications for local church leaders, focusing on the essential qualities that make them suitable for leadership, such as being blameless, faithful in marriage, abstaining from wine, and having the ability to teach and correct. Malcomson highlights the significance of ruling one's own house well, being tested and proven before assuming leadership roles, and maintaining a good reputation among both believers and unbelievers.

Transcript

The great mark of New Testament leadership is that of character. Christian character can best be defined as Christ-likeness. When charisma, gifting, ability and personality are given first place then problems begin. When we speak of qualifications for leadership we speak of those qualities in a person's life which make them fit, suitable or eligible for leadership. Not long before Paul's departure to his eternal reward he writes to two young men, Timothy and Titus, whom he had trained.

To both he lays out qualifications for local church leaders which he calls bishops and elders, which are one and the same office (Tit.1:5-7; I Tim.3:1-2; Acts 20:17, 28). Although the two lists of qualifications are slightly different they are basically the same. Paul begins with: "If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work" (3:1). At first this may seem strange. Surely encouraging men to desire a leadership position could create problems? The word "desire" used here means to 'stretch oneself; reach out after; and to set his heart on.'

Paul is saying that if a man desires to be a bishop he will strive and stretch after qualifying himself in character. This is not a desire for position but a desire for character. If he does this then he is caught up in a safe, hard, long, but good effort. "Blameless" (I Tim.3:2; Tit.1:6-7). This quality comes first in both lists. This means to be un-rebukeable, un-accused, un-reprovable and above reproach. After investigation nothing can be laid to their charge. Of course we know there are false accusers, and those who will look for anything and accuse of anything, but this term means to be blameless before God and the Scriptures.

"The husband of one wife" (3:2, 12; Tit.1:6). Literally this means 'a one woman man.' This speaks of a man (if he is married) who has his heart and focus set on one woman. He is not a flirt or womaniser. The term "one" speaks of unity and oneness. It is possible for a man to be married to the same woman for life but to be disqualified by this statement because he is not "one" with her or he is too loose or casual with other women. This certainly does not exclude single men from ministry.

"Vigilant" (3:2). A literal translation of this is to 'abstain from wine' or 'be free from its influence.' This also is given as a quality for deacon's wives (v11) and older men in the church (Tit.2:2). This word is without question the foremost word in the New Testament requiring abstinence from alcoholic wine. "Sober" (3:2; Tit.1:8). This instruction is given as well for the older men and woman in the church (Tit.2:2 "temperate", v5 "discreet") as well as the young men (Tit.2:6 "sober minded").

This means to be 'sound or whole in mind.' To be self-controlled best defines this. This will be a man who is able to curb and control his feelings, thoughts and emotions. "Of good behaviour" (3:2). When believers look upon him what they see is a good or beautiful lifestyle. This word "good" means beautiful, virtues or valuable. This word is used by Christ in the parables for good ground, good fruit, good seed, good pearls and good fish. We could say that this man is beautifully ordered or that he conducts himself in a rare way.

"Given to hospitality" (3:2; Tit.1:8). This means 'a lover' or 'friend of guests or strangers' or 'to entertain strangers.' This is a quality expected of all the members of a church and to be given to other believers around them (Rom.12:13; I Pet.4:9) but is especially to be shown by leaders to those who come in from the outside. This does not mean to be unwise or foolish with who comes into your home. "Apt to teach" (3:2; II Tim.2:24-26; Tit.1:9-11). He must have the ability to teach.

He may not be greatly dynamic or profound but he must teach the people. Today there is a move away from leadership who preach the Word, preach Christ, and preach truth. Yet this is a fundamental thing for leaders. He must also have the ability to correct those who oppose and disobey the truth of the Word and stop the mouths of those who are coming into the homes of the local believers with false doctrines and fictional stories (Tit.1:9-14). "Not given to wine" (3:3; Tit.1:7).

"Given to wine" means to 'stay near wine.' It is one who stays in the vicinity of drink, who has a casual relaxed attitude around it and is at home in such an environment. This means much more than not getting drunk. A leader in the church realises the dangers and fruit of tarrying in an environment of social drinking and will avoid it. "No striker" (3:3; Tit.1:7). A striker is one who will break forth in a quarrelsome way to the point of coming to blows. This term literally means to flatten and pound.

He will strike and smite with the fist, he is violent. But an elder cannot be one who settles issues by using his fist or the threat of it to get his own way. Any man who could do this is certainly not ready for ministry. "Not greedy of filthy lucre" (3:3; Tit.1:7). "Not a lover of money." He is not to labour or desire to labour in the church for money. Now we know that Paul teaches a number of times that these local leaders ought to be provided for financially, but this qualification shows that the money is a practicality.

This is not a job or a means to make money. There is to be no shameful greed for money (I Thess.2:5; II Pet.2:3, 14). "But patient" (3:3; II Tim.2:24). This is the characteristic of being mild and gentle. Tit.3:2, "...but gentle, shewing all meekness unto all men." Gentleness of spirit is shown by meekness to those around you. "Not a brawler" (3:3; II Tim.2:4; Tit.3:2). You cannot be gentle and a brawler at the same time, these two are opposites. A brawler is one who disputes, quarrels, strives and argues.

II Tim.2:14, "Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers." "Not covetous" (3:3). The previous qualification concerning money had to do specifically with the ministry. This one has to do with his love of money in his own heart, lifestyle and home. To be covetous is broader than the desire for money. It can be for another man's wife, house, land, job or ministry (I Tim.6:5-10).

"One that ruleth well his own house" (3:4-5; 3:12; Tit.1:6). The order of your home will either prepare and qualify you or obstruct and disqualify you from leadership. The home is the basic building block of the church. The fruit of this will be seen in the children "...having faithful children (those who believe and trust in Christ) not accused of riot or unruly" (without rule). "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" This ability to rule his own home will enable him to take care of the church.

"Not a novice" (3:6). The literal meaning is 'newly planted' in the sense of a newly planted tree that is only beginning to grow. The root meaning is 'newly born' or 'youthful and fresh.' This speaks of a new convert, one who is not long saved. In v10 instruction is given concerning Deacons, to let them be "first proved" before making them such. This means to 'test, examine and scrutinise' in order to make sure they qualify. Now it goes on to tell us the reason, "lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil."

It is worth remembering that the mature Paul was given a thorn in the flesh to stop him getting proud over the revelations he was receiving (II Cor. 12:7). "He must have a good report of them which are without" (3:7). He must have a good testimony or report with the unsaved. The reason given is "lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil." If he loses his testimony and good standing through open sin or bad character he then has fallen into the devils trap who wants to discredit the church before the world.

"Not selfwilled" (Tit.1:7). That is, 'not self pleasing.' A self pleasing person is dominated by self interest, they are inconsiderate of others and they tend to assert their own will. Basically they are selfish with a high opinion of themselves. They think only of their own pleasure. It is interesting that one of the main thoughts in the Greek for the term self is a 'baffling wind.' But Christ's servants are not such, for them self must die, they are marked by self-denial. "Not soon angry" (1:7).

He is not prone to anger or aroused to anger quickly. A leader who gets angry easily and gets hot at the slightest thing will be feared rather than loved, despised rather than helped (Prov.14:17; 15:18; 16:32; Ecc.7:9). If a man cannot control his own self how can he be expected to control good order in the local church? This does not exclude righteous anger for Paul writes: "Be ye angry, and sin not" (Eph.4:26-27). There is a type of anger that contains no sin, but it comes slow and goes quickly.

James gives two helps to a slow anger: "be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:" (Jm.1:19-20). "A lover of good men" (1:8). He is a lover of good men or good things. One of the great marks of a man is who does he keep company with; the type of men he gathers around him reveals much. Paul gathered men like Luke, Timothy, Titus and Silas. Also there are strict commands in Scripture of who we should not keep company with "I have written unto you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such an one no not to eat." (I Cor.5:11).

But wider than just people is that we are a lover of all good things. "Just" (1:8). He is righteous or upright in all his dealings. He walks straight in all his affairs. What a blessing a righteous leader is for God will

answer his prayer for the sheep, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much" (Jm.5:16). "Holy" (1:8). They are hallowed, consecrated and sanctified. To qualify for ministry they must be separated from sin and consecrated to God. The word "consecrate" means to be set apart for a task or dedicated to a purpose.

They separate themselves from many secular and social distractions in order to tend the spiritual needs of the flock. "Temperate" (1:8). This means 'to stand, or stand against, with vigour, might and strength.' This shows that he will have a strength to stand against compromise and to stand firm when circumstances, people's opinions and even his own fears and thoughts rise up to try and move him off course in leading the church forward into the will of God. In an hour of so many winds of doctrine such an attitude and character is vital.

We see from this list the kind of man that the Lord looks for in the leadership of the local church. This is not a suggestion from the Lord, the opinion of an apostle or a high standard for a time of revival. This is the unchanging command of God, the charge of an apostle and the Divine wisdom of the Holy Spirit for all time. In whatever culture, generation, national region, denominational affiliation or doctrinal persuasion this is the biblical character and qualification for local leadership.

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