

With another major election coming up in November, someone suggested that we discuss the qualities of good leaders in a sermon. That is actually a great idea, so let's start with **good leaders** in the church -- **the elders**. What are some of the qualities God requires of those who lead His people?

Courage

It takes a **great deal of courage** to be a good leader. When God chose Joshua to replace Moses as Israel's next leader, we read that Joshua was told to *"be strong and of good courage"* (Deut. 31:7). These words were repeated again after the death of Moses, Joshua 1:6, 9, 18. *Do you think courage is important?!*

Some men are *paralyzed by fear* and refuse to do the right thing, to the harm of the Lord's people. One cannot be a servant of the Lord and *fear people*. There are times when elders have to *announce withdrawal* from unfaithful brethren. This takes courage. There are *judgments* that must be made which are in the best interest of the church as a whole, and some few may loudly complain and oppose them. It takes courage to stand your ground.

Conviction

Good leaders must be **knowledgeable** in the Word, and aware of the many false doctrines that are being perpetrated around them. Titus 1:9-11 well illustrates this truth. Paul wrote that elders are to be *"holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict. For there are many insubordinate, ... whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not..."* Elders, or bishops, are required to know the difference between truth and error; right and wrong, truth and judgment. Wisdom, experience, and knowledge in God's Word all play a part in the matter.

Understand brethren, that elders should try their best to get along with everyone, to make wise decisions that are acceptable to all in the church. But there are times when unpopular decisions have to be made by elders, and they need the courage of their convictions to stand their ground. Otherwise they are nothing more than **puppets** of a tyrannical elder or prominent member. This is not God's plan!

Compassionate

Good leaders **understand** the people they are leading. They do not drive the flock, but they lead -- by example, by kindness, and with an understanding heart. Jesus was the Perfect Leader, and He said *"I am gentle and lowly in heart"* (Matt. 11:29). Jesus was not weak, but powerful. He knew the truth, He led with courage and conviction, and He did so with *total selflessness*. Good leaders are not those who please themselves.

Jesus explained the difference between a *"good shepherd"* and a *"hireling"* in John. 10. The man who wants to be an elder in order to have his way, to please himself, and to *"call the shots"* is **NOT** a good leader! A good leader (1) knows his people and is known by them, vv. 4-5, 14; (2) benefits them, vv. 9-10; and (3) sacrifices himself, v. 11. The hireling is in it for himself, vv. 12-13.

Dictators, lording it over the flock (1 Pet. 5:3), arrogantly thinking that *they know best*, are one of the greatest problems the church may ever face. The apostle Paul warned elders about the danger of becoming like that (Acts 20:30). Old Testament kings were poor leaders who cared only for themselves (Ezek. 34:2ff). Good leaders care for what is truly best for their people, and take the time to learn what is needed and how best to meet that need.

Problem-Solving

Good leaders must resolve conflict, fix problems, and be wise in the advice which they give. In the business world, a survey of 2,700 employees discovered that many were unhappy in the work place because their supervisors failed to **understand** and **resolve...**

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