

## Chapter One

# FOUNDATIONS FOR LEADERSHIP (A study based on Christ's teachings)

Jesus is the founder of the Church, the builder of the Church, the life of the Church. If we desire to understand church government and its leadership, we must begin with Christ's teachings.

Surprisingly, Jesus has very little to say about the government of the Church. He announced its establishment (Matt. 16:18) "...I will build my church...", and He showed its role in disciplining the disobedient (Matt. 18:15-18). But we find no methods or regulations for organization or for establishing church offices. Why is this?

Jesus recognized and emphasized that which was more important: the spiritual preparation of twelve men for leadership. Impatiently, we want to get started. We ask, "How are we to do it?" Jesus says, "Wait, prepare your heart first." We want activity. Jesus wants attitude. We want to begin with Mark 16:15, "Go ye..." Jesus wants us to begin with Mark 1:17 (NAS) "Follow me..." It took 3 1/2 years of preparation to make twelve disciples into twelve apostles.

Jesus gives us the foundations for leadership. No one is ready for leadership or is prepared to understand church government who has not learned the lessons our Lord gave us in the gospels. When heart attitudes are right, then the Holy Spirit can guide us from Acts and the Epistles to the proper operation of the local church.

Here are some cardinal principles we find in the gospels:

## A. Leadership is Chosen by Jesus

### 1. Jesus, the “Head” is building His Church (Matt. 16:13-19).

We must jealously keep Him as the Head (Colossians 1 & 2). Much church organization is man-originated, world-copied, and human-directed. It may be numerically and outwardly successful, but it will ultimately succumb to “the gates of Hell,” that is, spiritual defeat. We must continually look to the Head for wisdom for every decision.

### 2. Jesus chooses the leaders (John 6:70; Mark 3:13-19; 6:7-13).

Church leaders are not to be chosen by a congregational vote or by human desire. Jesus chose the twelve and He chooses today.

How does Jesus call His servants to leadership today? Though the manner of the call varies, those whom the Lord calls will sense this call or desire in their spirit (I Tim 3:1).

There is a 3-step pattern in the leader’s call in the gospels that should be followed today. First, the call by the Lord (Matt. 4:18-22). Second, the 3 1/2 year wait while knowledge and anointing grow. Third, recognition and confirmation by others (Acts 1& 2). Note this pattern in David’s ministry: (1) Call (I Sam. 16:1-13); (2) Wait of 10 years more or less; (3) Recognition by leaders of Israel (II Sam. 2:4; 5:3). In Paul’s ministry: (1) Call (Acts 9); (2) A wait of 3 years plus 14 years (Gal. 1:18; 2:1); (3) Recognition (Acts 9:26-28 and 13:1-3).

In Matthew 23 Jesus describes the false leaders. In the New American Standard translation it says these men “...seated themselves in the chair of Moses...” There are many today who have seated themselves in Jesus’ seat. They have never passed through the period of waiting, and they have not submitted to other recognized ministers and waited for their approval. They set themselves up as pastors, teachers, and prophets. Even Jesus did not assume His position Himself (Hebr. 5:1-10). How much more should we wait until someone greater than we recognizes our ministry and gift.

### **3. Prospective leaders are to be “with Him” (Mark 3:14).**

The twelve stayed with Jesus. Today also, the one called to serve the Lord as a church leader must pass through a training period with Jesus. This is possible through study of the Word, prayer, and continual communion with Him. He learns the spiritual disciplines of listening, seeking, fasting and waiting. He increases in true knowledge of the Word and Holy Spirit anointing. Being “with Jesus” does not mean that one is not with other godly teachers. To the contrary, it is through sitting under the teaching of godly men we hear the voice of our Lord (Luke 10:16; John 13:20).

### **4. Leadership’s ability come from Christ (John 15:4-5).**

Without Jesus we can do nothing. Paul said his enabling was from the Lord (I Tim 1:12). Leadership is an extension of Jesus. It is a measure of the gift of Christ (Eph. 4:7-11). Leadership that does not reflect the Spirit of Christ and does not flow from a close relationship with Jesus is false leadership. Natural leadership ability is not the criterium, but rather Christ-likeness.

## **B. The Attitude of Church Leaders**

Here is where failures in leadership occur, such as: pride, selfishness, domination, fear of man, self-confidence, love of money, preoccupation with secondary matters. Here are four important areas that Jesus emphasized:

### **1. A servant spirit (Luke 22:24-27)**

The disciples were slow in learning this basic fact of spiritual leadership. In Mark 10:35-45, on the final trip to Jerusalem, the disciples were disputing, jealous, showing their pride. In the upper room they continued their carnal strivings. Jesus’ washing of the disciples’ feet was a final dramatic object lesson. It is a universal human desire to lord it over others, but it is not the way of leaders in the Church (II Cor. 1:24). Leadership must serve and maintain this spirit of serving. Paul said he was the “slave” of the Church (II Cor.4:5).

In two passages Jesus talks about those “put in charge” of other believers (Matt. 24:45 and Luke 12:41-48 NAS). The Lord called them stewards (house managers) in Luke. The point of both passages is that they will care for the needs of others, and those who mistreat their fellow servants and who feed themselves will be severely judged. Serving is the key to faithful stewardship in the house of the Lord (I Cor. 4:1, 2 NAS).

## 2. **Humility** (Matt. 23:12; 19:30; Luke 14:7-11; 18:14)

Humility includes the servant spirit, but it covers more. Humility means, among other things, able to take correction and reproof, able to work when your opinion has been ignored, and able to receive criticism without defending yourself. (See Moses’ example Numbers 12). It means associating with the lowly (Rom. 12:16 NAS), and considering others better than yourself (Phil. 2:3). Christ provides us with the greatest example of humility (Phil. 2:1-8). He associated with the lowest of mankind and never sought out the rich rulers or the influential.

## 3. **Faithfulness in three areas** (Luke 16:10-12)

### a. Faithfulness in **little things**, verse 10.

If one cannot do small, insignificant jobs, one will not do greater jobs. Faithfulness in menial tasks must precede being entrusted with more responsible tasks (Matt. 25:21, 23).

### b. Faithfulness in **money**, verse 11.

Lack of fidelity in financial matters disqualifies one from the spiritual riches (Luke 19:11-26; Matt. 25:14-30).

Here are some questions to ask yourself:

- Am I possessed of the love of money?
- Am I motivated by greed?
- Am I dishonest with finances?
- Am I careless with funds, accounts, checking accounts?
- Am I gullible about easy-money schemes?
- Do I buy non-essential, non-emergency items on credit?
- Do I have many debts?

Our financial house must be in order if we would be leaders in the Church.

c. Faithfulness in **somebody else's work**, verse 12.

Some would-be leaders of the Church never learn to be submitted to the authority of others. Submission to other older, more mature men is cardinal if we expect to have an authority of our own. The Centurion of Matthew 8:5-13 understood this principle. Spiritual authority, which is the only authority of the church leader, flows from being submitted to others. Being submitted means able to take instruction and correction. It means being able to support someone else's vision and willing to wait for your own vision to be realized.

4. **An undivided love for Jesus** (Luke 16:13)

In John 21:15-17 Jesus related love for Himself to the work of shepherding the flock. Our love, that is, what our heart is set upon, must be exclusively fixed on Jesus. Failures occur when false loves captivate the church leader's interest or affection. Some false loves are: **Money** (Luke 16:13; I Tim. 6:9, 10); **Praise of man** (John 5:41-44; 12:42, 43). Compare Proverbs 29:25 "the fear of man"; Love **of the present world**, Demas (II Tim. 4:10); **Illicit sex** (Prov. 6:32, 33).

Love is man's highest motivation. It is the only worthy motive for serving the Church. Certainly it is not obligation (I Peter 5:2). As we love Him we will love people (John 13:34, 35). In fact, without an undivided love for Christ we cannot serve our Lord or our fellow believers.

**Compassion**, an expression of love to the unfortunate, was a main characteristic of Jesus (Matt. 9:36; 14:14; 15:32; 20:34). The Lord's workers must have His compassion.