

“Leadership is the art and science of inspiring others to reach their full potential in the pursuit of a common vision”

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Today Scripture Reference



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The TCL E-Leadership Resource Getting Good Church Leaders?

1 Timothy 3:1-7 NIV

1Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer,[a] he desires a noble task. 2Now the overseer must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. 4He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. 5(If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) 6He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. 7He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap.

How do you choose your church leaders? What do you expect of the leaders in your church? In Paul letter to Timothy, he certainly lays out the foundational character traits that God requires of the holders of the office of elder and deacon. It is a common list of Christian character and life qualifications. You could look at the list in two ways. At first glance the bar might even look a bit low, given that these traits are really what every Christian should be striving for. Given that perspective, the bar could be the same for all believers in the church, thus producing a long list of qualified people in every church.

On the other hand, the fact that Paul identified and listed them emphasizes the need for a solid pattern of righteousness the life of an elder or deacon. Paul knew we could not judge a person's heart, but we could see evidence of a qualified leader through the life they live. This almost seems contradictory as most church leaders will admit that in the depths of their spirit, even the most righteous elder or deacon feels they fall short. Why? Even the most righteous elder or deacon knows they are a sinner.

I have served as elder now in two churches. The first one was in need of an elder, and I accepted the challenge as from the Lord. There was no self or public evaluation, no review, and no time period of testing. I was asked, I was placed on the slate, and I was voted in. When I was asked to consider serving as elder in the church I serve in now it was much different. The process was like this:

I was asked to consider serving after someone nominated me. When I answered yes to the above, they gave me a questionnaire comprised of about two dozen questions to answer. The questions were very detailed as to my walk with God, my history, my giving to the church, and my work in shepherding people and so on. My wife was contacted and asked questions. I was given a written theological exam that had to be completed in one hour, no references and no "study Bibles". I was then interviewed for one hour by the entire pastoral staff along with other lay leaders. Then my name was presented to the congregation for time of testing. Only after this multi month process was I voted on by the congregation.

I need to be honest with you. I almost declined finishing the process because I thought the process was "over the top". After all, I participated in three Pastoral ordination counsels myself and I did not see any difference in the bar that was set for me as an elder and the bar we set for pastors. For sometime after becoming an elder, I even strategized within myself as to when I would take the initiative in introducing a change in the process.

The day of changing the process never came. While we as elders continue to fine tune how this process is implemented, the list I have above is intact. And now, years later I embrace the process. I embrace it because of the group of men that I serve with. The importance of character is revealed when you, as a leader, wrestle with other fellow leaders over church matters, large and small. Your personal interests, your value of money, your weaknesses, your love for God, your love of people ... all will be revealed, especially inside the board room.

Paul raised the bar not only to appoint good people, but to appoint people who can stand the tests of each other, thus maintaining unity in the church.

Some would criticized these kinds of processes by saying such a process is designed to control, and is used to "weed in" friends of leadership. Friends do not believe this lie. For even if it were true, the result of passing such leadership tests will ultimately produce leaders who, like Paul, labor for Christ and His church, not man.

Does your church elders/leaders have a "bar exam"? .. Did you pass it? ... Can you?