

# Bible Witness



Articles Inside: The Offices of Pastors, Elders & Deacons  
Appointment of New Leaders  
Leaders and Prayer Life  
Leaders and Servanthood  
Labouring Together  
Church Leaders' Pitfalls  
Extraordinary Services of God's Servants  
Bible Trivia - Genesis 32 & 33



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## CONTENTS

### Biblical Leadership

- 3** The Offices of Pastors, Elders & Deacons
- 6** Appointment of New Leaders
- 9** Leaders and Prayer Life
- 12** Leaders and Servanthood
- 14** Labouring Together
- 16** The Call to Church Leadership
- 18** Church Leaders' Pitfalls
- 22** Extraordinary Services of God's Servants

### Children's Page

- 23** Bible Trivia - Genesis 32 & 33

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# THE OFFICES OF PASTORS, ELDERS & DEACONS

QUEK SUAN YEW

With the completion of the Scriptures, the ministries of the apostles and prophets, as we know them from Scriptures, came to an end. There is no such thing as a restoration of these two God-given ministries as the Charismatics have proposed. Their proposals are unscriptural. What ministries we have today to nurture and protect the church are only pastors, elders and deacons.

**Pastors** are shepherds of the flock. In the New Testament, the word for pastor is “*poimen*” and it means “a shepherd”. In the Old Testament, the Hebrew word is “*ra’ah*” which also means “shepherd”. Their role includes: the

feeding, protection, nurture, and comfort of the flock under their care. Psalm 23 describes the function of the pastor quite thoroughly. The pastor is also an elder but an elder is not a pastor. Both these ministries are for life as the requirements of an elder and pastor describe both the office as well as the character of the person.

Psalm 23 was written by David, the shepherd. He looked after his father’s sheep when he was a boy. He knew much about the role of a shepherd experientially. The shepherd’s role is to ensure that the flock lacks nothing. The flock has a deep sense of trust and calm when it has a shepherd. It provides a calming effect to the flock when there is a shepherd within calling distance. The flock may not call the shepherd all the time but they need to know that he is there when they need him. This calming effect sums up the importance of the need for a local pastor in every local church.

- **The pastor feeds the flock** – “He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.” The pastor diligently studies the Word of God and ensures that the flock is given the milk and meat, which is God’s holy and perfect Word. He constantly feeds the flock.
- **The pastor points the flock to Christ** – “He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in



the paths of righteousness for his name's sake." If need be, the pastor will rebuke and exhort from God's Word to point the flock back to Christ when they go astray. His duty is to redirect them back to the path of righteousness. He does not point people to himself. He directs them to God's perfect Word and exalts Christ.

- **The pastor comforts the flock through Christ** – "Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The flock finds strength and security when the pastor teaches the Word of God faithfully. The pastor will comfort the flock when they are down or distressed or confused, using the Word of God.
- **The pastor protects the flock** – "Thou preparent a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over." The pastor will give his life for the flock. He is prepared to do anything according to Scriptures to ensure that the flock is safe. His safety is always second place to that of God's flock.
- **The pastor will never desert the flock** – "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever." The pastor will be available for the flock as long as he lives. He will not talk about his salary or demand how many days' leave he should have annually. He will not sell out God's flock for another. He is faithful to the high calling assigned to him by his Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ.

On the other hand, the pastor who works for money is a hireling. He will run away and

leave the sheep to the wolves. He will fleece the flock of their wealth and abuse their trust in him. He betrays them and seeks to protect his own skin. The hireling is evil, not stupid. He will be sweet with his words and creep into the homes of "silly women". These silly women will in turn lead their even sillier husbands into paths of sin and debauchery. He has no fear of God in his heart and would not blink an eyelid to hurt the Lord's anointed. God's ministry, to these hirelings, is nothing but an opportunity to make some money. The congregation is merely a fertile ground for him to ply his trade of diabolic and spin his tales of lies and deceits. Once a better offer comes along, he would depart without a second glance. His loyalty is self and no one else. His god is his belly. His "reward" from God one day will be the fire of hell. If your pastors do not possess the qualities mentioned in Psalm 23, what you have in your church are hirelings.

**Elders** — The Greek word for an elder is "*presbuteros*". It is used 67 times in the New Testament. 65 times it is translated in the KJV as an "elder", once as "old man" (Acts 2:17), and another time as "old woman" in 1 Timothy 5:2. It is used to describe an elderly person (male or female), a member of the Sanhedrin Council (cf. Acts 24:1) and a Christian "presbyter". The other word, which refers to an elder, is the word "bishop" (*episkopos*). His duty or role is similar to that of an elder. There are no female elders or pastors. It is a ministry for men only. Churches that have female pastors and elders are unbiblical.

Their roles or duties include assisting the pastors. They do not take over the role of the pastors. Some churches, which control the pastors and turn them into "gophers", have to answer to God one day. They will be judged by God. Elders are not old men when it comes to a Christian presbyter. An elder must be

spiritually mature and very knowledgeable in the Word of God. The qualifications of an elder are found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7. These are also the same qualifications for the pastor. These qualifications are not negotiable. They must be adhered to or else the church that put up elders without any of these qualifications would pay the ultimate price, which is the death of the church. We are not referring to the church building but the people in the church. These elders have to make spiritual decisions and if they are carnal, and the pastor is spiritual, there will be no end to conflict within the church. The motives of these elders would be worldly and self-seeking. They will wreak their ministries and the world will be found in the church. Their worldly methods will permeate the very fabric of church life.

**Deacons** — The Greek word is “*diakonos*”. It is used 29 times in the New Testament. Three times it is used to refer to an officer in the church (cf. Philippians 1:1; 1 Timothy 3:8, 12). The emphasis of a *diakonos* is one of service. He assists the elders and pastors in the ministry. The Bible teaches us that there are both deacons and deaconesses. Phebe was a deaconess as the term *diakonos* was used to describe her in Romans 16:1. The KJV translated it as “servant”. The office of deacon or deaconess ceases once he or she ceases to serve as one.

The qualifications of a deacon are found in 1 Timothy 3:8-13. One will find that the qualifications are less stringent compared to those for elders. ◆

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# APPOINTMENT OF NEW LEADERS

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

Appointment of leaders in the church is no small matter. The Word of God has provided the church with divine instructions on this matter. So, only men of God's choice should be appointed in the leadership of the church.

Only godly men can appropriately and effectively manage the ministries of the church. The church, being a spiritual body, can only be managed by men of high spiritual credentials. Let us take note that the qualifications for church leaders are not to be determined by any human entity or individual, because God has already stipulated them. Those who do not meet all of the qualifications required by God's Word for Elders and Deacons should not come to these positions.

The need for biblically qualified people to come to serve in the offices of Elder and Deacon is urgent and great. However, we should not hurry and carelessly appoint people to the offices of the church. My prayerful opinion is

that while we continue to have the services of the present Pastor, Elders and Deacons, we must earnestly pray for God's leading concerning who should be appointed to these offices. The early church prayed to have both the discernment concerning God's choice of men to the leadership and also their equipping done adequately.

## Select Leaders with Much Prayer

The Apostle Peter and fellow apostles prayed for God's leading in the appointment of a man to replace Judas. "And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place" (Acts 1:24-25). The Scripture clearly records in another text that the prayers of the early church for godly men to lead the ministry were answered - "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2).

We need the help of the Holy Spirit in determining the right persons for the offices of the church. The Spirit knows every man's heart. From the example of the anointing of David as King, we know that in the selection of leaders, God is interested in the spiritual condition of the heart, rather than outward



appearance. We read in 1 Samuel 16:7, “But the LORD said unto Samuel, Look not on his countenance, or on the height of his stature; because I have refused him: for the LORD seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outward appearance, but the LORD looketh on the heart.” This is the reason why Peter and the rest of the Apostles prayed, “Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen, That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship.” If we have to have men of God’s choice in the leadership, we must sincerely seek His mind in prayer, even in fasting.

Another reason why we must pray in the selection of godly leaders is that it is the Spirit who equips men for the offices of the church. The Spirit is the giver of spiritual gifts that are necessary for the offices of the church. “But all these worketh that one and the selfsame Spirit, dividing to every man severally as he will” (1 Corinthians 12:11). So only the Spirit can show who are the men whom He hath equipped with the appropriate gifts for the edification of the church.

Even our Lord Jesus prayed all the night long, before He chose the apostles. “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles” (Luke 6:12, 13). So let us pray for godly leaders during our Prayer Meetings on Tuesday nights and in all other prayer gatherings. God’s will must be

done in the appointment of church leaders. Like Moses, we must pray, “Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all flesh, set a man over the congregation” (Numbers 27:16).

## Select Leaders by the Standards of God’s Word

In spite of the clear statements in the Scripture regarding the elders’ and deacons’ qualifications, people often take one of two extreme positions regarding their qualifications. The first is to ignore the full range of spiritual qualifications, thus permitting unqualified men to fill the roles of leadership. The other extreme is to add qualifications or restrictions that God doesn’t demand, thus excluding needed and qualified men from church leadership. Ultimately, such practices weaken and lower the congregation’s spiritual life; and also prevent the congregation from reaching its full potential.



The Apostle Paul outlined the spiritual qualifications for elders and deacons in 1 Timothy 3:1-13 with a specific purpose in his mind. This purpose is recorded in verses 14-15: “These things write I unto thee . . . that thou mayest know how thou oughtest

to behave thyself in the house of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and ground of the truth.” From these words, it is clear God requires that only spiritually and morally qualified men are appointed to the leadership of the church that the spiritual atmosphere of the church might function as the pillar and ground of His truth.

Members of the church ought to consider the biblical guidelines for church leaders before indicating their support or rejection of a person to the leadership. So when it comes to the election of brethren to the office of Elder and Deacon, let our minds be fully saturated with Scriptural instructions on Church leadership that we may not give ourselves into principles and motives which are contradictory to God's will. When all church members make their choices according to the Scriptural teaching, rather than individual preferences, the church will experience unity of mind in the election of its leadership. If every one of us is committed to all the Scriptural guidelines for Church leadership, there will not be any room for disagreement or disunity. Our commitment to God's Word will enable us to have godly wisdom and judgment in our decision-making. "The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple" (Psalm 119:130).

The following procedure for the appointment of Elders and Deacons is prescribed in the constitution of Gethsemane B-P Church (and most of the Bible-Presbyterian churches in Singapore), which is an excellent guideline. These guidelines are according to the Biblical teaching on leadership. (For emphasis, some portions are printed in italics.)

Article 20.2 Candidates for election to Church Session *shall satisfy the requirements listed in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1 and 1 Peter 5*. In addition, to ensure better objectivity in selection, they shall fulfil the following conditions:

- a. demonstrate beyond reasonable doubt and over a sufficient length of time that they are faithful and mature members of the Body of Christ and faithfully *devote themselves to personal prayer and study of the Word*;
- b. *attend public worship and prayer meetings of the Church regularly unless prevented from doing so for valid reasons*;
- c. make a *careful study of the Constitution*, in particular the *Principle and Practice of Biblical Separation* and *fully accept it*;
- d. be *willing to participate wholeheartedly in the ministry of the Church with the Pastor*, and to devote time, talents and resources in such ministry which shall include serving in the various departments of the Church.

There are about 20 spiritual qualities mentioned in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1, which must be found in everyone who comes to the eldership and deaconship of the church. We must not make any compromise on these requirements because men without these qualities cannot safeguard the purity and true spiritual maturity of the church.

While good leaders are essential to the progress of the ministry of the church, the appointment of bad leaders will be destructive to its spiritual progress and effective functioning. So let the church and its members prayerfully select their leaders according to the biblical guidelines. ◆

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**We must see to it that His glory  
is the one sole object of all we do.**  
*Charles Spurgeon*  
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# LEADERS AND PRAYER LIFE

TAN KIAN SING

Praying is part and parcel of a church leader's life. A church leader cannot go about his service unto the Lord without praying. In the Holy Scriptures, we can readily find examples of those whom God had appointed as leaders who were praying right from the start of their ministry, throughout their service unto the Lord and His people, and even towards the end of their lives. They prayed in times of peace and in times of trouble. They prayed to show their dependence upon the Lord. They prayed to seek the Lord for help and for mercy as they served the Master and the people whom they had been given the charge to lead.



Let us look at some examples of men of God whose prayer lives are exemplary records for us to learn and to emulate.

Solomon was young when he was appointed king, but he very readily prayed and asked the Lord for wisdom at the beginning of his reign as the new king of Israel. In 1 Kings 3:7, we read his prayer: "And now, O LORD my God, thou hast made thy servant king instead of David my father: and I am but a little child: I know not how to go out or come in." How Solomon humbled himself before the Lord and asked Him for help as he began to rule Israel. Solomon prayed and asked the Lord for the great blessing of wisdom in order to enable him to rule the many people under his charge. He acknowledged his inadequacy and showed his dependence upon the Lord God Almighty.

God's desire is for men to be on their knees in full subjection to Him. Leaders should not boast nor think of themselves as having the strength and the spiritual gifts to serve the Lord and His people. They need rather to humble themselves and recognise their weaknesses; to depend fully upon the Lord to help and to grant them the grace to overcome their weaknesses. Remember that we ought not to lead by our own might, nor by power, but by the Spirit of the Lord (cf. Zechariah 4:6).

In order to lead well and to make good decisions, leaders need to pray and wait upon

the Lord for His guidance and the Spirit to empower and enable them. When Nehemiah was burdened with the need to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, he “sat down and wept, and mourned certain days, and fasted, and prayed before the God of heaven” (Nehemiah 1:4) before he would embark on the project. And the Lord granted him success before the king and in gathering the people to devote themselves to rebuild the city of God. Nehemiah prayed earnestly unto the Lord before he made the decision and acted upon it as the Lord directed him. Leaders ought to show dependence upon the Lord through prayers before they ever make important decisions in doing the Lord’s work.

Did not the Lord continue to pray all night before He decided on the twelve apostles? In Luke 6:12-13, we read: “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.”

Now, we note that leaders are also unceasing in their prayers. How often do we pray and how much time do we spend before the throne of grace as God’s appointed leaders for His work and His people?

Prayer was a consistent feature in the life of our Lord Jesus. We read in the gospels how the Lord would always pray early in the morning (Mark 1:35 - “And in the morning, rising up a great while before day, he went out, and departed into a solitary place, and there prayed”) and all night (Luke 6:12; Mark 14:32-42), and taught the disciples to pray always (Luke 18:1 - “And he spake a parable unto them to this end, that men ought always to pray, and not to faint”; Luke 21:36 - “Watch ye therefore, and pray always”). Besides the

Lord’s pattern of a deep, earnest, enduring and constant prayer life, another great example of one who preaches on praying always and practising it himself is none other than the great Apostle Paul. If our Master and the great Apostle prayed so much and so earnestly, then how much more do we ought to pray?

We read in many of Paul’s epistles how he encouraged the readers of various churches to pray without ceasing. To the brethren in Thessalonica, Ephesus and Colossae, Paul exhorts: “Pray without ceasing” (1 Thessalonians 5:17); “Praying always with all prayer and supplication in the Spirit, and watching thereunto with all perseverance and supplication for all saints” (Ephesians 6:18); “Continue in prayer, and watch in the same with thanksgiving” (Colossians 4:2).

And not only did he exhort the brethren to be praying always, his own prayer life, as their leader, was characterised by unceasing prayers for them. To the Romans, he wrote: “For God is my witness, whom I serve with my spirit in the gospel of his Son, that without ceasing I make mention of you always in my prayers” (Romans 1:9). To the Thessalonians, Paul encouraged them saying: “Remembering without ceasing your work of faith, and labour of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ, in the sight of God and our Father” (1 Thessalonians 1:3). And through night and day, the Apostle prayed unceasingly for young Timothy, his spiritual son, who certainly needed much prayer to help him in his pastoral duties (2 Timothy 1:3 - “I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of thee in my prayers night and day”).

Thomas Murphy in his book on Pastoral Theology said: “Not a day, then, should pass

without the pastor carrying ... petition before the throne, and wrestling for the Holy Spirit to come and baptise him afresh, and baptize him thoroughly, with His sanctifying influences."

The great Welsh preacher, Mr William of Wern, had this testimony: "The old ministers were not much better preachers than we are, and in many respects they were inferior, but there was an unction about their ministry, and success attended upon it now but seldom witnesses. And what was the cause of the difference? They prayed more than we do. If we would prevail and have power with men, we must first prevail and have power with God. It was on his knees that Jacob became a prince, and if we would become princes we must be oftener and more importunate upon our knees."

It is well noted that many great church leaders had deep lives of prayer. Martin Luther and John Wesley prayed for hours each day. The great reformer, Martin Luther, said: "I generally pray two hours every day, except on very busy days. On those days, I pray three." John Hyde, a missionary to India, prayed so often that he became known as "praying Hyde". It was said of Spurgeon that he never prayed more than five minutes at a time, but he never went more than five minutes without praying. E. M. Bounds was devoted to praying three hours a day beginning at 4 a.m. in the morning, and

his books are a wonderful example of the power of a praying man.

An effective leader must have a deep prayer life. A Christian leader must discipline himself to continue to grow and to lead in prayer always. The Christian leader should set the example of devotion and prayer in the church, in the home, and in his life day and night. Do you measure up to these?

It is certainly the will of God that as leaders, our lives must be characterised with the discipline of prayer. As we pray, we show dependence upon the Spirit of God to help and to guide us in our leadership (Zechariah 4:6 "...Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts"). We need to be praying constantly in earnestness and perseverance for the work, for the people and for ourselves that we may not fall but rather be effective in the work of God's Kingdom (Mark 14:38 - "Watch ye and pray, lest ye enter into temptation. The spirit truly is ready, but the flesh is weak"; 1 Peter 4:7 - "But the end of all things is at hand: be ye therefore sober, and watch unto prayer"). As leaders in the ministry of the Lord, let us therefore examine our hearts before the Lord if our prayer life is sufficient and appropriate enough. May God help us, especially, as leaders to give ourselves unto the habit of continuing instant in prayer and supplication in the Spirit! ◆

**The fact is, the secret of all ministerial success lies in prevalence at the mercy-seat.**

*Charles Spurgeon*

# LEADERS AND SERVANTHOOD

LEE KIM SHONG

Today, leadership is a much talked about subject. Many seminars and conferences have been held and many gifted speakers have been invited to talk on this subject. Christian churches also stress on leadership training. Institutions have been set up to train Christian leaders. Sometimes secular ideas of leadership are brought into the church unawares. About twenty years ago, I read an article by a church leader who wrote about his role in church as someone who hires and fires.

The leaders of the Christian church are supposed to be the servants of God. We are not the Managing Director or CEO of a company. "But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant" (Matthew 20:25-27).

We are here to lead according to God's will. "Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; neither as being lords over God's

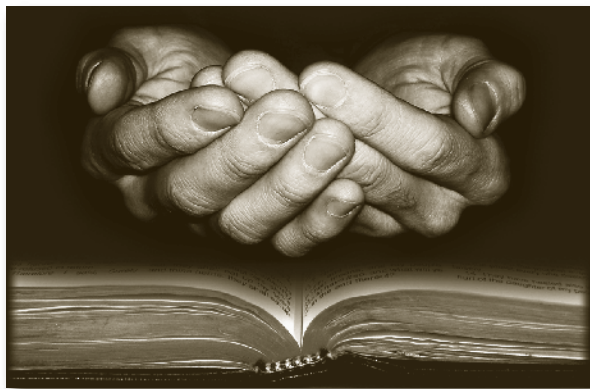
heritage, but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye shall receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away" (1 Peter 5:2-4).

The word "servant" has the idea of a slave. In other words, we are slaves of Christ. We were the slaves of sin before we were converted. But we thank the Lord that since we have been saved, we are His servants. His great love in saving us should compel us to serve Him and not ourselves. We are also thankful to the

Lord for choosing us as leaders of His church, bought by His precious blood. One day, the Lord will expect us to give an account of our service to Him.

Unless we lead by serving, our leadership will not

go far. Unless we have a servant attitude, those who are following us will not have the right idea of serving. The Lord Jesus Christ has set a good example of leadership. He did not only talk of servanthood, He Himself was the best example of a servant. "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: but made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men: and being found in fashion as a man,





he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross" (Philippians 2:5-8).

If ever anyone should be exempted from service, it should be the Lord Jesus Christ. But He made Himself of no reputation and took upon Him the form of a servant. In this generation, which is characterised by the swelling of the ego, such leadership is unthinkable. But Christ's leadership was such. On the night before He was betrayed, He was willing to take the role of a servant to wash the disciples' feet (John 13:3-14).

The King of kings was willing to humble Himself to do such a humble task of a servant. It is hard to accept that. Even the Apostle Peter forbade our Lord to wash his feet. After washing their feet, the Lord Jesus Christ spoke to them in verses 15 to 17, "For I have given you an example, that ye should do as I have done to you. Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither he that is sent greater than he that sent him. If ye know these things, happy are ye if ye do them."

Is there any task that is too menial for us to perform? Do we fear that our image will be tarnished by doing "unimportant" jobs like washing, sweeping and tidying up? There are many in the church who long to be leaders but are not willing to be servants first. Many talk like leaders but do not behave like one. Little do they realise that it is a great privilege to be servants of the Lord of lords. Even a doorkeeper in the Lord's house is an honourable position.

When the co-labourer of Robert Morrison, William Milne, went for an interview to be a missionary to China, most of the missions committee members were fearful that he

was not fit for the office. Some of them even proposed that he should be a technician rather than a missionary. But he loudly replied that he was willing to do any work that was related to missions. He was even willing to chop wood and carry water to serve God. He is a rare species in the twenty-first century.

Another story was told of a graduate of an American university who was very much moved by the work of William Booth, founder of The Salvation Army. He gave up of his own accord a high-paying job and paid his way to England to join The Salvation Army. He was full of expectation of getting a high position when he met up with General Booth.

At that time, there was a team of The Salvation Army personnel who returned from preaching in the squatter area. They took off their boots which were full of mud. General Booth spoke to the holder of Bachelor of Arts who had just expressed his desire to serve. He said, "Welcome to The Salvation Army. Your first assignment is to clean these twenty over pairs of boots." After that, General Booth walked away.

The American graduate was very annoyed. He said, "I've travelled all the way here and gave up my high-paid job just to wash these boots? This is the job of a servant." During the night, he tossed about in bed and could not sleep. The Holy Spirit spoke to him, "The Lord Jesus Christ even washed the disciples' feet." After much struggle, he cleaned every boot before daybreak. Later he became an early leader of The Salvation Army in USA. "For even the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45).

The way to lead in a Christian manner is to stoop to serve. There is no other way. ◆

# LABOURING TOGETHER

JEFFREY KHOO

## Unity (Philippians 1:27-30)

As the Roman army conquered the world as a united force, so should the Christian church contend steadfastly for the faith with one spirit and one mind. The Scriptures command all Christians to unite in thought and action. It goes without saying that Christian unity must find its basis on the truth of God's Word. Christians are to contend hand in hand for "the faith of the gospel" (Philippians 1:27; cf. Jude 3). This "faith" is the objective faith (i.e., the Christian Faith, the Body of Truth, the Word of God). Unity is strength. The Church would be much more effective in proclaiming the Gospel and defending the faith if they did so as a united army of Christ grounded on His Truth.



Christians are not to be afraid of their enemies. Their foes are defeated foes. In Christ victory is already won. The holy courage displayed by believers in the midst of suffering and persecution proves their truly regenerate state. Their enemies may kill the body, but they cannot kill the soul. God will one day resurrect the bodies of the saints. The enemies

of Christ appear victorious, but their victory is indeed hollow. Their rebellion against Christ points to their ultimate destruction by His hands on the day of judgment. Knowing that the victory is already won, let us then press on to "earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered unto the saints" (Jude 3).

Christians are called to fight a common enemy, not each other. The Bible warns against divisiveness. He enjoined the Philippians to be like-minded—to have the same mind that is produced by the same Lord and Spirit, worked out by a common love for Christ and one another. Dr Homer Kent rightly observed, "Paul's command for the Philippians to be like-minded was not a command for unity at the expense of truth. It assumes that 'the same thing' is also 'the right thing'."

## Humility (Philippians 2:1-11)

Paul rejoiced that the Philippians in Rome were preaching the Gospel though some did so out of envy and strife (Philippians 1:15-16). Against such a divisive attitude of contention, he wrote, "Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves. Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others" (Philippians 2:3-4).

In this age of self-esteem, Paul taught the opposite—other-esteem: "let each esteem other better than themselves". The doctrine of self-esteem is unbiblical and dangerous. Self-esteem's maxim is "You cannot love

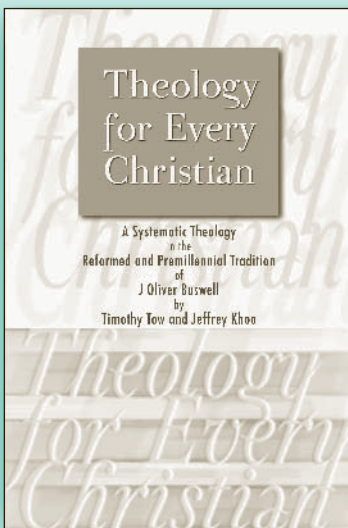
another person unless you love yourself". Is this true? Where in the Bible does it teach that we must first love ourselves before we are able to love others? It was precisely because of vainglory or self-love that certain members of the Philippian church preached the Gospel with a divisive spirit of envy and strife. Self-esteem tore the church apart. Paul's antidote was other-esteem. Paul tells us to "consider others better than ourselves". In other words, we must be selfless, not selfish, not self first but others first (Romans 12:10). Someone has observed that English grammar reflects the selfish attitude of the world. In English, the 1st person is "I", 2nd person is "you", and 3rd person is "he". But Christian grammar is totally reverse: 1st person is "He" (i.e., God), 2nd person is "you" (i.e., others), and 3rd person is "I" (self is last). In other words, first is Christ-esteem (Galatians 2:20), then other-esteem (Philippians 2:3), and last of all self-esteem (Matthew 16:24).

The Lord Jesus Christ is the supreme example of humility and selflessness. Christ became man by taking on human flesh. He gave up His *shekinah* glory in order to be clothed with flesh and blood. The second person of the Holy Trinity voluntarily unseated



Himself from His divine throne, and disrobed Himself of His divine glory to become a slave and a human being, thereby becoming the *Theanthropos*—the God-Man—to save His people from their sins by His work on the cross. The victory Christ achieved through His Cross-work saw Him being exalted to His original position of kingship and glory, and more.

God the Father and God the Son worked together in unity. God the Son served mankind with humility. Let us follow the divine pattern of Biblical unity and Christian humility in our labour for the Lord, knowing that our labour in the Lord and for the Lord will never be in vain (1 Corinthians 15:58). ◆



The FEBC Press in 2007 published a *Theology for Every Christian: A Systematic Theology in the Reformed and Premillennial Tradition of J Oliver Buswell* by Timothy Tow and Jeffrey Khoo (736 pages).

This book can be purchased from FEBC Bookroom, 9A Gilstead Road, Singapore 309063 (Tel: 6254 9188) or Bible Witness Media Ministry, Block 531 Upper Cross Street, #02-48 Hong Lim Complex, Singapore 050531 (Tel: 6438 0578)

# THE CALL TO CHURCH LEADERSHIP

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

God has always called upon leaders to guide His people. In 1 Samuel 13:14, we read, "The LORD hath sought him a man after his own heart, and the LORD hath commanded him to be captain over his people." God told Ezekiel, "I sought for a man among them, that should make up the hedge, and stand in the gap before me for the land, that I should not destroy it: but I found none" (Ezekiel 22:30).

## Church Leadership is a Calling from the Lord

When it comes to who should be appointed to church leadership, let it not be ignored that only those whom God has called to the office should be appointed. Appointments to the offices of Pastors, Elders and Deacons are not to be based on mere human abilities or seniority, social status, wealth, etc. Church leadership is not an honorary position to reward people. It ought to be filled by men who are prepared by God through His calling.

All the offices of the church must be filled with people who are called by the Lord. We often associate "calling" with pastors, missionaries, and other full-time workers of the church. But, how about elders and deacons? The Scripture is clear that to these offices also God calls men; and only those who are sure of God's appointment should enter these offices. The candidates for Church Session must be sure that they are called by the Lord to serve Him in these roles.

Paul said to the Ephesian church leaders who came to meet him in Miletus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God. . ." (Acts 20:28). Paul's advice was that all leaders must first take care of themselves as they were "made overseers" by the Holy Spirit.

It is, therefore, important that those who come to leadership must know with certainty that leadership is God's appointment for them.





No one is to enter these offices of the church because of human persuasion or appointment. Though men can be instrumental in God's hand in directing people to leadership, each candidate must be sure in his heart that God has called him to serve in the church leadership.

## **One's Calling must be Confirmed by God's Word**

How can one know whether God wants him to serve as a leader? The first and foremost sign from the Lord comes by means of His Word. If a man has all the Scriptural qualifications listed out in 1 Timothy 3, Titus 1, and 1 Peter 5, he is certainly eligible for church leadership. If he lacks any one of them, he is certainly not eligible.

When the Apostle Paul commissioned Titus to appoint church leaders in Crete, he was not allowed to choose leaders based on his own human wisdom and judgment. But Paul gave Titus a list of spiritual qualifications that he should look for in the lives of those whom he would ordain as elders. If anyone lacked a single one of those qualifications, Titus could not consider him as God's choice for leadership. Likewise, Paul also instructed Timothy that he should abide by the guidelines set by the Holy Spirit in His Word for the appointment of elders and deacons in his pastorate.

So let us consider these qualities prescribed by the Scriptures to determine who should be the leaders of the church. Let us not encourage anyone who does not meet these qualities for leadership. It is a sin to appoint anyone against that which is prescribed by the Lord. Neither should anyone take up leadership if he himself is not assured of God's calling through the Scriptures.

## **One's Calling must be Confirmed by Prayer**

Secondly, one must receive peace and assurance within himself to serve the Lord by waiting upon God in prayer. Proverbs 3:5-6 promises, "Trust in the LORD with all thine heart; and lean not unto thine own understanding. In all thine ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct thy paths."

We also see in Acts, how the early church spent time in prayer and fasting to seek God's leading in the appointment of brethren for various roles in the ministry. Luke wrote about how the Holy Spirit led the church in Antioch in appointing men for the work. "As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Ghost said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereunto I have called them" (Acts 13:2). Earnest prayer of the church is pertinent in knowing God's choice to the leadership.

## **One's Calling must be Confirmed by the Family**

This is necessary, especially for the married believers. Apart from the personal spiritual qualifications, the Scripture also insists that the candidates should have a godly family which is submissive to his leadership. A married candidate must have a godly and submissive wife and children. Because the Scripture clearly states, "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the Church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5). So, if one's children are unbelieving and rebellious, we cannot consider him for church leadership. Three times (twice in 1 Timothy 3, and once in Titus 1), the Apostle Paul has said that those who will be appointed to rule the church must be those who rule their household by raising up submissive children. A troubled and

disunited family will be a hindrance to a man's service in the church.

## One's Calling must be Confirmed by the Church

In Acts 6:3, in the appointment of men to serve at the tables (very likely as deacons), the apostles asked the congregation, saying "look ye out among you seven men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business." The candidate for Church Session must have the recognition of the church. The members

of the church must indicate their acceptance of the candidate's spiritual ability to rule the church.

At this time, it must also be said that the congregation as a whole must be prayerful and also faithful to God and His word while casting their votes. No member of the church should cast his/her vote based on self-determined criteria. The church must prayerfully and joyfully elect and support those who are called and prepared to be leaders according to God's will. ◆

# CHURCH LEADERS' PITFALLS

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

Church leaders are not free from the temptations of sin. They need to be always on guard lest they be suddenly overtaken by the deceitfulness of sin. My prayer, as I write this article, is that the Biblical expose of the deceitfulness of sin that surrounds church leaders will further intensify our vigilance and prayer, that we might keep ourselves pure for the work of the Lord.

## Pitfall #1: A Sense of Self-Glory and Self-Vindictiveness

The Apostle John wrote about an early church leader who walked into this pitfall. "I wrote unto the church: but Diotrephes, who loveth to have the preeminence among them,

receiveth us not" (3 John 9). It is not at all uncommon that the behaviour of certain men in the church leadership degenerate into one of self-assertiveness and self-glory. A sense of immunity from accountability and authority fills their minds. They act as though they are above everyone, and even above the demands of morality and charity.

Like Diotrephes who opposed and sidelined the Apostle John and other leaders of the early church, some of the present church leaders also act highhandedly. They become domineering. They become bossy. These men love the prestige and power of leadership so much that they care for none but themselves.

They forget godly men whom God has used to nurture the church. They slander good men and promote those who are just like them.

Let us protect ourselves from this sin of pride by co-labouring and submitting ourselves to godly men who love God's truth and righteousness and serve before Him humbly, faithfully and diligently. The Apostle Peter advises the leaders, "Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being ensamples to the flock" (1 Peter 5:3). And later he wrote, "Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Peter 5:5-6).

Submit yourself also to a council of Biblically-minded, spiritually-wise advisers. "Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established" (Proverbs 15:22). The Bible makes clear provision for rebuking an elder who persists in sin (cf. 1 Timothy 5:19-20). No one is above reproof. Everyone ought to be accountable. Let every one of us who serves in the leadership remind himself that God expects us to be humble, submissive and accountable to one another.

## **Pitfall #2: Succumbing to Itching Ears as Love of Truth Evaporates**

The Apostle Paul cautions, "For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; and they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned unto fables" (2 Timothy 4:3-4).

Many who expressed a passion for God's truth at the beginning of their ministry have succumbed later to the popular notions and expectations of the people around them. The love of truth is weakened by the love for recognition and admiration; and soon integrity has no leg to stand on. Every manner of rationalization and compromise to meet the demands of the expanding audience takes over. Doctrines are not emphasized; moral purity is not pursued after. The audience is to be entertained — the itching ears are to be scratched. Why? Otherwise, he would have to face the unhappiness of the crowd; and he is afraid that people would desert him. So immunity from objection and opposition is created with a heavy dose of relational ethics. The language of love, forgiveness and acceptance abounds — but for those who have eyes to see, it is a camouflage to cover up the abandonment of love for God's truth.

In order to protect ourselves from such perilous compromise in the ministry, we should cultivate an unflinching commitment to "preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine" (2 Timothy 4:2). Remain fully dedicated to proclaim the truth, even in its smallest details, and turn a deaf ear to the desires of men to have their ears scratched. Compromise with falsehood often begins in small things.

In order to be a brave and faithful preacher of the Word, "study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2 Timothy 2:15). In the ministry of many leaders, the Word of God has taken a back seat to storytelling, social analysis, family discussions, psychological diagnoses, etc., which begin to usurp the authority of the inspired and preserved Word of God. Loose and sloppy

handling of the Scripture eventually leads to loose and sloppy living of the leaders and the congregation. Let all leaders protect themselves and their congregations through a disciplined study of God's Word and faithful preaching.

### **Pitfall #3: Disregarding the Family Life**

The Apostle Paul very emphatically advised that leaders should "be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly" (Titus 1:6; cf. 1 Timothy 3:2, 4, 12). It is tragic that many leaders have failed to give careful attention in the nurturing of their own children in the ways of God. Therefore, Paul challenges us, "For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?" (1 Timothy 3:5).

Our loving treatment of our wives ought to be the reflection of Christ's wonderful love for the church. The Apostle Paul wrote in Ephesians 5:25-27, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it; that he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, that he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish." Let every church leader remember that his treatment of his wife is reflective of how greatly he thinks of the Lord's loving dealings with the church.

An adulterous church leader is a disastrous testimony before the church. He does not portray the Lord's faithful and true love for the church. The Apostle Paul teaches us in Ephesians 5:31-32 that Christian marriage is a token of the mystery of the relationship that Christ has with the church. "For this cause

shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church." Adultery is an appalling desecration of the image of Christ and His church.

Let every church leader remember that God expects him to prove his faithfulness as a leader in his own home first. Remind yourself repeatedly that your marriage is a living testimony of Christ's relationship to the church. We simply must recover the wonder of this truth. Marriage has to do with Christ, not just two people trying to seek fulfillment. It is a mission whereby God's love is to be portrayed to the world. It is an extraordinary calling.

### **Pitfall #4: Self-pity that Excuses Worry, Bitterness and Other Sins**

The struggles of a church leader are seldom fully understood by those who are around him. Paul has captured the troubles of the church leaders the best, when he wrote, "We are troubled on every side, yet not distressed; we are perplexed, but not in despair; persecuted, but not forsaken; cast down, but not destroyed" (2 Corinthians 4:8-9).

Some in the ministry have been so plagued by problems that they allow their souls to plunge into self-pity and many other sins that accompany anxiety, worry and fear. Some leaders have used their needs, loneliness, problems to excuse their sins of greed, theft, sex, abusive behaviour, etc. They would say, "Nobody understands my problems. Nobody seem to care that I also have to take care of my family's needs. It is such pressure that led me to steal." Or "Nobody else seems to feel for me in my loneliness the way she does. If any of



them knew what I was going through in this leadership role, they would understand why I need this kind of embrace, I need this kind of ‘unconditional acceptance’. I have borne enough of the burden of being everybody’s spiritual example, I can’t take it any more. And I don’t care if they don’t approve.”

Self-pity is a subtle sin; and it is packed with deceptive power. It looks so meek and weak. But underneath it is pride. Self-pity is a blind leader of proud men, which guides them into pits of sins.

Every leader must learn to find his strength, wisdom, courage and provision in the Lord. The Lord—and He alone—must be our portion, or we will give in to self-pity and all the sins that accompany it. We must seek the presence of God where there is “fulness of joy” and “at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore”. Let us learn to draw near to God when all kinds of troubles arise before us. “God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea” (Psalm 46:1-2).

## **Pitfall #5: Falling in Love with the Present World**

“For Demas hath forsaken me, having loved this present world, and is departed unto Thessalonica. . . .” (2 Timothy 4:10). Demas was a fellow labourer of Paul in the work of the Gospel (cf. Colossians 4:14; Philemon 24). Paul mentioned him along with the early church leaders like Luke, Marcus and Aristarchus.

Demas left Paul and the ministry after he fell in love with this present world. What is it about the world that leaders like Demas in particular are tempted to love?

In Luke 8:14, Jesus cautioned, “. . . when they have heard, go forth, and are choked with cares and riches and pleasures of this life, and bring no fruit to perfection.” Our Saviour mentioned three causes that could lead a man away from being fruitful in the kingdom of God. They are cares of this life, riches of this world and pleasures of this world.

Demas’ motive for forsaking Paul might have been his love for worldly ease, safety, comforts, and disinclination to brave danger with Paul.

Anyone who sincerely serves the Lord would soon find that he needs to sacrifice all his desires for the comfort, pleasure and glory of this world. Anyone who entertains an immoderate love for this material world, its gain, pleasure and glory, will not be able to serve God fervently and faithfully. He will soon wilfully abandon the cause of the Gospel because of his love for this material world.

The best protection from this pitfall is to always set our mind on the glory of God and His kingdom. Paul said, “But God forbid that I should glory, save in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world is crucified unto me, and I unto the world” (Galatians 6:14). The spell of sin’s fascination is broken when the superior pleasures of God’s presence becomes the preoccupation.

If we love the Lord and His work, then we must also remind ourselves that “the friendship of the world is enmity with God” and “whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God” (James 4:4). Think long and hard about those who have fallen so painfully and drastically, having drunk the deadly poison of worldliness. ♦

# EXTRAORDINARY SERVICES OF GOD'S SERVANTS

PRABHUDAS KOSHY

"Now after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD it came to pass, that the LORD spake unto Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' minister, saying, Moses my servant is dead; now therefore arise, go over this Jordan, thou, and all this people, unto the land which I do give to them, even to the children of Israel" (Joshua 1:1-2).

Moses is introduced in the above verses twice as the Lord's servant - "Moses, the servant of the LORD" and "Moses, my servant". Even after Moses' death, his great Master talked about him as "My servant". He must have pleased his Master so well in all that he was assigned to do.

We know that on one occasion, Moses, being provoked to anger by the people, did not follow the Lord's instruction. Certainly, the Master had graciously forgiven him, though the consequence of his sin remained and he was unable to enter the Promised Land. What a gracious Master Moses had! He had mercy to forgive and use Moses again. He had mercy to commend and honour His servant, even after his death. Not only in this passage do we see the great honour God has bestowed on Moses. Thousands of years later, when the Son of Man was here on earth, on the Transfiguration Mount, God sent Moses to meet His Son on earth (cf. Luke 9:29-31).

Joshua, the other character in our passage, is also introduced as a servant. But he is referred to as "Moses' servant". To be Moses' servant was most pleasing in God's sight. It was no demeaning thing to assist, to serve a man whom God has called to be His servant. To help a man of God is to help to fulfil his Great Master's will. Joshua's service to Moses was his service to the God of Moses. Joshua's allegiance to Moses was a token of his loyalty to the Lord whom Moses served. This fact is most clear when we consider that the Lord chose Joshua to lead Israel, after the death of Moses.

Christian churches today, while looking for leaders, often appear to be preoccupied with the candidate's educational degrees, skills, eloquence, fame, etc. This has caused many churches to lose a godly and faithful leadership. God's choice leaders are servants; those who are faithful, loyal, answering in devotion to God and His faithful servants. ◆



BIBLE TRIVIA - GENESIS 32 & 33

Sarah Yong

READ THE PASSAGE FROM YOUR BIBLE AND DECIDE WHICH STATEMENTS ARE TRUE (T) AND WHICH ARE FALSE (F).  
CIRCLE THE LETTER IN THE CORRECT COLUMN.

No.	Question	True	False
1.	Jacob sent servants before him to Esau his brother.	S	G
2.	They reported to Jacob that Esau had 400 men with him.	O	E
3.	Jacob prayed to God to deliver him from the wrath of Esau.	A	D
4.	He prepared more than 500 animals as a gift to Esau.	I	P
5.	Jacob hoped that the present would appease Esau, so that he would be accepted.	S	I
6.	At the brook of Jabbok, Jacob wrestled with an angel.	N	T
7.	Jacob’s name was changed to Israel.	H	O
8.	He called the place Peniel because he had seen God face to face.	E	B
9.	Jacob bowed himself to the ground 3 times when he met his brother.	K	F
10.	Esau saw the groups of women and children, and was jealous of his brother.	C	R
11.	After Jacob and Esau parted, Esau returned unto Seir.	A	M
12.	Jacob journeyed to Succoth and finally dwelt in Shalem, a city of Shechem.	L	W

JACOB ERECTED AN ALTAR, AND CALLED IT EL-EL-O-HE-IS-RA-EL.  
WHAT DOES IT MEAN?

(HINT: FILL IN THE CIRCLED LETTERS ACCORDING TO THE QUESTION NUMBERS)

1 2 3      4 5      6 7 8      1 2 3      2 9      4 5 10 11 8 12

Answers to Vol. 7, Issue 4 - Bible Trivia - Genesis 31

p. 23 - (1) return, kindred; (2) wives, angel; (3) camels, cattle; (4) pursued, journey; (5) dream, rebuked; (6) affliction, labour; (7) covenant, sacrifices; (8) blessed, departed.

Memory Verse: “And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect will of God.” Romans 12:2

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