

BIBLICAL NEED FOR TRUE LEADERS

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God's people have always needed leaders. When Moses was drawing near to the time of his death, he asked God to provide a shepherd for the Israelites (Numbers 27:15-23). The reason for his asking for a leader was that he was afraid that the children of Israel would become as "sheep which have no shepherd" without one. Joshua proved to be a great leader of the people, except that it seems he lacked foresight. Joshua did not ask God to name his replacement and as a result, each Israelite "did that which was right in his own eyes" (Judges 21:25).

When God provided judges to save the people from oppression, the people would follow God for a while and then return to their sinful ways. After a king was given the people it seemed that everything went well. The only problem was, not all the kings followed God. Eventually, this led to captivity for God's people. The Old Testament reveals to us plainly that God's people need not only leadership, but true leaders. By true, what is meant is one who follows God and leads others to God.

Matthew Henry went to London, met a young lady of the nobility, who was also wealthy, and they fell in love. She went to ask her father if she could marry him and he said, "He's got no background, you don't know where he's come from." She replied, "Yes, I know, but I know where he's going and I want to go with him." This is the type of leader that God's people need. One who knows he is headed to heaven and inspires others to follow him there.

Jesus is the head of the church, therefore He is its leader (Ephesians 1:22-23). Jesus delegated His authority to the apostles (John 13:20; 2 Corinthians 5:20). This is why it is said that the early church followed the apostles' doctrine (Acts 2:42). Paul told the Corinthians to be imitators of him as he imitated Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1).

It would be wonderful if we had modern day apostles that could reveal to us the exact answers to the questions we have and to lead us, but we do not have any alive today who could do that. Knowing that this would be the case, God devised the office of an elder to provide leadership. Knowing that it would be dangerous to leave the leadership of a congregation in the hands of one man, God devised the eldership: A group of men leading the congregation and making decisions in matters of judgment and upholding the standard of truth as taught in God's word.

Paul commanded the Ephesian elders to watch after the flock of God and to feed the church of God (Acts 20:28). Paul reminded Titus that part of the work that he was to be doing in Crete was ordaining elders in every city there (Titus 1:5-11). The reason that elders were needed was that there were false teachers subverting whole houses and they needed to be stopped. That was the work of a leader then and it is now as well.

An eldership is to lead each congregation by setting the example of godly living, standing for the truth and against error, and providing spiritual food for the congregation. They also have the added responsibility of watching for the souls of the members of the congregation they shepherd (Hebrews 13:17). Happy is the congregation with a sound, solid, loving eldership. Sadly, there are congregations that have poor leadership from their elders. These congregations

always seem to be having troubles. Poor leadership is a hindrance to growth, initiative and outreach. Where poor leadership is, church squabbles and even splits are sure to follow. The church is the bride of Christ and the Lord desires true leaders to take care of His bride. Being an elder is a tremendous responsibility but also a tremendous honor. In an age where the church is under constant attack from both without and within, the need for true leaders is greater than ever.

In the church today, there are still those that subvert whole houses. There are still those that would bind that which is not bound by God. There are still those that would loose that which God has not loosed. There are still those that would introduce unbiblical ideas into the church and have them accepted. Without true leaders these people would take over the church and have her commit spiritual adultery.

True, biblical leaders are those that love God and want only what is best for the Lord's church. A true leader is one who can separate what he may want from what is best for the church. A true leader is in no way selfish. A true leader leads by example and asks nothing of others that he himself is not willing to do.

It is told that James Garfield, when elected President of the United States, said that he was stepping down from a higher office to become President. Garfield had been an elder in the Lord's church before becoming President. May everyone have such a high and noble view of the eldership. May God continue to bless the church with true leaders.