



Strand: AUTHENTIC LEADERSHIP	Subject: <i>New Testament Selection Criteria for Authentic Christian Leadership</i>	Lesson: SUPPLEMENTARY
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## ***Selection Criteria for Authentic Christian Leadership***

### **Introduction**

So, you want to be a leader? The question is: what kind of person makes an authentic Christian leader, a real man or woman of God? There are some good models of leadership in the modern world ... and some poor ones. In a real sense, those models are limited, because Christian leadership reflects a different world view and has different objectives. There are lessons to be learned from secular leadership, but in God's economy these only work if submitted to the Lordship of the Holy Spirit, and adapted or otherwise in line with His purposes. Christian leadership is neither organisational, nor positional, it is spiritual.

In our series on Christians in leadership (in any sphere), we have briefly encountered a number of leaders mentioned in the Bible, and a few from the modern era. This lesson focuses on the kind of person the Apostle Paul (who had a track record in selecting and training anointed apostolic ministry) believed met the conditions for leading God's people, God's way, for God's purpose. Some of the standards make sense, when we understand the heart of the Gospel; others are a challenge, because we live surrounded by secular cultures and what God calls us to is "higher" than what society usually demands or accepts. The spiritual leader's mandate and purpose are different; the outcomes are at odds with what the world expects. The aims are eternal.

Paul's epistles to Timothy and Titus were probably his last letters, written after many years of leadership in some of the first Christian communities (though not all). Called "pastoral epistles" by Paul Anton in 1726, and sometimes (probably erroneously) referred to as "church manuals", or "advice to young pastors", they are instructive, as they give clear guidance to Timothy and Titus (experienced leaders in their own right) as they sought to identify those to whom the leadership batons should be passed in due course; all part of leaving a solid "legacy" (see separate notes on the topic of legacy).

This lesson is not a commentary on the pastoral epistles (which cover other subjects, as well as leadership issues), but a short synopsis of what Paul expected leaders of the growing world Christian community to look like, and how they should live. We will concentrate on 1 & 2 Timothy.

### **The Need for Next Generation Leaders Identified**

Timothy and Titus were experienced Christian leaders. But all leaders pass on eventually, and often little is left of their footprints; Timothy (in Ephesus) and Titus (in Crete) were no exceptions. The effectiveness of leaders can be evaluated by what (or whom) they leave behind. This is our challenge today.

Let's not focus on Timothy and Titus, but the kinds of people they looked for, to work alongside them in leading the churches. The era covered by *Acts* was passing. The

Christian community (coming together out of all classes and ethnic groups) was growing and needed workable structures, solid teaching, examples of Christian living and strong leadership. Opposition from the non-Christian community was ever-present, and would shortly peak in a fresh wave of persecution under the Roman Emperor Nero. There was no shortage of false and divisive ideas on the periphery of the church (promoted by Gnostics, Judaisers, syncretists, heretics and others), that were trying to attach themselves to Christian teaching, like barnacles to the keel of a vessel. Leadership was not for the faint-hearted, or those who wanted it for their own ends. There were those who had influence and sought to get into positions of leadership for the wrong reasons. Their lives, motives and morals did not reflect what genuine Christianity stood for. Their doctrines were suspect or erroneous. Their methods belonged to the world. Others were godly, caring, effective leaders; they were often the first people that enemies of the church arrested during times of persecution; leadership in the Body of Christ was not a sinecure.

This was the context in which Paul (in prison at the time, especially writing 2 Timothy) set forth his criteria for those who should take the church to the next level, under God.

### Clarifying Titles

*“Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.” (1 Timothy 3:1 NIV)*

Before going further, it is important to say something about language. The Greek word used here is *episkopē*, or “overseer, office, charge, the office of an elder”. The term “Episcopalian” (rule by bishops) comes from the Greek. “Presbyterian” denotes rule by presbyters, or elders. There are different structures of church government.

Other versions say:

- “leadership in the church” (The Message)
- “the office of overseer (bishop, superintendent)” (Amplified Bible)
- “bishop” (New King James Version)
- “holding office” (Phillips)

Our purpose here is not to get into a discussion about forms of church government, but to emphasize that it is not the job title (as useful as titles sometimes are) that makes a leader, but the call of God. The Christian community needs pastoral leadership (refer to earlier notes on the “shepherd” role of the Christian leader) that is committed first and foremost to Jesus Christ, then to reaching the world and discipling believers in the environment of the church. The criteria for leaders are universal and apply regardless of church hierarchies or the actual title or job description used for the individual leader.

### Selection Criteria and Responsibilities - Notes on what 1 & 2 Timothy Say (some criteria are repeated in various passages, for emphasis)

<p>Christian leaders recognize the call of God to the role (and the spiritual authority that comes with the office), and persevere in that call, even when it gets hard.</p> <p>Jesus never lost sight of His relationship with the Father, God’s plan for redemption and the reason He came.</p> <p>Leadership is not a right, it is a privilege. Too many leaders glory in power, position and perks, or become petty or pompous, and lose sight of that privilege. If you do so, you will lose sight of the purpose for which you are called - to love and serve God and people, and show them how to live (1:5)</p> <p>The gifts that God has given are not to be taken for granted or treated lightly. We are to protect what God has given us. We do not earn them, nor are they our personal possessions; they</p>	<p>1 Timothy</p> <p>1:1, 2, 12, 18; 2:7; 4:14</p> <p>2 Timothy</p> <p>1:6</p> <p>4:5</p>
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are entrusted to us by God, by His grace, for His reasons.	
<p>Identify and deal with false doctrines that emerge in the church.</p> <p>The earliest challenges facing the church were false leaders and doctrines, that sought to undermine the simplicity of the Gospel, hence the urgency of some of the New Testament epistles. The Christian life, at both individual and corporate levels, involves conflict, between God and Satan, the Kingdom of God and the kingdoms of this world, and between ideas. The Christian leader must know the truth well enough to be able to discern between truth and falsehood, and deal with them. (Chapter 6 goes into considerable detail.)</p>	<p>1 Timothy</p> <p>1:3-7; 4:6; 6:3-5</p> <p>2 Timothy</p> <p>2:17, 18</p> <p>3:1-9</p>
<p>Be a person of prayer. Spend time with God - often.</p> <p>Paul encourages Timothy to prioritize prayer. After many years of ministry leadership he recognized the danger of prayer being pushed aside in the 'busyness' of church life. The leader is a pray-er first and foremost. R.A. Torrey wrote, "Prayer is the key that unlocks all the storehouses of God's infinite grace and power. All that God is, and all that God has, is at the disposal of prayer." Prayer helps us to see and do the will of God - and helps release faith necessary for it to come to pass. It is prayer that gives us strength to do His work (1:12)</p>	<p>1 Timothy</p> <p>2:1-8</p>
<p>Be a person of good Christian character:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• above reproach</li> <li>• faithful to his wife *</li> <li>• temperate, self-controlled</li> <li>• live wisely</li> <li>• respectable, good reputation</li> <li>• hospitable, willing to have guests in his home, generous</li> <li>• able to teach</li> <li>• not a heavy drinker</li> <li>• not violent, but gentle</li> <li>• not quarrelsome</li> <li>• not a lover of money</li> <li>• able to must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him (in a manner worthy of respect)</li> <li>• not a recent convert</li> <li>• have a good reputation with people outside the church</li> </ul> <p>* The epistles speak to ministry in terms of a single gender; we know that the call of God to leadership across the Body of Christ today comes in many shapes and forms; where women are in positions of leadership the texts should be applied to their circumstances. Likewise, there are some in Christian leadership who are not married.</p> <p>"Character" says it all. Preserve your integrity and reputation at all costs.</p> <p>The verses that follow (vs 8-10, 12-13) apply many of these same requirements to those who hold the function of "deacon" (helper, servant) in the church. Character and credibility apply at every level of leadership. Before being placed in positions</p>	<p>3:1-7</p>

leadership they were to be tested.	
<p>Pursue godly character.</p> <p>Christian leaders exercise influence over the church. One of the prerequisites to being in the role is a desire to live out the character of Jesus. Pride, selfishness and wrong ambition sometimes get in the way. We need to examine our hearts and let the Holy Spirit show us where we need to change, so that our personal lives depict that of our Saviour.</p> <p>The passage also warns against getting involved in fruitless and spurious argumentation, that detract from the work.</p>	4:7
<p>Set an example for other believers in terms of hard work, good speech, personal conduct, godly love, faith; purity, right living, endurance and gentleness.</p> <p>If a leadership position is just a title, you will quickly be disappointed because leadership requires a lot of energy, a thick skin, involves heavy demands, lots of personal challenges, long hours (usually unrecognised by others), thankless tasks, being misunderstood judged and ignored, giving help and advice that often falls on deaf ears or ungrateful hearts.</p> <p>Paul says that there will be those who turn away from the faith, but he encourages Timothy that this is the very reason that we strive. A called leader doesn't back off because of a lack of results but is stirred to see breakthroughs. It is a beautiful thing to see the leader's hard work reflected in lives being changed.</p>	4:11, 12; 5:22; 6:11
<p>Grow spiritually (and evidently to others). Leaders need to be growing continually, as should all Christians.</p>	4:15, 16
<p>Be devoted to the public reading of Scripture, to preaching and to teaching.</p> <p>Public ministry is one of the key defining features of Christian leadership (though this is not always the case). Preachers/ teachers need to have a solid grasp on the detail of what they declare, and seek to ensure that they teach <i>all</i> that is necessary.</p> <p>The church is always in need of good, Biblical teaching that has depth, speaks to peoples' lives and helps them grow as Christians in their (variable) personal circumstances, not just "at church".</p> <p>Spiritual leaders who teach in this age of technique need to be aware that it is not skills, knowledge or charisma, airs, graces or showmanship that convey and reveal truth imparted by preaching, but the Holy Spirit who opens hearts. "Great" preachers can fall into sin and out of public ministry; our reliance must on the grace of God, to do His work.</p>	4:13; 5:17
<p>Watch your life and doctrine (what you believe) closely</p> <p>Paul encourages Timothy both to teach and be an example. Teaching should always be accompanied by practical</p>	4:16

<p>application. If not, then it becomes mere philosophy, contestable ideals, dogma and creed in a marketplace that demands equality for all beliefs - and expects people to keep their beliefs private.</p> <p>It is essential that leaders “practice what they preach”. When Christian leaders share, they don’t just offer information, they present truth; who they are in real life will colour the way people receive what they say.</p>	
<p>Be able and willing to work hard and direct church life.</p> <p>Church leadership usually involves a lot of meetings, oversight of teams, visitations, counselling, sorting out difficult issues, denominational functions, message preparation, administrative duties, and many other public obligations. Add to this, the personal responsibility of family and home life. And the need for the leader to have time to grow personally, maintain a Spirit-filled life, study, pray, develop new friendships, witness, exercise, overcome temptation and spiritual attacks, maintain equilibrium, and model patient sainthood. Who among us is capable of this? Leaders truly need to be sure of the call of God and reliant on His grace.</p>	5:17
<p>Be able and willing to deal with sin in the church, starting with sin at the leadership level. This takes courage, but if the head is sick the illness will flow through to the rest of the body.</p>	5:20
<p>Be free of favouritism, partiality, or taking sides. The New Testament church grew amid a stratified society, where class and manipulative power structures were important. The first part of this chapter shows how the Gospel breaks these down.</p>	5:21
<p>Keep what you have learned from senior leaders as the pattern of sound teaching, with faith and love in Christ Jesus; do this in the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit and the grace of God through Christ. It takes humility to learn from others, but this is the only way we will grow.</p> <p>The call to Christian to leadership is a call to a life-long pursuit of God. There should always be an insatiable desire - a longing - for more of Him.</p> <p>Paul exhorts Timothy to “fan into flame” (re-ignite) the gift on his life. He did not suggest that Timothy find someone who could do this for him.</p> <p>There comes a time in our spiritual journey when we must take responsibility for our own maturity in God. No longer is it the responsibility of another leader or mentor. Christian leadership can be tough; it can be disheartening; the temptation to give up is recurrent, and many do so. We can only re-ignite the call and the fire within us by prayer and with the help of the Holy Spirit. Sometimes, as in this case, the encouragement to do so comes from others, who can see what is going on and genuinely care for us as leaders.</p>	2 Timothy 1:13; 2:1, 6
<p>Be committed to teaching, mentoring, trusting and releasing reliable people who will then do so in the lives of others.</p>	2:2

<p>Leadership multiplies itself. Good leaders have shelf lives. When they go they should not leave a vacuum behind them; this happens when they are persuaded that only they are able to lead, and as a consequence do not invest in and release others.</p> <p>Leadership is an opportunity to pioneer, create paths and opportunities for others to stand with us, trust them to do the work with us, then watch as they take on the mantle.</p> <p>Jesus was a good picker and discipler of men. Having trained them, He sent them out to do His work.</p>	
<p>Recognize the need for focus, discipline, patience and endurance in personal and church life. This must be enhanced by time to reflect, think and pray alone, journal what God is saying on an individual basis, receive input from others, and plan.</p>	2:3-7, 10
<p>Provide solid teaching and instruction for the whole church</p>	2:14
<p>Acquire the skills to accurately handle (literally direct, handle correctly, keep on a straight path) God's word of truth. Don't be afraid of hard work.</p>	2:15
<p>Be an example of purity, faith, love, peace; not quarrelsome; kind, able to teach; not resentful; willing to gently teach those who do not agree with them.</p>	2:22-26
<p>Avoid the lifestyles of those who live in sin.</p>	3:1-9
<p>Be an example of good teaching, faith, patience, love, endurance even in the face of persecution.</p>	3:10-12
<p>Depend on God's inspired Word for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness.</p> <p>A called leader will delight in studying and meditating on the Word. Effective Christian leadership is also <i>competent</i> leadership. Sometimes the leader will need to get involved to correct false teaching creeping into the church.</p>	3:14-17
<p>Commit to preaching the Word, "in season and out of season"; correcting, rebuking and encourage others - with great patience and careful instruction, based on sound doctrine.</p> <p>Effective Christian leaders do not give up on their God-given passion and let the work grind to a halt. They are conscious of the importance of timing; they are motivated to listen to (and reflect) what the Holy Spirit is saying about the moment.</p> <p>Leaders use relationships wisely, to correct, teach and train others, so that the work continues to grow and be fruitful.</p> <p>False teaching and false teachers will present themselves, but Godly leadership will keep the church on track.</p>	4:2-3
<p>Keep the faith - there is an eternal reward.</p> <p>Real change, transformation and resilience are the work of the Holy Spirit. We cannot bring about change by a strong, apologetic argument alone - it must be accompanied by the power of the Holy Spirit. Paul urges Timothy not to get involved</p>	4:5-8

in arguments but rather, to gently instruct.

“Winning” is not in the argument but in the gentle sincerity that comes with the Spirit at work in your life.

Christian leadership involves both a calling from God and a high level of obedient commitment. The bar is set high for personal standards and the witness of the leader’s life. The level of accountability is also high, for the Christian leader guides lives, with eternal consequences. None of us is naturally equipped to do this, but if we have a mandate from God to do so, He will be our sufficiency. The casualty rate among Christian leaders is far too high; this is coupled with a reluctance on the part of many who are called to surrender to God’s will and get involved in Christian service because of the cost involved.

God grant us Spirit-filled, Christ-centred leaders, old and new, to pastor, lead, teach, warn and encourage the Body of Christ, so that the people of God can be all that He wants in our generation and beyond.

Are you called to be a Christian leader, to influence the lives of others, for eternity? Let God search your heart and teach you how to be an authentic servant leader who will help build the Body of Christ and glorify Him.

