

Chapter Two

PRINCIPLES FOR SUCCESSFUL LEADERSHIP

(A study based on Christ's teachings)

Although Jesus' teaching was not explicit on church government. He did give us basic truths and principles of spiritual life which will assure success to the church leader. One all-important truth is the spiritual nature of the Church.

A. The Spiritual Nature of the Church

1. The Church that Jesus is building is a spiritual entity.

If we see the Church only from its external, visible characteristics we have totally misunderstood the true nature of what Christ is building.

It was a continuous struggle for our Lord to get His disciples to see things from the spiritual perspective rather than the material or literal. We see this in Matthew 16:5-12, John 4:3 1-38 and John 6:26-63. Verse 63 is a key verse, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life." Concerning the kingdom Jesus said: "...The kingdom of God is not coming with signs to be observed.. .behold, the kingdom of God is in your midst." (Luke 17:20,21). He said to Pilate, "My kingdom is not of this realm," (John 18:36).

2. Thus the sphere of our ministry is spiritual, not physical (II Cor. 4:16-18). Men who do not understand this basic fact wreak havoc in the Church. Though we may have literal buildings and use literal money, the Church itself is spiritual. If Satan can get our eyes off the spiritual and onto the visible aspects, he can defeat us. Note the following failure of the Jewish religious leaders and how Jesus exposed them. These men were preoccupied with the externals of the law and ignored the internal, spiritual aspects.

3. Characteristics of false leaders from Matthew 23

- a. They seat themselves, vs. 2 (NAS). True leaders wait for other leaders to recognize them and set them in their place of ministry. (Compare Heb. 5:1-5,10).
 - b. They don't practice what they preach, vs. 3.
 - c. They put people under bondage (legalism), vs. 4.
 - d. They are pitiless, unconcerned about the needs of others, vs. 4.
 - e. They do their religious deeds to be seen by men, vs. 5.
 - f. They seek exaltation before men, vss. 6,7; (Mark 12:38,39).
 - g. They want titles and positions, vss. 7-10.
 - h. They live off the poor, vs. 14 (Mark 12:40).
 - i. They are motivated by greed, vss. 16-19. (Luke 16:14, 15).
 - j. They are preoccupied with externals, vss. 23-28.
 - k. They justify themselves, vss. 29, 30; (Luke 16:15; 18:9-12).
- These negative characteristics give us an excellent guide to what the true leader should not do and what he should do.

B. The Spiritual Nature of the Church Leader's Ministry

Here are six activities that our Lord gives us, all of which are directed to the mind and heart. They are based on proclaiming the truth about Jesus. Truth is spirit and truth is powerful. It powerfully affects the externals of life, but it does not involve force or obligation in any form.

1. Preaching (Mark 3:14; Matt. 10:7; Mark 16:15; Luke 24:47). Announcing the good news of Jesus and the Kingdom is a prime activity of the leader of the Church. Acts 2 is a model of the power of preaching and its life-transforming spiritual effects.

2. Making disciples (Matt 28:19).

This requires a prolonged period of training and teaching. There are two important facts concerning discipleship. True discipleship is always to Jesus and not to the church leader, and discipleship is always voluntary (Matt. 16:24). Jesus concentrated His discipling on the twelve for the purpose of developing leaders. Even so, one of the goals of making disciples is to prepare new leaders for the Church.

3. Teaching (Matt. 28:20).

Teaching differs from preaching in that it is more didactic (instructive). Preaching is more exhortative. Matthew 13:52 shows us that teaching should cover a variety of subjects old and new.

4. Healing the sick, casting out demons (Mark 3:15; Matt. 10:1, 8; Mark 6:12,13; 16:15-20; John 14:12).

Christ's supernatural ministry of healing and deliverance is to be continued through His servants, the leaders of the Church.

5. Feeding the flock (John 21:15,17; Matt. 24:45; Luke 12:42). (See also Acts 6:2,4).

The Word of God is our spiritual food (Matt. 4:4). In John 6:32-35, 48-51 Jesus said He is the bread of life. All vocal ministry must be based on the Bible and centered on Jesus.

6. Shepherding the flock (John 21:16).

The Greek word "poimaino" translated "feed" here carries the idea of tending, leading, protecting, ruling and governing.

C. The Spiritual Nature of the Church Leaders' Authority

The matter of the leaders' authority has been misunderstood, and there has been much abuse. The authority of the church leader is in the spiritual realm. It does not involve physical force or domination of people's lives (Luke 22:25-27).

1. They have an authority over demons and infirmities (Matt. 10:1; Mark 3: 14,15; 6:7; 16:17,18). The struggle of the Church is spiritual (Eph. 6:12). When we recognize this and engage in spiritual battle, we are always victorious (Luke 10:17-24).

2. They have an authority to bind and loose (Matt. 16:19; 18:18). This is obviously a spiritual binding and loosing since it is done in heavens well as on earth.

3. They have an **authority to forgive sin** (John 20:23). This promise is similar to the above. Certainly this forgiveness is governed by what God has already done. Where there is no repentance, there is no authority to forgive. Nor can there be a retaining of sin where genuine repentance and confession have occurred.

D. Key Principles for Success

Here are seven truths that Christ gave us. We cannot ignore one of them. Successful leadership is based on them.

1. Do all **our righteousness for God's eyes** (Matt 6:1-4). The Father's reward will be lost if our goal is man's approval. This was the failure of the Jews, and it destroyed their faith (John 5:44; 12:42,43).

2. Prayer (Matt. 6:5,6; 26:41; Luke 18:1; John 14:12-14). Prayer is our main spiritual weapon. It had top priority in the life of our Lord. His total reliance on the Father is the secret of His life and ministry (John 5:19, 20, 30; 8:28; 12:49). Since we can do nothing without Christ (John 15:5), we must remain in constant dependence —through prayer—on Him.

3. Fasting (Matt. 6:16-18). There is a reward for proper fasting. It is a secret of power (Matt. 17:21). By our denial of the flesh we rise out of the natural realm and into the spiritual.

4. Renounce the world's criteria of success (Luke 16:15; 6:20-26). Man glories in bigness, richness, pomp and carnal power. These are an abomination to God. The Lord's servant

will glory in the opposite (II Cor. 12:9,10; I Cor. 1:25-29; I Cor. 4:9-13).

5. Self-humbling brings exaltation (Matt. 23:12). Faithful leaders of the Church will be recognized and exalted, but true exaltation comes only from self-humbling. We humble ourselves or else God will humble us.

6. Laying down your life brings fruit (John 12:24-26). The leaders of the Church must follow the example of the Head of the Church. There is a cross for us, too (Matt. 16:24). Until the Lord's servant lays down his will, his pleasures, his ambitions, even his ministry, there will be little fruit. There is a breaking," a "dying" for all the church leaders.

7. The Baptism in the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49; Acts 1:6-8; John 14:16).

Though Christ was born of the Spirit and lived without sin, He did no ministry until He received the Holy Spirit at the River Jordan. Then on the eve of the Church's birth, Jesus insisted on the twelve apostles' waiting for the enduement with power from on high. We dare not minimize this experience or equate it with our salvation if we want the power of the supernatural in our ministry, "but you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you (Acts 1:8). "...greater works than these shall he do..." (John 14:12). There is always an increasing measure of the Holy Spirit for the Church leader who seeks (Luke 11:9-13).