

MARANATHA MESSENGER

Weekly Newsletter of

MARANATHA BIBLE-PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

"Present every man perfect in Christ Jesus" (Colossians 1:28)

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Sunday School: 9.45 am Worship Service: 10.45 am Wednesday Prayer Meeting: 8.00 pm

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BIBLICAL CHARACTERISTICS OF GODLY LEADERS

Introduction

The world generally agrees that there are certain people who are born with leadership qualities or born to lead. However, the Word of God differs from such notion or perception. In the secular world, a leader may be placed in a position of leadership simply because he or she possesses certain natural talents, ability or leadership qualities recognized by their superior or by their peers; but in the spiritual realm, leaders have to be divinely called and cultivated or prepared through time by the grace of God nurtured in the Spirit of God, not simply by recognition of certain abilities, talents or leadership qualities. What are some of the characteristics of spiritual leaders? First, a godly leader is someone who is called of God to lead and must be prepared to serve as servant-leaders. Second, a godly leader must also love God, His Word and seek to be Spirit filled by walking in the Spirit in obedience. Lastly, a godly leader must possess due passion for the work of God and compassion and burden for the lost. We shall consider the three main points with regard to the biblical characteristics of godly leaders.

A Leader Must be Cultivated and Prepared to Serve Others

While it may be true in the corporate world, the management often simply assigns and dispatches their subordinates to run the errands without being the need to be personally involved. However, according to the Word of God, it is different in the spiritual realm. This means, no one is called only to be a leader, but the greatest leaders should also be greatest servants who actively serve as he leads. Spiritual leaders are first prepared by being followers and servants of others. Just as Joshua was a follower of Moses (Exodus 17:9,10); as Elisha a follower of Elijah (1 Kings 19:21); as Peter, James, John and Paul (and other disciples of Jesus) were followers of Christ (Matthew 4:20,22); as early Christians were followers of Paul and other Apostles (Philippians 3:17; Hebrews 6:12; 1 Corinthians 4:16; 11:1). Of course, every Christian should be most concerned about following our LORD and Saviour, Jesus Christ as the ultimate and perfect example (Ephesians 5:1; Philippians 2:5-8). Thus, before a person is called to lead, the Bible tells that God would prepare the person to learn how to be a follower of someone before he can lead others, as a servant-leader.

Not only that every great leader must be a follower first, but they must also be faithful servants and remain so for the rest of his calling as servants of others. Did not our Lord remind us in Matthew 20:25-28, "...Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise **dominion over them**, and they that are **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: *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister...*" This explicitly teaches us that we are all called to be servants of Jesus Christ and are to serve one another, unlike in the secular world that exercises authority upon them. Those who rule among God's people would be ministers or servants to most people as our LORD said, "**greatest among you shall be your servant**" (Matthew 23:11) in God's church. For, even our LORD, while He was on His earthly ministry, came **not be ministered but to minister** (Matthew 20:28b) and so as Moses who was also the **servant in the household of Israel** (Hebrews 3:5)!

A Godly Leader Must Love God and be Filled by the Holy Spirit!

Having called by God, cultivated and prepared as a leader, a leader must also possess great love for God and seek to be filled with His Spirit in order to serve Him effectively and bringing glory and honour to God. For without the love for God and the enablement and empowerment of the Holy Spirit in their lives and in the service, the leader may render all his effort in the service in vain.

Yet, what does it mean to love God? Our Lord quoting Deuteronomy 6:5 which says that we are to **love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind** (Matthew 22:37; Mark 12:30), but what are the implications of loving God in such a manner? A person who loves God with all his heart, soul and mind should exhibit his love for the Word of God and seek to keep all the commandments. Such deportment can be observed in the lives of Moses, Joshua, Ezra, Nehemiah, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Daniel, Ezekiel, Paul, John, Peter, James, John and all the rest of great men and women in the Bible. These saints who had been both **great lovers of God** and also **great lover of God's Holy and infallible Word** and resolve to keep them above all cost throughout their lives. In other words, these who were leaders themselves among God's people, exhibited their love for God by studying His Word diligently (2 Timothy 2:15), mediating them (Psalm 119:15) and resolve to keep (Ezra 7:10) them, which was what our LORD requires of us if anyone claims to loves Him (John 14:15; Psalm 119:4). To keep God's commandments, one need to **read, study and meditate upon** them daily, especially, if one is called to be a spiritual leader in any capacity. Only when a spiritual leader manifest his love by reading, studying and keeping God's Word, he is qualified to be a leader as he sets a good example for God's flock to follow (1 Peter 5:3). Thus, another important characteristic of a godly leader is someone who loves the LORD, and this requires his observance of the Word of God diligently as part of his calling.

What would be the natural consequences of one who loves God and abides in His Word? When a person loves God, studies and obeys His truth, he would naturally be filled with the Holy Spirit of God because he walks in the Spirit of God (Galatians 5:18-23), who is also the Spirit of Truth (1 John 4:6). When he is filled with the Spirit of God, he would be sensitive to the will of God, be dependent on the grace of God as he serves and be empowered by the Spirit of God in his service. Just as Moses under the divine inspiration rightly said, "*... enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!*" (Numbers 11:29). Note that Moses said that not only those who are chosen are fit to be leaders but also those whom **'the LORD would put His Spirit upon'** are apt to be leaders among God's people! The same is true for God's chosen priests in the Old Testament (Exodus 28:3); Joshua, the faithful servant of Moses (Numbers 27:18; Deuteronomy 34:9); David, the man after God's own heart (1 Samuel 16:13); Daniel, one who defies not

himself for the sake of the LORD (Daniel 5:11); the first deacons in the early church (Acts 6:3), especially Stephen (Acts 7); they were all Spirit filled men who love the LORD and His Word! No Christian can do anything meaningful or God honouring without the Spirit of God upon him (Ephesians 5:18). For, without Christ, we can do nothing (John 15:5), that is, nothing positive can come out in the service of God without Christ. Zechariah 4:6 says, **"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the LORD of hosts"**.

First, when a person who is Spirit filled, he would be **self-sacrificial**. Just like Moses who was prepared to take on the punishment for the disobedient Israelites (Exodus 32:32); or Paul who **endured all things for the elect's sakes** (2 Timothy 2:10) so that some may be saved; or willingness to mind others need or to show concern for others by offering help voluntarily (Philippians 2:4), not just verbally or superficially (James 2:15,16), leaders who are Spirit filled are willing to sacrifice for their flock either spiritually or even physically. **Second**, a Spirit filled leader would also exhibit **self-denial**. Jesus said, **"If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me** (Matthew 16:24). This implies that such persons would never seek any recognition of man but always render glory to Christ for all the tasks or accomplishments that God enabled him (Philippians 1:21) as a self-less and humble servant. This also means that there should be no arrogance or pride to be found in his demeanour or speech but exhibiting only spirit of humility, obedience and submission before God and man (Matthew 11:29; 1 Peter 5:5,6; Proverbs 29:23) as examples to others, for God resists the proud but gives grace to the humble (James 4:6). Therefore, it is pivotal that a leader should love God, study His word and keep them, as the result of this, one may be filled with His Spirit prepared and empowered in the service as godly leaders.

A Godly Leader Must Possess Passion for God's Work and Compassion for the Lost!

Lastly but not the least, a godly leader must also possess great passion or zeal for God's work and compassion for the lost. A person can be called and prepared and ready to serve, but if one does not possess passion for God's work and the compassion for the lost, it is futile if he possess no genuine motive for service, but just out of sheer duty.

Again, we can observe the lives of all the great men and women in the Bible who not only love God, Spirit filled and ready to serve but they also possess great passion or zeal for God's work such as Moses, Joshua, David, Caleb, Elijah, Ezra, Jeremiah, Ezekiel and all the prophets, and the Apostles and many disciples of our LORD. What are the implications of being passionate and zealous for the work of the LORD as a leader? **First**, such persons are ones who are self-motivated and not slothful in business, but fervent in spirit (Romans 12:11; Galatians 1:14), zealous of good works (Titus 2:14). **Second**, he who is passionate for the service of God also means that he is committed to serve because he knows that it is a reasonable service to the LORD (Romans 12:1) and a calling (1 Peter 2:9; 1 Timothy 3:1; 2 Corinthians 9:8), that is, he is willing to sacrifice his **time, energy and resources** voluntarily without reservation for the sake of his Master and Lord (Luke 5:11; 9:23).

How about compassion for the lost? Not just the leaders, all of us who are saved are called to imitate Christ's example. When our Lord saw the multitude in Matthew 9, **he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted,**

and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd (Matthew 9:36). The Lord was not simply caring for their physical needs, but He saw them as lost sheep, that was what prompted his compassion as spiritual harvest are ready (Matthew 9:37,38). If the LORD said that he came **to seek and save the lost** (Luke 19:10), should we not all the more be motivated with compassion **to seek and save** the lost by reaching out to sinners in anyway we can with every resource we have? Or, perhaps, you do not realize the seriousness what awaits each of us when we meet Christ face to face and also give an account before Him? Realizing such grave responsibility and burden as in his calling **as an Apostle**, Paul cried out, **"woe is unto me, if I preach not the gospel!"** (1 Corinthians 9:16). Are we all not called to preach the Word? Yes! For, the great commission is not just reserved for those who stand behind the pulpit, elders and missionaries or those who had undergone theological training, but for every obedient child of God to the Great Commission. Some may say, "the time is just not right, may be I shall wait a while," but Paul said, **"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season"** (2 Timothy 4:2). Others may argue, "It is up to God to save the lost, so there is nothing much we could do." Then what is the use of Paul, Peter, James, John and even our LORD proclaiming the gospel during their days? Paul said, **"How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher?"** (Romans 10:14). Is not the preaching of the cross the power of God unto salvation? (1 Corinthians 1:18). It is often a misunderstanding of our Arminian brethren that label reformed and Calvinistic churches as churches that never evangelize. We need to correct that false impression of our reformed faith and need to be more actively involved in the evangelistic outreach to the saving of souls as we are to go and share the gospel and pray for the conversion of sinners or encourage others to go, peradventure, God may save some according to His sovereign will and His mercy.

Conclusion

Therefore, a godly leader must be someone who is divinely called and prepared to serve as a servant leader. As a leader, he must love God and His Word and endeavor to abide in them in order to walk in the Spirit of God and be filled by Him. He must also possess passion for the work of God and passion for the lost by actively engaging in the saving of souls and praying for their conversion. May God help us.

David Weng

Q & A

I have regular arguments with my spouse and now there seem to be a strain in our relationship and is less than fulfilling. How should we address or mend this?

It is not uncommon to have disagreements between couples from time to time. Anger, excessive work, frustration with each other and the problems with children, school, home, and even leisure can cause conflict and tension between couples and may affect your marriage. You need to take notice of it and do something

about it before it is too late! The fact is, any marriage can be threatened, no matter how fabulous it was when you started out and Satan will try to destroy it if possible. If you do not care for and nurture your marital relationship, then your marriage can be in potential danger.

Many will probably gave their relationship more time and attention when it was new, and now, after being married for several years and that newness has worn off, and so has the excitement and that has to be checked.

Marriages can be in trouble when we stop spending time and energy on our relationship with God and our mate and substitute it for work, friends, leisure, the children or even some legitimate hobbies or interest. Some couples seldom even eat meals together, or share the same room (due to overseas travelling or other reasons) and rarely talk about or show their love to each other. There is a possibility that it can become a weakened relationship! (An average American couple speaks to each other about 12 minutes a day as revealed in a survey done the US a few years ago.)

To get that joy back in marriage from the Lord and the joy and blessed fulfillment back in your marriage, you need to work on it in the Lord. The fact is, fulfilling, happy marriages do not just happen, they have to be pursued and realised with conscious effort and love by God's enabling grace and mercies.

Here are five pointers to help you get back on track into your marriage:

1. **Put God first and then each other at the second (Matthew 6:33).** Move each other to the second of your to-do lists, just below your love and devotion to and for Jesus. Make spending time together a priority, just as you did when you were first dating. We are amazed at how many spouses and children spent time at home with one another for a few hours a week and thought it is sufficient. You need quantity time as well as real quality time **together to build up something meaningful.**

2. **Confess our sins to God and be forgiving and kind to each other (1 John 1:9).** Unresolved offenses and an unforgiving spirit block all kinds of intimacy - emotional, physical and spiritual. We know this from our own experience and from talking to many couples over the past one and half decade where marital love has grown cold. Trying to get close while the hurts remain is like trying to hurdle over a 100-metre fence. It will not happen **easily without a serious commitment and sacrifice and self surrender something has to go first? Is it pride, indifference, self-righteousness, anger, immoral practices, covetousness or your anger or jealousy or a negative stumbling block that has to go?** Something to think about.

3. **Make an effort to deepen relationships by purposeful interaction (Mark 3:13,14).** Most men tell us they were far more successful at connecting with their wives before marriage or before children. And many women report to us that as family responsibilities and challenges mount, they lose track of their husbands' most heartfelt needs. Recapturing the joy in your relationship requires that you get to deeply know your spouse all over again with intensive opportunities to pray, share and mull over things together. Get away on a holiday once a while and leave the job and kids alone for a while. Remember to turn off the handphone for a season and do not bring the laptop, the iPod or MP3 (and turn off the TV as well).

4. **Manage your thinking with godly discipline (Philippians 4:8).** Are you always negative, who always in your work, church, or spouses, and react angrily and retaliate? What are you playing over and over in your mind about your spouse? Can you change the way you think about him or her? You may have to do two things: (1) Be willing to want to love again with your spouse. (2) Manage and discipline your thoughts against unedifying notions. Focus your mind or thoughts on the qualities or events that caused you to love your spouse whom God gave to you in the first place.

5. **Rekindle your love for God and each other and have special times together (Ephesians 5:2).** Show your love to your spouse often and but even more important is making sure your spouse feels cherished. The need for just plain "good times" is very important. Decide with each other what fun time is like for the two of you. Then plan it and get away. Sit down with your calendar and be serious about setting time for not being so serious. This is not a time to deal with work, and other heavy issues. Let your spouse rediscover you with contentment and associate you with **God's given joy and blessing again. It is a great thing to be married to someone you love in the Lord and love is the lubricant that takes away the friction in life.**

We can rekindle the joy of being married again by deliberately honouring Christ in worship, service and prayer together and spending time with each other. As you do that, pray that God will revive and restore you and your marriage and nothing is impossible with God.

Jack Sin



Learning about the care & transportation of fishes at Qian Hu Fish Farm.



MYFers & Tweens united for an awesome task - catching small fishes.



Maranatha Family Day at the Vision Farm on National Day.



Combined NBC Get-together at Dn & Mrs Daniel Tau's home.



Join the MLF monthly meetings on 1st Sundays of the month (Seminar on the Ministry of Angels).



Do join the fortnightly Ladies BS at Pancy's home on Tuesday at 2pm.



Pastoral & Session Visitation at Peter & Serlin's home.

At the Pulpit
Theme for the Quarter:
Studies on 1 Peter: Testings In The Believers' Sojourn On Earth
Rev (Dr) Jack Sin
"The Christian Attitude Towards Sufferings"
(1 Pet 3:13-22)

[End of MM]