

4. Developing Qualified Leaders to Lead Churches

In our last topic, we concluded by mentioning that Paul left Crete without staying long enough to develop elders to lead the church in each city. As a result, Paul left Titus in Crete to appoint elders to lead the churches in each city on that island. Titus 1:5 says, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” Here, we see that Paul was saying that there were potential elders in every city, but those men needed further development, so they would become qualified for spiritual leadership. That was the responsibility Paul gave Titus when he left him in Crete.

In Titus 1:6-9, Paul gave Titus a list of the qualifications to use to guide him as he helped new Christians mature so they would become qualified for spiritual leadership. Titus 1:6-9 says, “if a man is blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of dissipation or insubordination. For a bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” We might summarize this list by saying that Titus was to help potential leaders:

- develop a respected life
- develop a healthy marriage
- develop a healthy family relationship
- become Christ-centered, not self-centered
- deal with former sinful habits
- learn to use their homes for ministry
- develop godly character
- learn to teach the Word of God
- learn to correct those who contradict

Qualifications are given primarily to qualify people not disqualify people. At the time a person becomes a new Christian, he usually meets few, if any, of these qualifications. Paul told Titus to appoint elders, that met these qualifications, in every city. Paul made it very clear that he felt that men in every city would become qualified if someone would help them develop and grow spiritually. Paul had not appointed those leaders, because they still needed help to grow and mature to become qualified. That meant that the primary ministry of Titus was to help unqualified men grow and mature in their Christian lives so they would become qualified for spiritual leadership.

Today, many churches have reversed the process. Instead of helping people mature and become qualified, churches have done one of two things. Some churches just ignore qualifications. Other churches go to the opposite extreme and use these qualifications to disqualify people, instead of using them as a guide to help them know how to help people mature spiritually and become qualified for spiritual leadership. Either approach will make it difficult for churches to develop and become the church Christ wants them to be.

From time to time, missionaries, church planters, or pastors tell me that they have no men in their

group, or church, qualified for spiritual leadership. I ask them to make a list of each of the men in their group or church. Then, we take the list and go through the list of men individual-by-individual. With each name, I ask the person to list, from the list above, the specific areas where that man is not qualified. In many cases, the person will list two or three qualifications the man does not meet. I may conclude with the man who has been a Christian for just a few weeks. Often, the missionary, church planter, or pastor will tell me that the new Christian is not qualified in any of the areas listed by Titus. I say that is exactly the point. When we first became Christians, none of us were qualified, but someone helped us grow and become qualified for spiritual leadership.

Then, I ask the missionary, church planter or pastor to read Titus 1:5 to me. He reads the verse, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” I then ask the question, “What does this verse say is your primary responsibility to each of the men on that list?” Sometimes, it takes a while for the person to begin to realize that this verse teaches that his primary responsibility is to help each man become qualified for spiritual leadership in the one, two, three, or more areas where he is not yet qualified.

With most, I then read Mark 3:13-14. “And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach.” Then I ask, “What was the first thing Christ did to help the Twelve become qualified for spiritual leadership?” Even though it takes a while, these leaders finally realize that the first reason Christ chose the Twelve was so they could be with Him.

Then, I point out that at least five things happened as these men were with Christ. First, they were able to observe the character of Christ, and as a result, eleven of the twelve began to become more like Christ in their character. Second, they were able to observe His prayer life as He prayed to the Father, and they learned how to build their relationship with the Father. Third, they were able to hear what Christ taught and see how to answer the questions that various people asked Him. Fourth, they were able to see how Christ taught what He taught, so they were being shown how to teach. Fifth, they were being shown how to do the work Christ would later commission them to do.

Later, in Matthew 28:19-20, Christ commissioned them to: Make Disciples. The disciples knew how Christ had helped them to become disciples, and so, when the church began on the Day of Pentecost, they immediately began doing the same things. Acts 2:42 says, “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.” The 120 disciples mentioned in Acts 1:15 immediately began to meet in small groups with the new believers. First, this gave the new believers daily opportunities to observe the character of the disciples. Second, they were learning to pray as they observed the prayer life of the disciples and prayed together. Third, they heard the apostles' doctrine (the teachings of Christ) and were getting their questions answered. Fourth, they were being shown how to teach the Word of God to others. Fifth, they were being shown how to do work Christ commissioned all Christians to do.

I then share with missionaries, church planters, and pastors who say they have no leaders that their

first priority is to help leaders develop. I mention that this will only happen as they spend time with the men, either individually, or in a small group, to give them the opportunity to grow by observing the life of the person with whom I am talking. These times together need to focus on the four things mentioned in Acts 2:42. “And they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.”

- Christ’s teachings
- fellowship
- eating together
- prayer

Second, I ask, “What areas does this list of qualifications say you need to help the first man on the list to grow in his spiritual life in order to become qualified?” Then, I share with the person what book or books of the Bible will be the most helpful to study in order to help that person become qualified for spiritual leadership in the areas where that person is lacking. I then repeat this second question about each man the person has listed. After going through the list of men, I ask the person to begin praying and asking the Lord to show Him which men to focus on in order to help them develop their spiritual leadership in the areas where they are not yet qualified.

One of the most common responses at this point is, “I don’t have enough time to meet regularly with some of those men individually or in a small group.” At that point, two key verses to examine together are Ephesians 5:16-17, “Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is.” Here, we see that the Lord wants us to make the best use of our time, because we already know that it is the will of the Lord to **Make Disciples**. I point out that the real question is, “According to the Word of God, “What are your priorities?”

Sometimes, it helps to suggest times they can meet with one man or a small group of men – times like: lunch hour, before or after work, taking one or two with them as they minister, before or after a regular meeting of the church, or other times that fit their local culture. Every person has the same number of hours in a week. That is why the key question is, “What are your priorities?” A key priority of every person who is already in spiritual leadership is to help one or more people become qualified for spiritual leadership.

The Lord wants to use each one of us to Make Disciples. As we are obedient to that command of Christ, we will help unqualified people develop and become qualified for spiritual leadership. The Lord will use our ministry of helping unqualified people become qualified to help build His church. May the Lord richly bless you as you help others grow spiritually and become qualified for spiritual leadership.