

## 10. Learning to Qualify Men as Elders – Part 1

The books of 1 and 2 Timothy along with Titus were written by Paul to give instruction to Timothy and Titus about how to develop and qualify people for spiritual leadership. These instructions to Timothy and Titus also give us the instructions that we need to qualify people for spiritual leadership and help them to understand how they are to minister as spiritual leaders. In this topic, and the next, we will see what Titus was to do to qualify men to serve as elders in each church. The principles that Paul gave to Titus are the same principles that we need to follow as we develop leadership in each local church.

Paul began this letter by telling Titus how the Lord had worked in his life. Titus 1:1-3 says, “Paul, a bondservant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ, according to the faith of God's elect and the acknowledgment of the truth which accords with godliness, in hope of eternal life which God, who cannot lie, promised before time began, but has in due time manifested His word through preaching, which was committed to me according to the commandment of God our Savior.” First, we see that Paul called himself a bondservant of God. The word that is translated “bondservant” was the word that was used to describe a slave in the Roman Empire. However, instead of being a slave to some man, Paul said that he was a bondservant of God.

In the same way, we want to help others understand that this is the nature of Biblical leadership. In Mark 10:42-45, “But Jesus called them to *Himself* and said to them, ‘You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’” Here, we see that spiritual leadership means learning to be a slave (bondservant) of all. In order to be the slave of all, we need to help our children learn to become the bondservants of God.

Christian leaders do not have any authority in themselves. In Matthew 28:18, “And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, ‘All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.’” Christ has been given all authority. First, we see that all Christians are to be servants (ministers) to others under the authority of Christ. Galatians 5:13 explains what this means when that verse says, “For you, brethren, have been called to liberty; only do not *use* liberty as an opportunity for the flesh, but through love serve one another.” Here, we see that as Christians we are all to serve one another in love. We do not serve by sharing our own opinions. Instead, we serve one another in love when we share the principles of the Word of God in love.

The word that is translated “desires to be first” speaks about anything that is first in time, place or rank. In Acts 28:17 we read, “And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: ‘Men *and* brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans.’” Here, we see that the word meant all of the leaders of the Jews that lived in the city of Rome. As a result, we could translate the verse in Mark 10:44 “anyone who desires to be a leader.” Anyone who desires to be a leader among Christians is to be

a bondservant of God so that he can be an effective leader to all. Helping men to become bondservants of God is part of the process of developing them to be an effective leader to all.

Second, we see that Paul called himself an apostle of Jesus Christ. As an apostle of Jesus Christ, Paul was to give eyewitness testimony of the resurrection of Christ. Acts 1:21-22 gives us the qualifications of an apostle when those verses say, “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.” Paul saw Christ on the road to Damascus and Ananias was told in Acts 9:15-16, “But the Lord said to him, ‘Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake.’” Christ chose Paul to be His apostle and said he would take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

Paul also looked at men who were potential leaders by looking at the past, the present and the future. First, in looking at the past, Paul said that God’s elect came to a true faith in Christ. Second, in the present, Paul said that leaders are to come to a precise and correct knowledge of the truth, which will lead them to godly living. Third, in the future, Paul said that godly leaders have the hope (confident assurance) of the salvation and eternal life that God promised before the world began. Although that was the plan of God before the world began, God has revealed that plan to the world through the Word of God and the preaching of the Gospel. Paul gave all potential leaders an example by the fact that He continually used the Word of God as he explained the Gospel wherever he went.

Titus 1:4 goes on to say, “To Titus, a true son in *our* common faith: Grace, mercy, *and* peace from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior.” Here, we see that Paul called Titus a true son in our common faith. Here, we see that Paul taught by his example as he developed men who had become true sons in the faith. 1 Corinthians 4:17 says, “For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord, who will remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach everywhere in every church.” Timothy and Titus plus many others were sons of Paul in the faith. We see several characteristics of a true son in the faith. A true son in the faith knows that he is loved. He is faithful to the Lord. He points to the example of his spiritual father and shows how that example agrees with the Word of God. He is able to say that his spiritual father is consistent in his teaching because he always taught the Word of God in every church where he preached. A spiritual son is following that example by teaching the Word of God and not his own opinions.

We also see the ministry that Paul had asked Titus to carry out as we come to verse five. 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 Titus had been left on the island of Crete for a specific purpose. We will explain that purpose more fully in a moment but first we need to understand a little about the island of Crete. Crete is an island that is 160 miles long. The island is 37 miles wide at its widest point. At the time of Paul, the island contained various cities scattered along the length of the island. This is important to know and understand

these facts about Crete because they help us to understand the ministry that Paul gave to Titus.

We see that Titus was instructed to do two things to carry out the purpose for which Paul had left him in Crete. First, Titus was to set in order the things that were lacking. The word that is translated “the things that are lacking” is used six times in the New Testament: three in the book of James, two in the book of Titus and once in the book of Luke. The word is used twice in James 1:4-5 where we read, “But let patience have *its* perfect work, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him.” In verse 4, we see that Christians are to become mature so that they lack nothing. In verse 5, they are told what Christians are to do if they lack wisdom. In James 2:15, it talks about how to help those who lack daily food. In Titus 3:13, Titus was to make sure that two of the team members had what they needed as they traveled.

Here, we see that the churches were not yet fully organized and needed to be developed to the point where they could function on their own as churches. Paul had provided an example of how to do this throughout his ministry. Acts 14:21-23 says, “And when they had preached the gospel to that city and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the faith, and *saying*, ‘We must through many tribulations enter the kingdom of God.’ So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” In addition to preaching the Gospel, Paul and Barnabas made disciples, strengthened those disciples, encouraged their continuing growth in the faith, prepared them for tribulation and developed a team of leaders in every church. These were the same things that Titus was to do to help these churches become fully organized and able to carry on their ministry on their own.

The second thing Titus was to do was to appoint leaders for the churches in every city. The qualifications for that leadership will be in our next topic. Here, we see the most important ministry of church planters or members of a church leadership team. They are to help men become qualified for spiritual leadership. Today, many churches say that they have no leaders because no one is qualified. Others appoint leaders who are not qualified. A key part of the ministry of Titus was to help potential leaders become qualified. We might ask the question this way, “Was Titus left in Crete to disqualify men or qualify men for spiritual leadership?” The way you answer that question will greatly change the way that you serve as a bondservant of Jesus Christ in your ministry.

We want to help our physical and spiritual children learn how to help men become qualified for spiritual leadership. We will see in our next topic that most of the qualifications for spiritual leadership are character-related because qualified leaders lead others by godly example and the teaching of sound doctrine. That is our goal as we help our children learn to develop other potential spiritual leaders. May the Lord richly bless you as you help your children learn to qualify men for spiritual leadership.