

Leaders Are To Lead

By Jason Hilburn

Throughout history God has revealed that in any group of people there is a great need for leadership. A system of authority can bring order out of chaos, and peace out of strife. Even in a group of only two people, such as the husband and wife, God has placed one in authority over the other, giving the husband the leadership of the household (Eph. 5:22-24). There is also a type of leadership in the Godhead Itself, in that God the Father is Head (Psa. 104:30; 1 Cor. 11:3; 15:27-28). It is therefore no surprise that God would establish a system of leadership in the precious Body purchased by the blood of His Son (Acts 20:28; 1 Pet. 1:18-19). God has revealed that He desires every congregation of the Lord's Church to be led by Scripturally qualified elders: "And when they had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23; cf. Tit. 1:5-9; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; 1 Pet. 5:1-3). Because of their God-given authority and duty, elders can rightfully be called the "leaders" of the congregation.

The very word "leader" implies that this is one who is not merely passively observing, but rather actively leading the way, as a shepherd leading a flock of sheep. The illustration of elders as shepherds is used several times in the Scriptures. Paul admonished the elders at Ephesus, "Take heed therefore unto yourselves, and to all the flock, over the which the Holy Ghost hath made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he hath purchased with his own blood. For I know this, that after my departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:28-29; cf. 1 Pet. 5:1-3). The word translated as "feed" can actually mean "to tend as a shepherd" (*Strong's*), and of course the use of such words as "flock" and "wolves" gives the reader a picture of shepherds overseeing sheep. Paul also called elders "pastors" (Eph. 4:11), which means "shepherds." When the Holy Spirit inspired David the shepherd to write "The Shepherd Psalm," He made it clear that a good shepherd leads his sheep to safety: "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake" (Psa. 23:1-3). Christ, the "Shepherd and Bishop of our souls" has led the way for His sheep, leaving an example that man should follow to get to Heaven (1 Pet. 2:21-25; John 10:27). With all of this in mind, godly leaders will be taking an active lead in the work of the church, setting an example the flock can follow to get to the safety of Heaven.

Elders Should Take the Lead in Benevolence

If it is the duty of every Christian to "do good unto all men" (Gal. 6:10; cf. Acts 4:32-35; 11:27-30), then certainly the leaders of the congregation should lead the way in such efforts! While having a proper understanding of their God-given authority, godly elders will also have an attitude of servitude. It is understood that others may need to be appointed to "serve tables" (Acts 6:2), but even our Lord, the Great Second Person of the Godhead, possessed the

heart of a servant who was kind and helpful to others. He left that humble example for all of His sheep to follow--even elders (John 13:3-17; Matt. 23:11-12; 25:34-46; Phil. 2:5-9). If shepherds are following the Great Shepherd, they will be seeking ways to help and serve others. Members of the local congregation should see a pattern of benevolence in the elders that they can follow. If elders are not benevolent, are they leading the flock in the right direction by their example?

Elders Should Take the Lead in Edification

If it is the duty of every Christian to edify their brethren (Eph. 4:11-12, 16, 29; Rom. 14:19; 1 Thess. 5:11), then certainly the leaders of the congregation should be great examples of those who edify! If anyone in the congregation should seek to “build up” the members, surely it should be the elders, the ones watching for the souls of the flock (Heb. 13:17). Members of the local congregation should see a pattern of edification in their leaders that they can follow. If elders are not those who build up their brethren, provoking them “unto love and to good works” (Heb. 10:24), are they leading the flock in the right direction by their example?

Elders Should Take the Lead in Evangelism

If it is the duty of every Christian to be evangelistic (Mark 16:15-16; Matt. 28:19-20; 2 Tim. 2:2), then certainly the leaders of the congregation should lead the way in evangelistic efforts! The Chief Shepherd came “to seek and to save that which was lost” (Luke 19:10). If shepherds are following the Chief Shepherd, they will always be looking for opportunities to teach people the Truth of the Gospel, knowing that their mission is the same as the Lord’s. Members of the local congregation should see a pattern of evangelism in the elders that they can follow. If elders are not evangelistic, are they leading the flock in the right direction by their example?

Conclusion

In every aspect of their lives, elders should be actively setting examples which can be safely followed by the flock. The writer of Hebrews wrote, “Remember them which have the rule over you, who have spoken unto you the word of God: whose faith follow, considering the end of their conversation” (Heb. 13:7). If today’s members of the Lord’s church follow the pattern of the elders who are leading them, will those members go to Heaven? If not, then those elders will not be in Heaven either! May the shepherds of the Lord’s church actively lead the sheep by their godly examples to the safety of Heaven, where the Chief Shepherd awaits.

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