

2. Basic Qualifications for Spiritual Leadership

In our last topic, we discussed Five Priorities of Spiritual Leadership. In that topic, we mentioned the basic qualifications given to Moses for spiritual leadership. Today, we will look at those qualifications in more detail. We will also look at the list of basic qualifications given for spiritual leadership, by the apostles, for the church at Jerusalem.

In Exodus 18:21, Moses was told, “Moreover you shall select from all the people able men, such as fear God, men of truth, hating covetousness; and place *such* over them *to be* rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens.” In this verse, we see that Moses was to pick:

- ◆ Able men – men of valor or godly strength
- ◆ Men who fear God
- ◆ Men of truth
- ◆ Men who hate covetousness

Then, in Acts 6:3, the apostles told the church, ““Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business.” In this verse, we see the following basic qualifications for spiritual leadership:

- ◆ Men of good reputation
- ◆ Men full of the Holy Spirit
- ◆ Men full of wisdom

As we look at these two lists, we see that the first thing mentioned is able men (men of valor or godly strength). One of the greatest dangers in spiritual leadership is when Christian leaders depend on their own strength, instead of doing what they do in the strength of the Lord. As a result, we help people become godly leaders by helping them learn to depend on the strength of the Lord, instead of self-effort. Isaiah 40:31 tells how we renew our strength, so that we are depending on the strength of the Lord. That verse says, “But those who wait on the LORD shall renew *their* strength; they shall mount up with wings like eagles, they shall run and not be weary, they shall walk and not faint.”

Then, 2 Corinthians 4:16 tells us, “Therefore we do not lose heart. Even though our outward man is perishing, yet the inward *man* is being renewed day by day.” In these two verses, we see how we become people of godly strength. As we wait on the Lord in prayer and meditation, He renews our strength. In renewing our strength, the Lord is renewing our inner man, and that gives us strength of character. We are to show people how to develop this godly character and inner strength by our own example.

Second, we see that we are to select people for spiritual leadership who fear God. The word that is translated “fear” means *to stand in awe of and show honor and respect to God*. Leaders will either fear God or fear men. Those who fear men will not make effective spiritual leaders because they will seek to please men rather than pleasing God. In contrast, those who fear God will be free to serve God in His power, instead of in their own strength. 2 Timothy 1:7 says, “For God has not

given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind.” People will learn to have a godly fear as they see it modeled in our lives.

Third, we are to select men of truth. This speaks of the fact that we are to select people who speak the truth because they can be counted on to be faithful men. In Ephesians 4:15, we read, “...but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—...” In this verse, we see that speaking truth is directly related to growing spiritual maturity. As people grow in spiritual maturity, they become known as people of truth, because they speak the truth and have spiritual stability in their lives.

Fourth, we are to select people who hate covetousness. A covetous person is a person who is greedy. God says that such people do not make good spiritual leaders because they will be influenced by money or things, instead of being led by God. According to 1 Timothy 6:6-8, we are to show contentment by our own example, “Now godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into *this* world, *and it is* certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and clothing, with these we shall be content.” As Christians learn to practice contentment, they will, at the same time, learn to hate covetousness.

Fifth, we are to select as leaders those who have a good reputation. The word that is translated “a good reputation” speaks of those who have an honorable testimony. When they speak about the Lord, their life backs up what they say. Their actions and their words are in agreement. We have all heard the statement, “Your actions speak so loudly I can’t hear what you say.” Those who are going to be effective spiritual leaders will have people listen to what they say because their words and their actions are in agreement.

Sixth, we are to select people for spiritual leadership who are full of the Holy Spirit. A person who is full of the Holy Spirit is one who has learned to walk in the Spirit (Galatians 5:16), be led by the Spirit (Galatians 5:18), bear the fruit of the Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23) and be filled with the Spirit (Ephesians 5:18). Here, we see one reason why it is very important to help new Christians learn to yield to the Holy Spirit, as a part of what we teach them, to help them begin growing in their spiritual lives. If they learn to yield to the Holy Spirit from the time they are new Christians, their lives will quickly begin to demonstrate the fruit of the Spirit because they are walking in the Spirit and being led by the Spirit. At every moment they are yielding to the Spirit, they are also filled with the Spirit.

The seventh qualification for basic spiritual leadership is to be full of wisdom. James 3:15-17 makes the contrast between worldly wisdom and godly wisdom. Those verses say, “This wisdom does not descend from above, but *is* earthly, sensual, demonic. For where envy and self-seeking *exist*, confusion and every evil thing *are* there. But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, willing to yield, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality and without hypocrisy.” A spiritual leader is to be full of godly wisdom. James 1:5 tells how we get godly wisdom, “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.”

As you can see, basic qualifications for spiritual leadership have nothing to do with speaking ability, personal charisma, or any of the other things the world looks for in leaders. Instead, the basic qualifications for spiritual leadership are all related to godly character. This is due to the fact that spiritual leaders are to lead others and not drive them. Godly leaders lead by character and example.

Remember that the original disciples were even failures as fishermen when they depended on their own strength, according to John 21:1-6. That is why Christ told them, in Luke 24:49, “Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high.” The contrast to this is seen in Acts 4:13, where they were depending on the Holy Spirit. That verse tells us, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated and untrained men, they marveled. And they realized that they had been with Jesus.”

If a person is depending on the Holy Spirit, instead of himself, Ephesians 3:20-21 tells us what God can do through that person. “Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him *be* glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.” May the Lord richly bless you as you help others develop basic qualifications for spiritual leadership.