

30. Church Leadership

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I. General

Good leadership is one of the most important prerequisites for a healthy church. For a church to function effectively it is critical that leaders know and do what is required of them. It is also important for church members to know what they should expect of leaders – and how they can support their leaders.

Note that a number of verses in this chapter speak of Paul and other NT leaders in their work overseeing a number of churches, or of leaders of the nation of Israel. Such verses are generally readily applicable to leaders of local churches today, and to their relationship with church members.

Required Characteristics

Godliness

For the overseer must be blameless as one entrusted with God's work, not arrogant, not prone to anger, not a drunkard, not violent, not greedy for gain. ⁸*Instead he must be hospitable, devoted to what is good, sensible, upright, devout, and self-controlled.* [TITUS 1:7-8](#)

Wisdom

[MOSES, TO THE ISRAELITES:] *Select wise and practical men, those known among your tribes, whom I may appoint as your leaders.* [DEUTERONOMY 1:13](#)

Strength and courage

[GOD, TO JOSHUA:] *Be strong and courageous, because you'll be leading this people to inherit the land that I promised to give their ancestors.* [JOSHUA 1:6 ISV](#)

Deep love for church members

[PAUL, TO CHURCH MEMBERS:] *Because of our love for you we were ready to share with you not only the Good News from God but even our own lives. You were so dear to us!* [1 THESSALONIANS 2:8 GNT](#)

False teachers typically deny Jesus Christ

Who, then, is the liar? It is those who say that Jesus is not the Messiah. Such people are the Enemies of Christ—they reject both the Father and the Son. [1 JOHN 2:22 GNT](#)

False teachers (in view here) typically deny or dilute key aspects of the gospel of Jesus Christ.

False Teachers (II): Guarding against Them

Watch out for false teachers and their teaching – so as not to be deceived

Watch out for false prophets, who come to you in sheep's clothing but inwardly are voracious wolves. [MATTHEW 7:15](#)

Let nobody deceive you with empty words, for because of these things God's wrath comes on the sons of disobedience. [EPHESIANS 5:6](#)

Test teachers by comparing their teaching with the Scriptures

The people of Berea were more open-minded than the people of Thessalonica. They were very willing to receive God's message, and every day they carefully examined the Scriptures to see if what Paul said was true. [ACTS 17:11 GW](#)

False teachers can be recognized by their "fruit"

You will recognize them by their fruit. Grapes are not gathered from thorns or figs from thistles, are they? ¹⁷In the same way, every good tree bears good fruit, but the bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸A good tree is not able to bear bad fruit, nor a bad tree to bear good fruit. [MATTHEW 7:16-18](#)

As used here, "fruit" is that which one's inner being or character produces – basically one's words and actions. In a secondary sense, the effect of one's words and actions – particularly on other people – is also one's produce or "fruit".

How to Teach

Explain God's word and truths

They [Levites] read from the book of God's law, explaining it and imparting insight. Thus the people gained understanding from what was read. [NEHEMIAH 8:8](#)

From morning until evening he [Paul] continued to explain the kingdom of God to them, trying to convince them about Jesus from the law of Moses and the Prophets. [ACTS 28:23B ISV](#)

The manner in which to teach

[PAUL, TO THE CHURCH LEADER TITUS:] Be sincere and serious in your teaching. ⁸Use sound words that cannot be criticized, so that your enemies may be put to shame by not having anything bad to say about us. [TITUS 2:7B-8 GNT](#)

[PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] Be very patient when you teach. [2 TIMOTHY 4:2B GW](#)

False Teachers (I): Their Teaching

False teachers speak lies and delusions of their own, while claiming God's authority

[JEREMIAH:] Then the LORD said to me, "Those [false] prophets are prophesying lies while claiming my authority! I did not send them. I did not commission them. I did not speak to them. They are prophesying to these people false visions, worthless predictions, and the delusions of their own mind. [JEREMIAH 14:14](#)

They say what their listeners like to hear – appealing and pleasant things

[JEREMIAH, WARNING HIS PEOPLE ABOUT FALSE PROPHETS:] They are filling you with false hopes. They are reporting visions of their own imaginations, not something the LORD has given them to say. ¹⁷They continually say to those who reject what the LORD has said, 'Things will go well for you!' They say to all those who follow the stubborn inclinations of their own hearts, 'Nothing bad will happen to you!'

[JEREMIAH 23:16B-17](#)

Managing the Church

As a leader, provide good leadership

Elders who provide effective leadership must be counted worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard in speaking and teaching. [1 TIMOTHY 5:17](#)

Be gentle and sparing in the use of authority

[PAUL, TO CHURCH MEMBERS:] Instead, we were gentle among you, like a nursing mother tenderly caring for her own children. [1 THESSALONIANS 2:7B ISV](#)

[PAUL, TO CHURCH MEMBERS:] For this reason, although in the Messiah I have complete freedom to order you to do what is proper, ⁹I prefer to make my appeal on the basis of love. [PHILEMON 1:8-9A ISV](#)

Be an example for others to follow

[PAUL, TO CHURCH MEMBERS:] For you know yourselves how you must imitate us, because we did not behave without discipline among you, ⁸and we did not eat anyone's food without paying. Instead, in toil and drudgery we worked night and day in order not to burden any of you. ⁹It was not because we do not have that right, but to give ourselves as an example for you to imitate. [2 THESSALONIANS 3:7-9](#)

Caring for Church Members

Be a shepherd taking care of God's flock

[PAUL, TO LEADERS:] Watch out for yourselves and for all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God that he obtained with the blood of his own Son. [ACTS 20:28](#)

Pray for church members

[PAUL, TO CHURCH MEMBERS:] We have not stopped praying for you since the first day we heard about you. In fact, we always pray that God will show you everything he wants you to do and that you may have all the wisdom and understanding that his Spirit gives.

[COLOSSIANS 1:9 CEV](#)

Strengthen members in the faith

[PAUL, TO CHURCH MEMBERS:] We are speaking in Christ before God, and *everything we do, dear friends, is to build you up.* 2 CORINTHIANS 12:19B

Work hard at helping church members

[PAUL, SPEAKING TO COLOSSIAN CHURCH MEMBERS ABOUT EPAPHRAS:] For I can testify that *he has worked hard for you and for those in Laodicea and Hierapolis.* COLOSSIANS 4:13

Confront church members over sin

[GOD, TO EZEKIEL:] Son of man, *confront Jerusalem with her abominable practices ...* EZEKIEL 16:2

Church Members' Duties to Leaders

Love your leaders

[PAUL, TO THE CORINTHIAN BELIEVERS:] You are so rich in all you have: in faith, speech, and knowledge, in your eagerness to help and in *your love for us.* 2 CORINTHIANS 8:7A GNT

Obey your leaders

Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with groaning, for that would be of no advantage to you. HEBREWS 13:17 ESV

Give your leaders material support

Now the one who receives instruction in the word must share all good things with the one who teaches it. GALATIANS 6:6

Remember the persecuted

II. Teaching in the Church

Teaching is one of the main roles of most church leaders. Good teaching is based on God's word, and should be delivered in accordance with the directions and sound examples found in Scripture. On the topic of teaching, one must also be aware of the characteristics of "false" teachers who are so often present in the church, so as to recognize them and deal with them.

What to Teach: God's Word

Teach and preach God's word

Every scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, ¹⁷that the person dedicated to God may be capable and equipped for every good work. 2 TIMOTHY 3:16–17

[PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] *Preach the word!* 2 TIMOTHY 4:2A NKJV

As such, teach God's commands and ways . . .

[JETHRO, TO MOSES:] *You should teach them God's commands and explain to them how they should live and what they should do.* EXODUS 18:20 GNT

. . . and teach the truths of the faith

[PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] *By pointing out such things to the brothers and sisters, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, having nourished yourself on the words of the faith and of the good teaching that you have followed.* 1 TIMOTHY 4:6

In v. 6a Paul exhorts Timothy to instruct the believers in the things that he had been writing about. These things were composed of or in line with the "words" or truths of the faith and the good teaching that Timothy himself had followed (v. 6b).

Moreover, read God's word in church worship

[PAUL, TO TIMOTHY:] Until I get there, *concentrate on reading Scripture in worship,* giving encouraging messages, and teaching people. 1 TIMOTHY 4:13 GW