

Sermon -- Qualities of Leadership  
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Those born into the Kingdom of God in the first resurrection are destined to be Kings and Priests in the World Tomorrow. In other words, they will be leaders, rulers, administrators, teachers, educators, planners and creators of a new and far better society. We need to be preparing now to assume leadership positions in that not far distant age.

Today I want to discuss qualities of leadership each of us ought to seek to develop in preparation for God's Kingdom. First, however, let's look at some examples of leadership and consider how critical the right kind of leadership is to the fate of nations, societies, and individuals. God warns us that following the wrong leadership can destroy us (Isaiah 9:16). On the other hand, Paul told Timothy that exercising the right kind of leadership could save both him and those he led (1 Timothy 4:16).

Genesis 3:17. Adam was assigned a leadership role in the first human family. But he failed miserably to lead his wife into a pattern of obedience to God. He failed to correct his wife's error when she sinned. And wound up following his wife's lead into sin. Both Adam and his wife failed in exercising proper qualities of leadership, and as a consequence they fell into sin and were cast out of God's presence.

Judges 2:7, 10-13. During the early period of the judges Israel had effective leaders in Joshua and his lieutenants, and under their leadership the nation served the Eternal, the true God. But after those leaders died out the nation lapsed into idolatry, following path of least resistance, seeking to blend in with the world around them, rather than following the path that God had set for them. As a consequence God gave them over to the hand of their enemies.

Later on, God gave Israel the kind of king they desired. 1 Samuel 12:13. However, when Saul failed to exhibit leadership qualities pleasing to God, he chose David to replace Saul. 1 Samuel 13:13-14. David was a man after God's own heart, but not the kind of man other humans would have been likely to choose as their leader. 1 Samuel 16:7.

Daniel was a captive slave who rose to a position of supreme leadership under powerful Gentile rulers. Why. Partly because he exhibited specific qualities of leadership that we will discuss today. One of those qualities was strength of character. Daniel 1:8. Daniel possessed humility. Daniel 2:30. He gave God due credit for what he was able to accomplish only with God's help. Daniel exhibited an excellent spirit, and developed a reputation for possessing knowledge and wisdom. Daniel 5:6. These are qualities of character and leadership that any of you can develop through diligent effort, with God's help.

As a matter of fact, the very fact that you're here indicates that you have already begun exercising desirable leadership qualities to some degree or another. Most people are not here today listening to God's word being taught. Something motivated you to be here today. Hopefully that something includes a genuine desire to please God, and you can build on that to grow into the kind of leader God wants you to become.

Acts 8:18-23. Simon Magus wanted a leadership role in the Church. But his motives were

selfish and lustful. He tried to buy influence and power. A wrongly motivated desire for power and control is evil, and disqualifies one for leadership in God's eyes.

Let's look now at specific qualities of leadership we should be striving to develop.

(1) Humility. Some people are driven by a lust for influence, recognition, control, for power over others, as was Simon Magus. However, a truly godly leader must be filled with a genuine humility motivated by love, as exemplified by Jesus Christ himself (Philippians 2:3-8). A leader must rid himself of vanity and self-righteousness. He must develop an attitude of wanting to render true service to others. And that often means being willing to sacrifice the self. As we carry on with lives of service to others, we must do so in humility and with graciousness, not begrudgingly nor with haughtiness. A pervasive spirit of humility and outgoing concern ought to be reflected in our interactions with other people (Romans 12:9-18).

Beware of a false humility springing from human ideas of righteousness (Colossians 2:18-23). Before you can expect to be exalted to a place of authority by God you must genuinely humble yourself and yield to him. James 4:6, 10. How are you doing with the legitimate responsibilities you have already? Men, are you proper leaders of your families -- uplifting, inspiring, guiding and setting a proper example in your conduct and attitude? Are you genuinely concerned about and looking after their well being in every way possible? Ladies, are you meekly discharging your responsibilities in serving the needs of your husband and children? If we're not humbly and diligently exercising the responsibilities God has given us already -- how can we expect to receive greater responsibilities later on?

(2) Love. God's entire plan is based on love -- outgoing concern -- for us. God is in the process of leading us into his Kingdom out of love for us, and a desire to share with us his life and everything he owns, which is, in fact, everything. God is in the process of building a family. Godly leadership is intended to be reflected in the family, and that's where it begins (Ephesians 5:25-33). Husbands are called upon to lead their families out of genuine love -- real concern for the well being of their wives (and children). Each husband should think about the needs of his wife -- physical, spiritual, emotional, intellectual -- and strive to see that those needs are met. Husbands, fathers, and wives too, should strive to build bonds of love in their families that cannot be broken. Every member of every family should be working actively toward that end. It is our duty before God.

Note how Paul approached leading the Church after a pattern of affection and care that one would expect of loving fathers and mothers (1 Thessalonians 2:7, 10-11). Fathers and mothers, are you gentle with one another and your children? Do you affectionately cherish your family members? Do you strive to be devout, just and blameless in your relations with one another? Do you lovingly exhort, implore and comfort your family? And can you extend that same loving approach to your church family? And then to everyone that you deal with? That's a tall order. But it's God's kind of leadership. And it begins with your most intimate relationships, within the family.

(3) Patience. A leader must exercise patience in dealing with others. Ephesians 6:4. This

implies working with children patiently and consistently. Not striking out in anger at every mistake, which is one way a child can be provoked to wrath. The same principle applies whether it's a family, a city or a nation. Ecclesiastes 7:8-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:14-15; 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

(4) Willing to suffer wrong. The leaders God has chosen have throughout history been maligned, hated, ridiculed, and persecuted wrongfully. Jesus Christ died as a despised criminal in the minds of his own countrymen. In any position of leadership there may very well be those who oppose, who will vilify and slander you. A godly leader must be willing to bear abuse without hatred and bitterness. Luke 6:22-23; 1 Corinthians 4:12-13; 1 Peter 2:19-23; 3:13-17.

(5) Vision. God has a vision of what he purposes for us. He wants us to have and be motivated by that same vision (Matthew 5:33). Do you have the vision of God's Kingdom in the forefront of your mind? Are the laws of God as frontlets before your eyes? All godly leaders must have vision and the faith to pursue it (Hebrews 11:8-16; 12:1-2).

(6) Strength of character. Daniel already mentioned. A leader must know the right, and have the fortitude and determination to do what's right. Proverbs 14:34; 29:2.

(7) A leader must lead. That means setting the right example, by following the example of Jesus Christ, who is the leader of us all. (1 Peter 1:15-16; 1 John 2:6).

We need now to begin to develop qualities of leadership according to godly principles, not out of a lust for power but so we'll be capable of taking on the responsibilities God has in mind for us in his Kingdom. And also so that our lives now can be lived to their full potential for accomplishment, fulfillment and joy. Let's strive to be in a position when Christ returns that he can say, "Well [done], good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord" (Matthew 25:21).