

Becoming a Biblical Leader **Jonathan Anderson**

The church matters. As Robert Saucy writes, “Throughout the course of history God has worked in the world in a variety of ways through individuals, nations, and peoples. The focus of His present work is the church.... Not only is Christ building His church, but it is the primary instrument through which He ministers in the world.”¹

Church leadership matters. Leaders in the church have a significant impact on the health and maturity of the congregation and the resulting ministry on behalf of Christ. This is why the New Testament provides such clear teaching regarding appointing leadership in the church and why it spends a significant amount of time providing instruction to church leaders.

Biblical church leadership looks very different from the leadership of the world, and so it must be intentionally cultivated through the study and application of God’s word. Being a faithful and effective leader in the church involves many things. The Scriptures highlight God’s grace in choosing and enabling leaders, apart from which they can do nothing. They also instruct regarding the needed character and gifts for godly leadership.

Being a leader is more than having a title or filling an office. John MacArthur writes, “To put it simply, leadership is influence.”² It means having people follow. However, we must not simply be concerned that people are following us as leaders, but with how we are motivating them and why we desire them to follow. Unlike worldly leaders, biblical leaders do not lord it over for selfish gain; instead, they serve and lead by example for the glory of Christ. They do not manipulate others with clever words, but rather they clearly speak the truth of God so that He will be understood, exalted, and obeyed.

In addition to being careful about how and why they lead, biblical leaders must also be intentional about where they lead others. They must have a clear biblical direction. This is why Paul wrote to Timothy, a young church leader, in 1 Timothy 3:15, “In case I am delayed, I write so that you will know how one ought to conduct himself in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, the pillar and support of the truth.” To lead the church, Timothy needed to know the truth and understand and appreciate the church. Such is the case for every church leader.

¹ Robert Saucy, *The Church in God’s Program* (Chicago: IL, Moody, 1972), 7.

² John MacArthur, *Called to Lead* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2004), vi.

But church leaders must not only be concerned with being biblical leaders themselves. They must also be intentional to cultivate future leaders. Throughout Paul's ministry, he was faithful to pour into the next generation of church leaders. Men like Timothy and Titus were equipped and encouraged by Paul. As he neared the end of his life and ministry, Paul recognized that he had faithfully passed the baton to these men, and he exhorted them to be faithful to pass it on to others. Nowhere is this clearer than in 2 Timothy 2:2, where Paul wrote, "The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to teach others also."

Timothy had been entrusted with God's truth by Paul, and he was also to pass the baton. But to what kind of person is such treasure to be entrusted? Paul sums it up in one word: faithful. Not popular or exceptionally gifted. Not influential or having a charismatic personality. But faithful. Church leaders must always be on the lookout for faithful men.

But we must do more than identify faithful men in our churches. We must also devote time and energy to uniquely invest in them. Jesus Himself modeled this approach to ministry. He was faithful to minister to the multitudes, but He also focused on training his disciples and particularly on investing in those who would be the leaders among them. The format for such an investment will vary. But the fact of that investment should be a consistent quality of biblical church leaders.

We must be biblical leaders ourselves. And we must cultivate biblical leadership in others, entrusting God's truth to faithful men who, able to teach, will in turn entrust the truth to other faithful men. And so, the baton will be passed for generations.