

# A WORD ON LEADERSHIP

by Dale Rumble

## Preface

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Those who tend the Lord's vineyards must not only keep out elephants and wild horses, they also have to guard against small animals. This tract deals with some little foxes that can ruin the fruit:

*Catch the foxes for us, the little foxes that are ruining the vineyards . . . (Song of Songs 2:15)*

## First—Servants

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It is important how to present oneself when representing the Lord in ministry. How we appear in the eyes of our audience will condition their response to our message. A speaker with a proud, unbroken spirit will impart little life to others. However, even if one's heart is pure, it is possible to convey the appearance of pride by ministering out of the authority of a title or an office.

The Lord Jesus instructed His disciples on this issue as follows:

*But do not be called Rabbi; for One is your Teacher, and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven. And do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ. But the greatest among you shall be your servant. (Matthew 23:8-11)*

These verses focus on the human heart and its potential to become tainted by pride. What a man builds by his ministry, he can destroy by his character. More than anything else, pride will destroy the integrity of one's character. What we *are* in Christ, determines the quality of what we can *accomplish* for Him.

In institutions of the world, officials function out of the authority vested in their offices. As long as someone occupies an office, its function can be carried out. However, God does not operate in that manner. His disciples function out of the anointing He imparts to them. No anointing means—no function! Leaders in the church are not primarily called to be decision makers; they are men who, because of the anointing and grace upon them, are able to hear from God and act accordingly.

The Greek word “EPISKOPE” in 1 Timothy 3:1, often translated as “office,” means literally “an overseeing,” and it implies one who is anointed by God for that function. In a secular application of the word, there are no offices in the church.

Key principles of leadership in the church are: “authority based on character,” and “ministry based on serving.” The first priority in ministry is to develop the heart of a servant and humility to grace one’s words. The importance of servanthood was primary emphasis of Jesus in what He taught His disciples, and the example He set before them by His personal life.

*You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them. It is not so among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant, and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave; just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many. (Matthew 20:25-28)*

## Church Restoration

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To some, such things as titles or offices may seem insignificant compared with other issues. They would say our only valid concern should be to preach the full gospel by exercising all the gifts and ministries of the Spirit. These believers seek one thing: to have the acts of God in their midst.

To others, such things are indispensable for an efficient running of the church apparatus. They see the assembly functioning as a business organization, or a well oiled machine. It will only be efficient when properly controlled by capable man (or women) in offices with titles and resources to support their function. They

primarily seek to define and control their work for God, whatever that may be.

Those who press on with the Lord in this time of renewing and restoring His church will discover that *everything* which does not conform to His character and word will be dealt with. They will see that titles and offices have no place in His house. To understand why this is so, one need only look back to when such things first appeared in the church.

The Lord Jesus brought forth the church to be an expression of His life, character and acts among men. All believers constitute on "EKKLESIA" (or church) which is His body. They are one body in Christ; a living spiritual organism with each member united to the Head in a life relationship, and all members functioning together in harmony under His direction (1 Corinthians 12:1-12; Romans 12:4-13).

The central focus of the early church was not the gospel, ministry, doctrine or church government; it was their common life in Christ. He was the center of everything, and He was seen as over all things among them. Believers were taught to care for one another, to see their need for each other, to minister and conduct themselves so that there would be no division in the body (1 Corinthians 1:10; 10:17; 12:13-27; Philipians 1:27; 2:1-4).

It is possible that the first root of division in the early church arose out of carnal desires in some believers to follow exclusively after certain leaders (1 Corinthians 3:1-6; 21-23). This did not occur as a result of assemblies having a single leader, for they were under the collective oversight of elders (Acts 14:23).

It is noteworthy that there is no record in scripture of anyone having the title of "pastor of a church." The function of pastors was inherent among the elders appointed to oversee each church since oversight includes the responsibilities of shepherding. The elders were not simply administrators, as is so often the case today, they were men of godly character graced with the ministry functions listed in Ephesians 4:11 that enabled them to equip the saints for service.

*I exhort the elders . . . shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain*

*but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. (1 Peter 5:1-3)*

By the end of the first century, writings of such men as Ignatius and Irenaeus began to refer to one individual in each church eldership as the “pastor” or “bishop” of that assembly. He was elevated to a position of authority over the other elders. Later, a similar distinction was made between pastors of churches, etc. Thus, a structure of hierarchical leadership evolved that divided men from each other, and pointed them away from a place of lowliness to places of prominence and dominance in the church. Over time, when leaders could not agree on various issues, denominations were created that further divided the body of Christ.

The emergence of this unscriptural hierarchy of leadership gave rise to an even greater division in Christendom; believers became divided into two classes: clergy and laity. Because the majority of Believers, as laity, were not equipped, nor expected to minister, the body of Christ ceased to be a spiritual organism and became a human organization. This is the historical framework of events that gave rise to title and offices in the church.

Unless men learn to serve, they will find it most difficult to walk in submission and be accountable to their peers. This lack is what gives rise to “lone rangers” and men who seek to rule rather than serve.

## Function

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The Lord’s commandment to not use personal titles, such as teacher, father or leader, does not deny the validity of these functions. We are to father others in Christ; we are to teach them and, if given grace to do so, we are to lead them. However, our emphasis must be on the function given to us by the grace of God, not on a title.

How to do this becomes apparent when we discover how apostles of the early church identified their roles. For example, we find that Paul never referred to himself as, “the apostle Paul”; used in this manner, the word “apostle” would be a title. He always spoke of himself as, “Paul, an apostle” which denoted his ministry

function. In his epistles, Paul makes it abundantly clear that the authority and power of his apostleship came entirely from the grace of God, which of course, is true for all ministry gifts (1 Corinthians 3:10; 15:9-10; Ephesians 4:7-11).

Should God lift His grace and anointing from someone, the spiritual life in his ministry would instantly cease. However, if that person believed that his authority, or right to minister came from his title, his office or the salary he earned from the church, he could go on ministering without God's anointing and not miss it. This would not only be harmful to the sheep, it would also dull his sense of accountability to the Lord. This is one reason why men in leadership must be free to speak to the presence and the absence of grace in each other's lives.

When writing the epistles, apostles in the New Testament identified their roles in the church through essentially four words. One word, bondservant, defined their commitment to serve. The following three words expressed their ministry functions: apostle, master builder and elder. The following scriptures illustrate their use of these words:

1. Paul

apostle: Romans 1:1; 1 Corinthians 1:1;  
2 Corinthians 1:1; Galatians 1:1; Ephesians 1:1;  
Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 2:6; 1 Timothy 1:1;  
2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1  
bondservant: Romans 1:1; 2 Timothy 1:1; Titus 1:1  
master builder: 1 Corinthians 3:10

2. James

bondservant: James 1:1

3. Peter

elder: 1 Peter 5:1  
bondservant: 2 Peter 1:1  
apostle: 2 Peter 1:1

4. John

elder: 2 John 1:1; 3 John 1:1  
bondservant: Revelation 1:1

5. Jude

bondservant: Jude 1:1

The humility of these men of God is evident in that they saw themselves, first of all, as bondservants of Christ. they sought no self grandeur in titles or offices, for they were following in the steps of their Lord. They present a very real contrast to the offices, titles and vestments marking those who possess official responsibility to minister in many religious bodies today.

## What Should We Do?

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Over the years, and especially in this century, as the Holy Spirit has moved in restoration of power, many unscriptural practices have ceased, at least in those bodes open to renewal. However, not all blemishes are gone, for religious traditions die hard!

It is vital that leaders see with the eyes and heart of the Lord, for only then will they clearly recognize what is yet wrong. Furthermore, they dare not be complacent just because the blessing of God is in their midst.

When Israel asked God for a king to rule over the, they did so out of desire to be like the heathen nations around them. They failed to recognize that they were, in fact, asking the Lord to cease being their king (1 Samuel 8:5-7). Even though they rejected the Lord as their king, He still blessed them from time to time. However, at no time was His blessing an approval of their form of leadership.

The history of the church is similar as leaders forsook the theocratic principles of government given to them, and adopted methods and practices of the secular world. Church leadership developed a hierarchical profile of authority employed by armies, businesses and national governments. To protect themselves from authoritarian abuses, some Christian bodies then adopted the democratic process of congregational voting.

Because the Lord loves His people, He has poured out His Spirit to renew and restore His inheritance. His blessings are present among His people, despite the shortcomings that hinder them from functioning fully as His body.

The question before leaders to day is, "What should we do?" Where appropriate, the answer is to repent, and in humility for-

sake our ways and return to His. We must not mistake His blessings among us as approval of the manner in which we oversee and lead His sheep. Our security and identity in Him must become rooted in His grace and His anointing upon us, not in the office we occupy or some title we bear.

The following are three examples of the need for repentance:

1. The practice of prefacing ministers' names with the word "reverend: violates the Lord's commandment expressed in Matthew 23:8-11. The word "reverend" comes from the Hebrew word "YARE" which literally means "awesome" or "awe-inspiring." Thus, it can only have reference to the Lord's name (Psalm 111:9). Imagine writing a letter to believers, exhorting them to be humble like the Lord, and then signing the correspondence as follows:

*Respectfully yours,  
The awesome (or right awesome)  
Dale Rumble*

2. A glaring instance of inappropriate reference to oneself is the practice of a sect whose leaders teach their followers to identify themselves in a manner so as to emphasize the fact that God indwells, and is in union with those who belong to Him. The essence of this emphasis is their statement of self-identity: "I am God in John doe (or Mary Smith) for." This is not only a step away from humility, it is a significant step toward self-deification. The fact that God indwells us, should be apparent by His character in our lives, not by what we call ourselves (2 Corinthians 4:7-10).

3. We would not consider taking one who has proven faithful as an intercessor, and making that person high priest of the assembly. We recognize that the Lord Jesus is the one and only High Priest of the church. Yet leaders essentially do just that, when they elevate one in eldership to the "office of senior pastor," a title reserved only for the Lord Jesus.

*Elders . . . shepherd the flock of God among you . . . and when the Senior Pastor (Chief Shepherd) appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Peter 5:1-4)*

These examples serve to illustrate some of the disparities that need to be repented of as His bride makes herself ready for her Lord's return. They are little foxes in His vineyard.

The Lord is cleansing His church by the washing of water with the word in this day of restoration, that He might sanctify her, and in the near future, present her to Himself in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle.

*He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. (Revelation 2:7)*



All Scripture is taken from the "New American Standard Bible."

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