

## **Titus 1**

### **The Qualities of Leadership**

The letter to Titus probably was written while the apostle Paul was in prison in Rome. Titus was a frequent traveling companion of Paul, including on his last trip that ended with his arrest in Jerusalem. Although Titus is not specifically mentioned during the period of his imprisonment in Caesarea, he had accompanied Paul to Jerusalem on other occasions, as noted in the letter to the Galatians. It is quite possible that Titus was accompanying Paul on his way from Caesarea to Rome, and was left behind on Crete, since the ship stayed there for some time in Acts 27:7-9. The most common opinion is that Titus was written along with 2 Timothy after Paul's release from prison, but 2 Timothy says that Titus was in Dalmatia, the present day Bosnia, about 700 miles from Crete, at that time. However, Titus does have a striking similarity to 1 Timothy, which was written shortly before Paul arrived in Jerusalem for the last time. These two letters, 1 Timothy and Titus, are sets of instructions for these two men on how to carry on after the end of apostles and prophets.

The beginning of Titus, which we will begin to study this morning, is all about leadership: the qualities of leadership, both good and bad. So, before we begin, let's consider some of the concepts of leadership with which we are familiar so we can have them fresh on our minds when we look at what Paul has to say about church leadership.

First, why do people lead? What motivates some people to aspire to positions of leadership? I think we can all agree that leaders are necessary - a necessary evil perhaps, but necessary. If there were no leaders, no group efforts, isolated individuals would be overwhelmed quickly by those who developed teamwork. Teams imply the need for a leader.

But, leading takes time. I think we can all agree that, at some point, when the tasks of leadership become large, leaders should be compensated for their time.

But why do some people want, desire, or aspire to leadership? I think our answers may depend largely on whether we like the leaders.

For example, what motives could I ascribe to leaders I don't like? I could say that they are in it for the money, or the power, or the glory, or that they can't do anything productive, so we made them administrators. Or we could say that leaders have no honest skills and are basically lazy, or that they are self-possessed, thinking so much of their own ideas that they are compelled to inflict them on the rest of us. We could go on endlessly maligning leaders - and never have to do it ourselves because we are too busy complaining. But Paul devotes two thirds of

chapter 1 to the good side of leadership, on only one third to the bad. Perhaps we should look more to the good side, too.

But, why do we have this letter at all? Why should we listen in on a personal communication between Paul and Titus? Are we in this picture? Is Paul's instruction about leadership intended for us? Yes, it is. In Paul's time, in Titus' time, congregations had no idea whom to follow. If apostles and prophets and other miracle workers had remained, it would have been obvious that they were the ones to follow - follow the power. But Paul didn't stay in one place all that long. Most places had no miracle workers, other than an occasional traveler. Titus - and Timothy - were sent to establish the transition, to tell how to start a sustainable leadership. In 2 Timothy 2:2, Timothy was instructed to entrust this knowledge to faithful men who would teach others also. We are the 'also.'

So, let's look at the first 5 verses, usually dismissed as the Introduction, and skipped over. However, in Titus, in which Paul describes the qualifications and the duties and the teaching topics of leaders, Paul exposes his own qualities that made him a successful leader. See if you can pick out the attitudes that make for good church leaders. Leadership in the church never really changed. The same qualities were required of the miracle working leaders. They were just more flashy. But, those same qualities were in Paul and are given as the qualities needed in that sustainable leadership that is to last the church until Judgment day.

Here are the first five verses.

"Paul, a bond-servant of God, and an apostle of Jesus Christ, for the faith of those chosen of God and the knowledge of the truth which is according to godliness, in the hope of eternal life, which God, who cannot lie, promised long ages ago, but at the proper time manifested, even His word, in the proclamation with which I was entrusted according to the commandment of God our Savior; to Titus, my true child in a common faith: Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior. For this reason I left you in Crete, that you might set in order what remains, and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,"

Out of the several qualities of leadership Paul expresses here, the one I'd like to address first is contained in the line, "With which I was entrusted." One of the primary reasons Paul endured the hardship of being a leader in the church was that he believed he had a sacred trust. It wasn't so much a matter of choice as a matter of responsibility.

With Paul, that was how it happened. God spoke to him specifically and gave him miraculous powers so he could prove that God had spoken to him. But what about us? Does God need to speak to each of us individually before we can

become leaders? Many denominations believe exactly that. But it is not on Titus' checklist. We do not have to take our stand as leaders based on imaginary visions. As Paul put it in Colossians 2:18, "taking his stand on visions he has seen inflated without cause by his fleshly mind." We have already been called as leaders through the Scriptures. Both Peter (1 Peter 2) and John (Revelation 1 and 5) wrote that the church is a kingdom of priests, the priesthood of all believers. And what is the function of a priest? To bring outsiders to God. Every Christian is a leader; it is a sacred trust, to bring outsiders to God. Our calling to be leaders may not have been as dramatic as Paul's, but we have been entrusted with the same proclamation, if we are to be the people Paul wrote to Timothy about, "faithful men who would teach others also."

The second quality of Paul's leadership shown in this introduction is love: love of the faithful. But the word, love, never appears. How is it love? Notice, starting in verse 1, Paul describes himself as a bondservant. He recognizes that, while he is a leader, he also has a boss. And, looking at the next phrase, he gives a reason. He wrote 'for.' He wrote, "I'm a bondservant of God and here's why:

1. For those who have faith.
2. For the truth.
3. In hope of eternal life.

That first one, 'for the faithful,' is love. He leads not for himself, but because it's best for the others. That is the very definition of love, to do what is best for the other person regardless of how it affects me.

Another reason Paul led: for the truth. He led because what he had to say was true, and if someone else were to fill the void left by Paul rejecting his responsibility, that other person probably would not have the truth. That's a scary thought. If we do not bring the truth to the world, those who fill the void we leave probably won't bring the truth.

And the third reason was in hope of heaven. Perhaps Paul means heaven for those whom he leads, but I think it is more like heaven for Paul. It's like Jesus' parable of the talents in Matthew 25. A rich man gave 5 silver bars (that's a talent: 75 pounds of precious metal) to one servant, two to another, and one to a third. The first two servants doubled their money while the master was gone. The third came back with the explanation, "Here's your silver bar. I kept it safely buried in the back yard." That servant was cast out into the outer darkness where there was weeping and gnashing of teeth. Paul knew that if he did not put to good use that which had been entrusted to him, that he would suffer a similar fate. How shall we return that which has been entrusted to us?

Paul was a leader for the same reasons we should be leaders, and we will find these same qualities repeated in the next section on good church leaders, and

in the section after that about bad church leaders. Paul saw his leadership as a responsibility. He did it out of love for the faithful. He did it for love of the truth. He did it as part of his hope of heaven. He did it humbly, as a bondservant. And he did not try to do it alone. He delegated authority. Here, he delegated to Titus. In the letters to Timothy, he delegated to Timothy, and to many others in Acts and the other letters. We are not in this leadership spot alone. Contrary to leadership outside the church where it is rightly said that it is lonely at the top, in the church, there is unlimited space at the top. Part of church leadership is to populate the space at the top.

So, let's go on and look at the qualities of good leadership among older male Christians. Subsequent chapters will describe the leadership roles of younger men, younger women, and older women. But right here, he's writing about older men, as you will plainly see.

"If any man be above reproach, the husband of one wife, having children who believe, not accused of dissipation or rebellion. For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict."

These are the qualities of an older male leader, which is Paul's focus in chapter 1. He will address younger men, younger women, and older women in later chapters.

I call this section qualities rather than qualifications. It is true that Paul listed several qualifications (things that can be observed), and those things are important. But even more important than that are the qualities of the person they describe.

Why would I say that qualities were more important? Qualifications are something you possess; qualities are something you are. It's like picking someone for a job. As an employer, you might have certain qualifications you want to see: education, experience, licenses. But if an applicant has all the qualifications, you still may not hire that person because that person does not have the quality you seek.

Behind that list of qualifications, what qualities is Paul seeking? For example, the first two qualifications have to do with family: husband of one wife, believing children. But what quality should we look for? We should seek a devoted and successful family man. It would be possible to possess these

qualifications because your wife refused to leave you and because she raised the kids despite you. You would have the qualifications, but not the quality.

How does this family-man quality match up with the qualities of leadership Paul revealed about himself in the first paragraph? What Paul was seeking was a proven history of responsibility and love. It is easy to leave the running of the family to the wife. It is easy to run the family for my own comfort. But the quality needed for church leadership is a history, experience in giving myself up for the good of the family.

Besides family, Paul has several other hints for how to see if love dominates a life: not self-willed, and hospitable (showing love for strangers). In those days, hospitality was measured by how many strangers you took into your home.

Paul also seeks leaders who love the truth: loving what is good, being just, sensible, holding fast the faithful word, and refuting those who contradict. These are essential qualities for leaders. Not only does he love people, not only does he give himself up for other people, he gives himself up for the truth. His devotion to truth is such that he will bear the embarrassment of learning something new, of correcting old misconceptions, because the truth is more important than ego.

Here's an illustration about truth. In Chemistry and Physics, there's a kind of rule of thumb. If the theory is complicated, it's probably wrong. In Chemistry and Physics, we always want to describe the truth with a formula or a principle. We do experiments to test out the formula, and then we modify the formula according to the results. If you have to keep adding fudge factors to the formula to make it match reality, you know that, eventually, the formula will fall apart.

The same goes for the truth in any subject, including the Word of God. Have you even noticed that explanations that say it's OK to do something questionable are always long and complicated? Have you ever noticed that the explanations for many church doctrines require jumping from verse to verse and get longer every year? A wise man once said, "If someone explains something to you from the Bible and it sounds complicated, it's probably wrong." Paul was looking for a love of truth, not a defender of our current level of misconception.

Paul was looking for a hope of heaven: not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not greedy, but devout and self-controlled. A leader's life must be dominated by his destination. He avoids some of the more insidious temptations by looking forward to heaven.

Paul was looking for the humble: not quick tempered, not self-willed, God's steward.

And Paul was looking for those who delegate: making more leaders by exhorting in sound doctrine.

These are the qualities of a leader. But what happens if someone who doesn't have these qualities becomes a leader? That is what Paul addressed at the end of the chapter.

"For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain. One of themselves, a prophet of their own, said, "Cretans are always liars, evil beasts, lazy gluttons." This testimony is true. For this cause reprove them severely that they may be sound in the faith, not paying attention to Jewish myths and commandments of men who turn away from the truth. To the pure, all things are pure; but to those who are defiled and unbelieving, nothing is pure, but both their mind and their conscience are defiled. They profess to know God, but by their deeds they deny Him being detestable and disobedient, and worthless for any good deed."

What qualities are missing in a bad leader that are present in a good one? Do they fail to delegate? Probably not. They delegate to those whom they trust, just like good leaders. Are they not humble? This paragraph gives us no hint that that is the problem. Do they not care about heaven? Not likely.

Where the bad leader is revealed is in responsibility, truth, and love.

Love of the truth, I think, is the easiest to spot. Paul calls their speech 'full of empty talk' and 'devoted to myths.' In other words, they talk a good game, but devotion to proof is lacking.

Empty talk: Have you ever listened to someone hold forth on God and Jesus for 20 or 30 minutes, and it sounded pretty good, but, when it was over, you didn't know what the point was? That's empty talk.

Myths: Lots of doctrines are based on myths. They don't all them myths; they call them proof, but they are actually just stories. For example, I've had lots of people try to convince me that miracle workers like we read about in Acts and 1 Corinthians are roaming the earth today. But their 'proof' consists of stories of people just far enough away in time or space that it is impossible to verify. They claim that these stories are believed by faith. That's not faith. The stories are myths: unprovable stories. The promises of God are based on sound, historical, factual evidence, not unprovable stories.

A leader can never use an unprovable story as proof and maintain a claim to love of the truth. We need to be careful not to try to prove what we know to be true with stories the facts of which we cannot prove. Paul never did. He gave proof. He required proof.

And the other qualities found lacking in bad leaders? Responsibility. A lifetime of giving yourself up for others is required. But those whose families are undisciplined because the father spends too much time in church work are bad leaders, not qualified because they lack the quality of knowing how to balance the needs of many competing demands.

And love. Just as hospitality proves love for strangers, not having had a stranger in your home for a year proves its lack.

We can identify a bad church leader. But the goal is not to merely avoid them, but to put an end to their influence and to save them from themselves. How do we do that? After all, people do not set out to be bad leaders. It just happens that way.

How can bad leaders be silenced? The answer is in verse 9. The good church leaders must be able to refute them. That means that the good church leaders must be present when the bad teaching is taking place, and have the ability to come up with the right Scripture or reasoning on the spot that disproves the bad teaching. That takes considerable preparation.

And what if, after being refuted and being reproved, the bad leader won't be silenced? Hopefully you will have convinced the hearers that the bad leader really is bad, and he will need to go elsewhere to find an audience.

Leadership in the church is everyone's responsibility. It is based on love of the brethren and love of the lost. It springs from love of the truth and a hope of heaven. That love can come only from the humble, because self-important people won't give up their own desires even for the truth. Leadership in the church is for everyone. Unlike the outside world, there is unlimited space at the top. In Titus 1, Paul gave leadership instruction for older men. In chapter 2, he continued with instructions for other groups in the church.

But it takes time to develop these qualities. What do we do while in training? What do we do while we prepare for leadership? Those same instructions written by Paul tell followers whom to follow. There are many who claim leadership, but only a few who have these qualities. This description from Paul gives us confidence that we can safely ignore those who claim leadership roles but do not have these qualities. But that does not mean that we can each make our own way, make our own decisions. It is the responsibility of every Christian to have the humility to seek out people who do have these qualities and follow them, to follow leaders who have our best interests at the top of their priority list. This is the leadership style of the family of God: followers who seek leaders, and leaders who give themselves up for the sake of those whom they lead, as Jesus did.