

True Leadership

Titus 1; Matt 7:13-23 (Acts 20:25-31)

If I fall under a bus

Walking across a busy road in North Adelaide to a Clergy mtg, I stopped in the middle because of the traffic, Mike retreated to the safety of the sidewalk! One false step and this sermon wouldn't have been theoretical!

Choosing the right person to replace me – Nominators due for election.

If you are thinking of being a nominator, responsible for choosing the Rector of the Parish for the future, you should listen to this sermon very carefully and read your Bible very carefully.

If you are concerned about the future of this church, the content of what is said Sunday by Sunday, the type of leadership that is to be exercised... this decision is vital.

Important for the future of the teaching of the Gospel, for passing faith on to your children, for

But what criteria would you use to choose someone to replace me?

Paul – writing to Titus, instructions for the appointment of elders in towns in Crete he has visited where the Gospel had sprung up, but not had time to sort out appropriate leadership...

The Purpose of Christian Leadership v1-4

We see this to start with in Paul's outline of his own role as an apostle.

Paul, a servant of God [actually the Greek word is "slave" or "bondservant"] and an apostle of Jesus Christ

- His purpose?

"to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness"

A knowledge dimension and a moral dimension - his purpose is to deepen the faith and knowledge of the truth of those chosen by God and this leads to a changed life and a desire to lead a godly life! "The good tree bears good fruit", Jesus says, and the good tree is fed and watered and fertilized by a growing faith and a deep, deep desire to know, follow and apply God's truth.

Those in church leadership are called to many things in our role, but this is our core business...

"to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness"

- It is easy to be distracted by many things I might say, and the pressures on us to do anything **but** this are at times quite strong. But let me say, this is what I believe God has called me to do, in my ministry and in this church.

"to further the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness."

Do you share this goal with me? Can you support me leading you in *this*? No one of course will disagree with this goal, but in the exercise of my ministry within and outside of this Parish, can I encourage you join me in this endeavour?

furthering the faith of God's elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness.

Paul goes on to speak about the context in which he teaches...

- *2 in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, 3 and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior.*

This deepening of faith that is leadership's goal looks to the life that is our heritage - eternal life - that a faithful, promise-keeping God has shown us so clearly and offers us in the coming of Christ. Paul the apostle says this preaching about Christ, the Messiah, the Saviour, has blasted its light into our lives and this world, and it cannot be ignored.

Lets now turn to...

The Character and Lifestyle of a Christian Leader v5-8

A number of years ago I was driving a leader of the evangelical Anglican side of the church in Tas from the airport to a mtg. We prayed together, I was greatly encouraged. A year later he ran off with his secretary having had an affair with her for many years. I couldn't believe that guy I had prayed so fervently with for the work of the Gospel was even then in an extramarital relationship.

I worked with a guy who was a Chaplain in the school I was in. He preached regularly in our church. A few years later I found out he had an internet romance and just abandoned his church and his wife and 4 kids and moved to Qld. She only found out when he didn't come home one day and he was half way to Brisbane.

6 An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe^(b) and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain.

You might wonder why Paul has to give such advice things but then you see later how the people of Crete are described – they are atrociously behaved! These are genuine priorities for the search committee as they look at the character of the person to choose.

6 An elder must be blameless. Blameless – perfection? The phrase “above reproach” is used in other translations. Not perfect, but *known as* a person who seeks to act with integrity and honesty.

- faithful to his wife, a man whose children believe^(b) and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. 7 Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless [again]...

Very politically incorrect!

- if he is to manage **God's** household you need to observe how the leader manages his own household.

- You will want to check their behaviour towards their wife – even his sex life!!! (are they faithful?)
- whether they have appropriate control of their children and have taught them in the faith is important as well (the word “believers” can also be translated “faithful”).
- Clergy kids go off the rails of course, and some, ultimately toss out the faith, but you wouldn’t **choose** someone as a leader who’s kids are out of control where they should be (when under their roof) or who are not involved in the church.
- Questions to ask of those who might know them – “Do they abuse their power or position? Are they overbearing or manipulative? Do they love their wife and serve them as Christ serves his church? Do they love and discipline their children, teaching them about the Lord? Are they likely to hit the bottle? What are they like with money?”
- These expectations have of course been broken by church leaders, to the devastation of individuals, the detriment and harm of the congregations they have led, and the wider church.

But more positively

Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined.

Very practical and applicable godly character and behavioral characteristics of a leader. (Potential nominators are you taking notes?)

Let me say these are challenging! Exercising self control when you want to yell at someone! Being godly when you are tempted like any other person. Being upright and holy, when others aren’t. When you want to give up the struggle to be godly when you are emotionally exhausted or sick or just plain worn out with the battles you have to face, both inside the church and out, and in your own flesh!

And anyone who has been in Christian leadership long knows these things are real challenges for those of us whom God has called to such service.

But, what are they to do? What am I to do?
(There are lists similar in 1 Tim)

The Activity of a Christian Leader v9

9 He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

3 things

- **Firstly**, be gripped by the Gospel themselves!

Mussels or mollusks as a kid – try to pry them off the rock. If you don't get them the first time they grip onto that rock and its almost impossible to get them off! They must grip like a mollusk to the true Gospel handed down. They must know it and believe it themselves. Everyone has doubts at times, but those who are to teach the faith must know it and be growing in it themselves.

Nominators – don't presume, ask them about their own faith! What they believe, how they would explain the Gospel to others. I fear some clergy wouldn't know how to lead people to Jesus.

- **Secondly**, teach others that true faith - *encourage* God's people through teaching sound doctrine about God, his word, his world and his Saviour. True doctrine, that is true "belief", helps people know how to live their life of faith in this world until Christ returns.

- **Thirdly**, refute those who oppose sound doctrine

How? Teach well! Actively oppose those who teach error and be prepared for battles over the truth of the Gospel. This happens inside and outside the church. See v13 - "rebuke them sharply".

Sometimes it needs to be said, straight, and in our comfortable Anglican world and polite Adelaide that isn't always received too well. No-one likes that, no-one thanks me for that, but it is one of the things I know I must do, and if I shy away from it I leave people in error, which leads to faithlessness.

- The early church had to do a lot of this!

The Reason for Christian Leadership v10-16

Four reasons...

- **Because there are people who actively oppose the Gospel**

- Are there? I have quite a list.

¹⁰ For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. ¹¹ They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain.

[See Pauls' warning as he leaves the Ephesian elders Acts 20:25 (p902)

²⁵ "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁶ Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God,^[a] which he bought with his own blood.^[b] ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.]

- **Because people can be deceived and led astray**

¹¹ They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach

- **Because of the immorality of their culture**

"what's the problem with Melbourne and Brisbane? They are too far from the city".

And they say Adelaidians are parochial!

Cultural norms are not necessarily Christian norms *and we all live immersed in them* and its hard to see them for ourselves.

One of the most politically incorrect verses is here in the Bible -

¹² One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."^[a] ¹³ This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith...

If one of their own knows what they are like (and the people of Crete apparently were well known for their atrocious behaviour) then Paul is telling Titus to be aware of this.

Ungodly cultures such as we all live in will “drag” on your faith. We need helpful teaching and godly instruction from leaders who live differently, who are godly, to avoid the “natural pitfalls” of being a member of that culture.

- **Because they come from inside the church**

See Jesus’ words

¹⁵ “Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves.

If you have ever seen what a wolf can do to a sheep you would take Jesus’ warning to heart. In our Adelaide Synod last year someone referred to the OT as “anathema” – “under God’s curse”! That is extraordinary and I think, Godless.

¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶ They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

- The denial of God by people who “seem” to be Christian not in their words, for they are clever with words, but by their actions, their “fruit”, they show what they are like.
- They are “detestable”, “unfit”, because they undermine the Gospel, people’s confidence in Christ as Lord, and lead them away from the foot of the cross.

Conclusion

Me getting a flu vaccine next week.

Godly example in living and good teaching ***acts as an inoculation*** against the tendency to sin and helps people when times of temptation, testing or godless teaching comes, as it will.

Choose your leaders wisely, asking the right questions of them, that focus on godliness of heart and life and well established faith.

Its hard work being a Christian leader – pray for wisdom, self control and godliness for me.

Titus 1:1-2:1

1 Paul, a servant of God and an apostle of Jesus Christ to further the faith of God’s elect and their knowledge of the truth that leads to godliness— ² in the hope of eternal life, which God, who does not lie, promised before the beginning of time, ³ and which now at his appointed season he has brought to light through the preaching entrusted to me by the command of God our Savior,

⁴ To Titus, my true son in our common faith:

Grace and peace from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Savior.

⁵ The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint ^{6a} elders in every town, as I directed you. ⁶ An elder must be blameless, faithful to his

wife, a man whose children believe^[b] and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. ⁷ Since an overseer manages God's household, he must be blameless—not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. ⁸ Rather, he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. ⁹ He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it.

¹⁰ For there are many rebellious people, full of meaningless talk and deception, especially those of the circumcision group. ¹¹ They must be silenced, because they are disrupting whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach—and that for the sake of dishonest gain. ¹² One of Crete's own prophets has said it: "Cretans are always liars, evil brutes, lazy gluttons."^[c] ¹³ This saying is true. Therefore rebuke them sharply, so that they will be sound in the faith ¹⁴ and will pay no attention to Jewish myths or to the merely human commands of those who reject the truth. ¹⁵ To the pure, all things are pure, but to those who are corrupted and do not believe, nothing is pure. In fact, both their minds and consciences are corrupted. ¹⁶ They claim to know God, but by their actions they deny him. They are detestable, disobedient and unfit for doing anything good.

2 You, however, must teach what is appropriate to sound doctrine.

Matthew 7:13-23

¹³ "Enter through the narrow gate. For wide is the gate and broad is the road that leads to destruction, and many enter through it. ¹⁴ But small is the gate and narrow the road that leads to life, and only a few find it.

¹⁵ "Watch out for false prophets. They come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ferocious wolves. ¹⁶ By their fruit you will recognize them. Do people pick grapes from thornbushes, or figs from thistles? ¹⁷ Likewise, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. ¹⁸ A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, and a bad tree cannot bear good fruit. ¹⁹ Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ²⁰ Thus, by their fruit you will recognize them.

²¹ "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name and in your name drive out demons and in your name perform many miracles?' ²³ Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'

Acts 25:25-31

²⁵ "Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. ²⁶ Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of any of you. ²⁷ For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. ²⁸ Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God,^[a] which he bought with his own blood.^[b] ²⁹ I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. ³⁰ Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. ³¹ So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears.