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"What Makes a Christian Leader?"

1 Peter 5:1-2: (NKJV) *"¹The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed: ²Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by compulsion but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly;"*

If you look around the world we live in, you will see all kinds of crises. There are worldwide political, ecological, and social crises. There are family and religious crises. There are national crises of debt, jobs and economy. With all of these varied crises, there is one element that is common to all. I would go as far as to say that if this one element were firm and stable, then the crisis associated with it would be far less of a crisis and much more of an issue. This one element is Leadership. With it, there is a past track record, a present direction and a future vision. Without it, there is - well, without it there is crisis and with that crisis there is diminished hope. While we are not in a position to address most of the crises just mentioned, we will take this morning and address Leadership in Christianity - how important is it and what gives one the ability and the authority to lead?

Questions for consideration:

1. Who are Christianity's leaders, as described in the Bible?
2. What qualifies someone to be such a leader?

1. Who are Christianity's leaders, as described in the Bible?

This is a TOUGH question and depending on what denomination you belong to, you would have a very different answer. Let's look at a scriptural example:

Matthew 16:18: (NRSV) *"And I tell you, you are **Peter <4074>**, and on this **rock <4073>** I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it."*

The name "Peter" means "rock". One of the traditional interpretations of this verse seems to indicate that Peter was to be the foundation of the Christian Church - Our Catholic friends would (I think) say that based upon this text, Peter was the first Pope. Let's look further and give you our perspective.

Peter: Strongs #4074. Petros (pet'-ros); apparently a primary word; a (piece of) rock; as a name, Petrus, an apostle

New American Standard Greek Lexicon: a stone or a boulder;
Peter, one of the twelve apostles

This specific word is always translated "Peter."

So, in **Matthew 16:18**, Peter is a name - a given name which signifies a rock. Does this mean that Peter is the "rock" that the church was to be built upon?

The word "rock" in this verse is slightly different:

Rock: Strongs #4073 petra (pet'-ra); a (mass of) rock (literally or figuratively)

New American Standard Greek Lexicon: a (large mass of) rock

So, how was this second word used elsewhere? **Matthew 7:24** **Mark 15:46** **Romans 9:33**

1 Corinthians 10:4 "Peter" **<4074>** is only used as the name of Peter; however "rock" **<4073>** often is a picture of Christ.

Now, let's go back to the context of **Matthew 16:16** to see what Jesus is saying and test our conclusion: **Matthew 16:13-18** What does the story tell us about the relationship of Peter, the rock, to the rock as the foundation of Christianity? Our thought is that Peter revealed who the rock was - Christ Jesus.



Matthew 20:26,27: "...but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant."
Those that you lead should become healthier and stronger as a result of you serving them.

Jesus himself verifies he is the foundation - the sole "rock" of the True Church:

1 Corinthians 3:9-14: The foundation is separate from what was built, enduring forever - it is Jesus Christ. When Jesus said, "You are Peter," he is saying, "You are strong! You are a rock!" And upon this foundation, as Peter had just said, that Jesus is the Messiah, the son of the Living God, that is the foundation (the rock) upon which he would build his church. That's exactly what the Apostle Paul says in **1 Corinthians 3:11**.

According to the Bible, Jesus is the only

foundation - but who leads in his absence?

Now to the context of our theme text: **1 Peter 5:1-4:** Peter himself verifies that Jesus is the foundation. He calls himself in the scripture above a "fellow elder," with the only difference is that he was able to witness the sufferings of Christ in person. Peter isn't "lording it over" that he is in greater authority than the others.

Elders: A Comprehensive position to oversee the flock of Jesus:

Elder: Strong's #4245, presbuteros (pres-boo'-ter-os); older, a senior; or Christian "presbyter"
Greek English lexicon - selected definitions: 1) elder, of age; 2) a term of rank or office 2a) among the Jews 2a1) members of the great council or Sanhedrin (because in early times the rulers of the people, judges, etc., were selected from elderly men) 2a2) of those who in separate cities managed public affairs and administered justice 2b) among the Christians, those who presided over the assemblies (or churches).
The NT uses the term bishop, elders, and presbyters interchangeably

So this word has a general meaning, carrying the thought of "older," or "senior," but also a position of some authority. We will be looking in the book of Timothy for many scriptures because Timothy was an elder, albeit a young man.

Some descriptive examples of elders: **1 Timothy 5:1** **1 Timothy 5:17** **1 Timothy 5:19**

Another word for "elder:"

Elder: Strong's #1985 episkopos (ep-is'-kop-os); a superintendent, i.e. Christian officer in genitive case charge of a (or the) church (literally or figuratively) 1) an overseer 1a) a man charged with the duty of seeing that things to be done by others are done rightly, any curator, guardian or superintendent 1b) the superintendent, elder, or overseer of a Christian church

1 Peter 2:25 **Acts 20:28**



Observations on what Eldership is:

- A position to be looked up to: **1 Timothy 5:1**
- A position of honor: **1 Timothy 5:17**
- A position whose integrity must be treated with dignity: **1 Timothy 5:19**
- A position that Jesus himself is described as having over our souls:
1 Peter 2:25
- A position with the great responsibility of feeding the flock: **Acts 20:28**

Where do we all fit in relation to Jesus Christ who is the only foundation for the Christian church? None of us, no human being, can take his place. No human being can make decisions as Christ did. No human being can sit in the seat of the same authority as Jesus Christ, because he is the only foundation. Everything else is built upon that foundation.

How do you build proper leadership to maintain that? It is difficult because human ego gets in the way very easily. How does one become an elder? This again is a difficult question and again your perception is dependent upon your denominational background. Our perspective starts with looking at the decision process in early Christianity.

Paul and Barnabas on a Missionary Journey: **Acts 14:21-23**



Ordained: Strong's #5500 cheirotoneo (khi-rot-on-eh'-o); (to stretch); to be a hand-reacher or voter (by raising the hand), i.e. (generally) to select or appoint: ordain, choose 1) to vote by stretching out the hand 2) to create or appoint by vote: one to have charge of some office or duty 3) to elect, create, appoint

2 Corinthians 8:16-19: (This "mystery" brother is never named; perhaps it was Luke, a very devout Christian.) This brother was chosen (ordained) by the churches, not by the Apostle Paul or by one person's authority. The multitude of individuals decided this brother would represent them.

The word "ordained," Strong's #5500, by definition and use reveals a voting environment, versus an "ordination" as we normally would think. Compare the following:

Ordain: Strong's #5087 tithemi (tith'-ay-mee); to place (in the widest application, literally and figuratively;) properly, in a passive or horizontal posture, lay, put, lay down, make, appoint, kneeldown **Lexicon:** selected definitions 1) to set, put, place 1a) to place or lay 1b) to put down, lay down 2) to make 2a) to make (or set) for one's self or for one's use 3) to set, fix establish 3a) to set forth 3b) to establish, ordain

Some of the many uses: Matthew 5:15 Matthew 12:18 Luke 20:43 Hebrews 1:2 (Jesus was ordained; leadership in the Christian church was voted upon.) That is what is called upon from Christian leadership. So in the early church, the becoming of an elder was a function of the church's decision - essentially the vote of those whom the elder would be shepherding and not a function of the decision of one individual.

2. What qualifies someone to be such a leader?

Back to the theme text:

1 Peter 5:1-4: Peter considered himself a "fellow elder," even though he had great authority given to him.

Observations from Peter's exhortations:



- Serve not because you must, but out of a willing heart;
- Serve, not for money, but out of sheer eagerness; (*"not for dishonest gain"*) Christianity was never meant to be a moneymaking prospect.
- Serve, not in a dominating way, but rather as a living example of Christ likeness. (*"nor as being lords over those entrusted to you"*)

Jesus reprimanded the Scribes and Pharisees for lording their positions over the people. Matthew 10:8

The following are two sets of scriptures that actually list qualifications for leaders:

1 Timothy 3:1-7 Titus 1:5-9 1 Timothy 3:1 1 Timothy 3:2-7: (NKJV) A bishop then must be:

- **blameless**, - **not arrested**, i.e. (by implication) **inculpable** This means living an honorable life both on the outside and the inside. Philippians 2:15
- **the husband of one wife**, This is ambiguous - this could mean only one wife at a time, only one wife in a lifetime; we believe it means living in a faithful covenant relationship with your one wife. This adds a dimension of reality to Christian leadership - leaders will come from regular people who come to Christianity. Are they living up to a covenant relationship to God through Jesus?
- **temperate**, - **sober**, i.e. (fig.) **circumspect** This is standing up tall and firm for something bigger than you are; to have self-restraint. 1 Corinthians 9:25: There is a dramatic cost to leadership. Part of worthy leadership is being able to pay that cost on a constant basis, without complaint.
- **sober-minded**, - **safe (sound) in mind**, i.e. **self-controlled (moderate as to opinion or passion)** 1 Peter 1:13: You are moderate in self and passionate in the grace.
- **of good behavior**, - **orderly**, i.e. **decorous:** A good leader lives what Christianity ought to look like.



- **hospitable, - fond of guests** This is a sense of community. The Christian community was a wide variety of peoples when this was written. There should be an open door to your physical home, but also an open heart to bring people in to encourage them and uplift them.
- **able to teach; - instructive** 2 Timothy 2:15: The Apostle is telling Timothy that he needed to be diligent in understanding the Gospel, the prophecies, and biblical teachings as a whole in order to be an effective teacher. Leadership means having the ability to teach, which separates a lot of Christians.
- **not given to wine**, Ephesians 5:18: Rather than filling yourself up with intoxicating drink, fill yourself up with the Holy Spirit. A Christian leader should have complete control over alcohol.
- **not violent, (physical and verbal towards others)** Titus 3:2
- **not greedy for money**, 1 Timothy 6:6-10: Greed entered into Christianity even back then. Paul wanted Timothy to be aware of this problem.
- **but gentle**, 1 Thessalonians 5:14: Gentle implies one isn't out for oneself.
- **not quarrelsome**, 2 Timothy 2:24: Quarrels are when people speak *at* each other, not *with* each other.
- **not covetous**; 2 Peter 2:3: To covet is to want something that is not rightfully yours. Leaders may covet more authority, for example. Leaders have responsibility to guide and support; wanting more is walking a dangerous ground.
- **one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence**; Do the children have to be believers? Young children aren't old enough to make such a decision, but as they are growing up they should have a sense of obedience. What if a leader has a rebellious teenager? It doesn't necessarily mean they are out of control. Children should show a sense of the Christianity for which the leader stands.
- **not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil**. Leadership requires wisdom that comes from experience.

1 Timothy 4:12: Timothy was a classic example of someone who was young but not a novice. The Apostle Paul was telling him not to let anyone look down upon him for being young, but to be an example in all ways. The people would see he had spiritual wisdom.

1 Timothy 6:17-21: Stand firm on what is important. Knowledge is good but it is meaningless unless it is applied.

- **Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil**. Your life ought to reflect great integrity to those who are not Christians.

Matthew 5:14-16: Be a light to the world. We can be an example of living a wholesome life of goodness, faith and humility. Once more:

- Serve not because you must, but out of a willing heart;
- Serve, not for money, but out of sheer eagerness; ("*not for dishonest gain*") Christianity was never meant to be a moneymaking prospect.
- Serve, not in a dominating way, but rather as a living example of Christ likeness. ("*nor as being lords over those entrusted to you*")

1 Peter 5:5-11: Do we have this kind of leadership in our church?

*So what makes a Christian leader?
For Jonathan and Rick and Christian Questions,
Think about it...!*