



LESSON #7 THE REQUIREMENTS OF A LEADER

This lesson is more on the practical aspect of leadership, rather than the spiritual side. According to Christ, the Head of the Church, leadership in God's house comes with certain requirements. Jesus said, ***“Unto whomsoever much is given, of him shall much be required.”*** Luke 12:48

In other words, Jesus was enforcing the obligations and conditions of functioning in the role of a leader. The more opportunity, the more open doors, the more increase, the more promotion, the more honour, the more is required on the operating end of ministerial work. Ministry doesn't just happen—it involves intentional prayer, realistic planning, concrete preparation and hands-on application. In other words, blood, sweat and tears, with an extra big dose of faith!

The Bible is extremely practical as well as spiritual—the book of Proverbs is a library full of every day advice and common-sense instructions to live a successful and blessed life. I read one chapter of Proverbs every day and it has imparted spiritual insight and godly instruction over many years. If leaders aren't being practical in their ministry requirements, neither will their followers be. If a leader's life is out of order, he or she cannot effectively lead—the reason being, God has ordained His chosen leaders to establish order in areas that are out of order, first in their lives and then in the lives of those entrusted to them by God. We often hear about Paul's younger companion, Timothy, but he also had another pastoral associate under his guidance by the name of Titus, who was given this sobering requirement as a leader in God's house.

“For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you.” Titus 1:5
Paul was instructing Titus to raise up faithful leaders for the new churches that were being planted throughout the cities of Crete, the largest island of Greece.

How important was this requirement? Notice that Paul commanded or charged Titus to fulfill his obligation. In other words, he was saying, “*Titus, you are required to do this serious work! Don’t just pray about it—don’t just have a board meeting about it—be practical, be intentional and do it!*” The definition of “practical” is to be “*concerned with the actual doing of something rather than with theory and ideas.*” A faithful leader is required to establish order and then to maintain that order.

Name four practical measures that would be required to establish order in a church.

- #1. _____
- #2. _____
- #3. _____
- #4. _____

SEVEN PRACTICAL REQUIREMENTS OF A LEADER

In this lesson, we are going to look at the *actual doing* of practical requirements to be successful and effective leaders in establishing order in church ministries. It is not enough to simply know the will of God—it requires fulfillment by the leader.

REQUIREMENT #1. COMMUNICATION

Leaders, above everyone else, must be excellent communicators. Don’t be vague when communicating with others—don’t assume they know what you’re talking about. Effective communication takes work, time, thoughtfulness and detail. Proverbs 15:28 teaches that, “*the heart of the godly thinks carefully before speaking...*” You cannot assume that the other person understands what you expect of them, especially when you are not communicating face to face. It is so easy to misunderstand a quick text sent off in haste. Before you hit “send”, read it over to ensure it is saying exactly what you are conveying. When it comes to phone conversations, be sure to actually listen to the person on the other end. It’s not all about you, leader! Give them time to share but in the same way, don’t let them steal the conversation. There are people who love to talk and they will go on and on and on if you let them, and you’ll be sitting there shaking your head. You must be the one to carry the conversation to its proper conclusion. Be tactful and polite, offer a short prayer, and perhaps even let them know at the beginning of the call how much time you have to speak. That way, if they want to go over, you can remind them that you’re on a schedule or you have other calls to make. Most people will understand and they’ll be grateful for the time you gave them. If you’re like me, it is at times a challenge to get back to people—this is not always easy, especially when you’re busy, but there is no excuse for failing to respond.

As a leader, you have to discipline yourself to return the call, send the text or reply to the email. It's best to do it immediately when possible, then it's done, and it's another check off your list. You'll feel a burden lifted even when it's just a short reply to a question or concern, or even a "hello, how are you?" type of message. If you simply can't do it right away, get into the habit of marking it down so you don't forget, and say a quick prayer for wisdom when you respond. Be sure to be sincere with right motives when replying or initiating a conversation.

Another fine mark of a great leader is the humility and willingness to say "*I'm sorry.*" Those two words will go a long way in mending a broken relationship or healing a misunderstanding or legitimate offense. We may feel justified in letting it go and even ignoring the contentious issue, believing it was not our fault and that if anyone should apologize, it should be the other person. That is a non-Christ-like attitude to beware of. Leaders should be first in humbling themselves and communicating a sincere apology to the other party—even when they know they are not to blame. Leaders must strive to make peace at all costs where possible. Jesus said, "***Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.***" Matthew 5:9

REQUIREMENT #2. TIME

Leaders all get the same 24 hours a day. There is no excuse for being late—being on time for a meeting or event requires self-control. Proverbs 25:28 warns us that, "***He that has no rule over his own spirit is like a city that is broken down, and without walls.***" A leader must make every effort to be punctual—when he or she is habitually late for an appointment with someone, they are telling the person waiting that they do not value their time—they don't respect the other person's schedule. What about God? Do we keep Him waiting because of our negligence or nonchalant attitude especially on Sunday morning? If your service begins at 10:30 a.m., do you stroll in at 10:35 or 10:40 a.m.? Again, it comes down to discipline and planning. Perhaps you need to get out of bed on Sunday morning a half hour earlier to not feel rushed going to church. Yes, it is that important. Why do we feel we can keep God waiting? Try doing that at your job!

Another notable point regarding time specifically in the area of preaching, teaching or conducting a prayer meeting is starting and ending on time. There is a time to start and there's a time to end...and God's OK with that! If the Holy Spirit has done His work and is no longer moving, then end at the right time, in spite of what some "more spiritual" people may feel. I've had to deal with individuals who thought I was quenching the Spirit by ending a meeting. The fact is, leaders have to make the tough calls and feel right about it, in spite of the awkwardness or uncomfortableness.

On three separate occasions, when I've been in charge of meetings, I've had to literally interrupt guest speakers because they didn't know when to quit—I also had to cut someone off in a prayer meeting I was leading. With 30 people present and only one hour, one particularly zealous person went on and on for well over 15 minutes which would have been fine in an all-night prayer meeting or in his own time at home, but it was inappropriate in that setting. I could sense others becoming uptight about it, because he was not being considerate of their time to pray. As the leader, I made the tough call to interrupt him to allow others to pray, even at the risk of him being offended and leaving the meeting, which he did not do. After we were done, he left the room and I ran after him to explain why I stopped him. To my delight, he responded that he was so thankful that I corrected him so that he would not repeat the same mistake—and he never did after that!

One final thought about “time”—it is imperative for leaders to take time for their own spiritual growth, or they will be of no value to others. We don't find the time—we make the time and part of our 24 hours must be designated to reading for personal equipping. Leaders are readers and they should immerse themselves in good books, along with the Word of God, on a daily basis. Paul exhorted Timothy, *“until I come, give attention to reading”* 1Timothy 4:13

REQUIREMENT #3. PHYSICAL HEALTH

Keeping our body strong and healthy without becoming fanatical is a must for a leader. This requires proper exercise and nutrition. How much? That depends on you, however we are to do all things in moderation. A steak dinner finished off with coffee and pie is a blessing, but not every day! The idea is to preserve good health right through the rest of your life. Therefore, we must remember that our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit which has been placed in our safe keeping for Him to dwell in. When Paul wrote in 1Timothy 4:8 that bodily exercise profits little, he was making that comparison in light of eternity. One day, your body will die, but until then, you can maintain daily strength to accomplish your destiny. Again, without becoming legalistic or obsessive, we choose what we eat and drink in order to stay physically fit. Desserts, coffee, meats, snacks, chocolate, are all permissible in moderation in combination with a clear conscience. As Christians and as church leaders, Julie and I made the choice a long time ago to abstain from alcohol because of our convictions and our witness to others, so as not to become a stumbling block. All leaders must resolve this matter between them and God regarding what He approves of. Paul states in 1Corinthians 10:31,

“Whatever you do, whether you eat or drink, do it all for God's glory.” Amen.

REQUIREMENT #4. REST & LEISURE

Ministry burn-out happens to the best of us. If you've been through it, you know that it depletes you not only of energy, but passion, vision and motivation. Jesus confronted this pitfall of leadership with His own disciples.

“And Jesus said unto them, come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat”. Mark 6:31

One of our board members recently wrote these words in a daily devotional our church compiled. *“Is it just me, or does life keep getting busier and busier? Rush here for this meeting, go there for that reason. Sometimes we need to just sit down with a mug of coffee and our Bible, and relax in God's presence.”* Amen! God's not impressed with premature burn out, especially when it results from engaging in activities, filling demands and making promises that did not originate from Him. “No” is a very necessary word for leaders to use at times, without feeling guilty when they're already stretched to the limit. Even Jesus spent quality time in rest and relaxation to be restored physically and spiritually in the renewing presence of His Father. There is a difference between leisure and laziness. Leisure is the reward of faithful toil in the responsibilities of the Kingdom. God does not reward laziness but He does bless a leader's hard work. In the timeless words of Psalm 23, the Lord makes His leaders to lie down in green pastures: He leads them beside the still waters and He restores their soul. Perfect rest is God's reward for our labours!

REQUIREMENT #5. VISIBILITY

Leaders are not hermits—we don't dwell in caves. We are in the public eye for a reason. As one of our board members says, *“We are Christ with skin!”* In other words, people need to see Jesus in us and we must be among them for that to happen. I have always appreciated this great quote from Chuck Swindoll—*“Two thirds of ministry is just being there!”*

Visibility requires being invitingly approachable, interacting with others and rubbing shoulders with common people in the market place. As much as Jesus valued and protected His time alone, He was also very visible to the common public. He attended weddings and funerals, He would be found at parties and amongst His fellow Jews in the synagogue. He met with people one on one but also had large crowds around Him. Jesus said to the seekers, *“If you have seen Me, you have seen the Father”.*

How can others, saved or unsaved, see the Father in us if we are not visible at ball games or the mall or coffee shops or concerts or city events or parks where sinners and hurting people congregate? Of course, we use discretion regarding where and with whom we are seen, but Jesus told us especially as leaders in His house, *“Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven.”* Matthew 5:16. Leaders shine among people!

REQUIREMENT #6 SUBMISSION TO AUTHORITY

Over the course of my time in ministry, I have encountered numerous “leaders” who do their own thing without being under the authority and blessing of a pastor. I tend to shy away from these lone ranger ministers, because even leaders are required to submit to leaders, as Hebrews 13:17 instructs. ***“Obey your spiritual leaders, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God.”*** I myself, as a pastor, am under the authority of the pastors and board of Pillar Of Fire Churches International, with whom I hold credentials. I am also submitted to the board of Freedom Life Church International. This is a scripturally, God-ordained requirement for leaders. A few years ago, I was contacted by a husband and wife ministry team that wanted to come to our church and teach on evangelism. They were very nice people, and that would have been tremendous...except for the fact that they were not under the authority of a pastor. How do I know that? Because I asked them if their pastor approves of their evangelism ministry. And then the truth came out. No pastor. No submission. Submission also includes being a part of a local church body, submitting and ministering to one another in love, as required in Hebrews 10:25,

“Do not forsake the assembling of yourselves together, as is the manner of some, but exhort one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.”

REQUIREMENT #7. READINESS

Readiness is the state of *being fully prepared*—a leader is ready, willing and able to pray, preach, counsel, comfort, support, give, etc. at a moment’s notice. Some years ago, Julie and I were attending a funeral for a friend when all of a sudden, I was called upon to share a tribute for the deceased. The funny thing is no one mentioned it to me prior to the service. Upon rising to my feet, and praying for help, the Lord gave me the first thought and 10 seconds later, I was standing before the mourners sharing my heart with them on behalf of our departed friend. Leaders must be fully prepared when spontaneously called upon to minister, *“in season and out of season”*. You never know when God will need you!

Readiness is a key factor in being a blessing to others, in season and out of season, whether you're feeling tired, frustrated, upset, weak, lacking in faith, defeated or whatever, God enables His leader to perform their duty of readiness. I remember some Sunday services years ago when I wasn't feeling ready to lead and I would pray, "Oh Lord, just get me through this!". That would be my default prayer—until God dealt with me to no longer pray that prayer of unbelief. He told me that I was to be ready to seize the moment and embrace it! I was to see every meeting as a learning opportunity or an occasion to be a blessing to others—I was to be keenly ready when God spoke or when the Holy Spirit was about to move in power! Oswald Chambers wrote, "Be ready for the sudden surprise visits of God. A ready person never needs to get ready—he is ready. Think of the time we waste trying to get ready once God has called!" Out of the seven requirements for leaders listed in this lesson, choose the three that have related to you and your ministry the most and in what way.

Communication _____

Time _____

Physical Health _____

Rest & Leisure _____

Visibility _____

Submission to Authority _____

Readiness _____

