

God's ideas about spiritual leadership

Dan Nelson – pastor

Calvary Chapel of the Ojai Valley

Leadership is a term that carries various meanings, intonations and nuances depending on the setting. In business, leadership can often reference the structure of authority, points of accountability, management styles, and supervisory roles. The military has a leadership hierarchy that is constructed of a very strict chain of command. Political leadership administers its influence balancing one's own aspirations with the desires of a constituency. But the Christian church is intentionally very different from all of these.

Many high school students are under daily reminders that their grade point averages and SAT scores will directly affect college admission status. And one's university degree can diametrically correlate to receiving the intended employment offer. On the job, exceptional performance often entitles one to a raise in pay or promotion. And one's thinking on what qualifies someone for leadership in ministry can easily be influenced by this type of understanding, derived from secular experiences. But Jesus came to bring the Kingdom of Heaven to Earth, which operates by a whole different set of rules.

In my role, lots of things cross my desk, including an occasional, seemingly random, solicitation from a church looking for a new pastor. As I peruse these types of letters, I am often shocked at the qualifications being sought in a minister. Sometimes they are seeking a "Superman": an unrealistic epitome of Jesus incarnate, the sort that doesn't really exist anywhere this side of heaven. But just as often, it seems that a corporate manager theologian is desired, a CEO type that can communicate publicly, pontificate spiritually, demonstrate credentials academically, and work real cheap.

It may be a surprise to some that God has actually given to us the qualifications for the ministry leader. We find these instructions in the Bible in the books of I Timothy and Titus, for example. Attributes such as having a reputation of good behavior, and clear thinking, being blameless, and temperate, hospitable and gentle, not covetous for stuff, nor greedy for money, not quarrelsome, nor violent, nor a drunkard, are listed alongside being committed to one's wife and raising children well before God. We are further warned not to put a new Christian into this role, despite one's résumé in earthly success. And the public presence must correspond to the private life. The central message is that

qualifications for "spiritual" leadership in the Kingdom of God require "spiritual" characteristics.

Tragically, I think sometimes non-Christians might get this principle better than the church.

We expect our auto mechanic to be thoroughly trained in modern diagnostic and repair techniques, equipped with the tools necessary to do the project effectively. We insist that our doctors be skilled in recent medical advancements, innovations and methods. And yet, our criteria for leadership in what we claim to be the most important aspect of our humanity, impacting eternity, our relationship with our creator, is often misguided. Instead of looking to standards established for non-spiritual purposes that may be useful at work, let's examine the Scriptures for our ideas. As we begin to think biblically, everything changes. Jesus emerges as our model. And worship service becomes neither concert nor comedy club, but authentic connection with the Holy Spirit of God, as the promise of Jesus Christ is upheld in joining at the gathering of his people.

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Dan Nelson is a frequent contributor to the Ojai Valley News and currently serves the Ojai Valley Ministerial Association and community as editor of the Religion Column. Permission is freely granted to reprint the article in its entirety. Dan Nelson is pastor of Calvary Chapel Christian Church of the Ojai Valley.



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Sunday Worship:

9:00 & 10:45am

Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View

Mid-Week Study:

7:00pm Thursday

Calvary Chapel Ojai Valley
195 Mahoney Ave., Oak View