



“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ,” I Corinthians 11:1.

Stewardship of Position

Central Truth: Both leaders and followers should strive to be effective in their respective places of service.

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“What position do you hold in your church?” One may reply, “I do not hold a position in the church. I am only a bench warmer.”

But you do hold a position. Even if the church has not elected you to an office, you still hold a position there. If you are not in the position of a leader, you must be in the position of a follower.

“*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*” (I Corinthians 11:1). That statement reflects Paul's concept of his being the leader and the church at Corinth being followers. Even more significant, he saw Christ as the leader and himself as a follower. The correct order of leadership always is Christ, the pastor, the designated church officers, and then the congregation as a whole.

The Bible sees the ministers as leaders in conduct. “*Ye have us for an ensample*” (Philippians 3:17). The faithful pastors can say, “*Those things which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do*” (Philippians 4:9). The responsibility is twofold: the leader must set the example and the follower must imitate the example. Both are accountable to God. That is the “Stewardship of Position.”

I. THE POSITION OF LEADERSHIP (I Peter 5:1-4)

Take the pastoral office as an example of faithful stewardship in a position of leadership. First Peter 5:1-4 discusses that in brief summary but excellent detail.

A. The leader must assume the responsibility of his office. The “*elder*” was a ruler in the Jewish synagogue. That office was adopted in the Christian churches and elder became a common designation for the one whom we call pastor today. To be in that office was more than an honor; it was a great responsibility. “*Taking the oversight*” was assuming the responsibility and fulfilling it under the leadership of God. One is faithful today in exact proportion to his assuming the responsibility of his office.

B. The leader must do his duty. The duty of pastors is to “*feed the flock of God*” (verse 2). One may hesitate out of a sense of personal inability (Jeremiah 1:1-6), but he must not rebel against God's call. God will enable His selected leaders to lead well (I Timothy 1:12). God said, “*I will give you pastors according to mine heart, which shall feed you with knowledge and understanding*” (Jeremiah 3:15). That becomes imperative in view of the fact that the “flock” has been purchased with the blood of Jesus Christ (Acts 20:28).

C. The leader must remember his accountability. Four things must control his ministry.

(1) He must assume his office: “*taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly*” (verse 2). Do your work voluntarily, not reluctantly; of a free will, not as if it were forced upon you. Assume the honor and the responsibility of the office and proceed to serve God there.

(2) He must govern his motives: “*not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind*” (verse 2). Neither personal profit nor selfish pride should influence one's work for God. The self-giving of Jesus is the example to us all (II Corinthians 8:9).

(3) He is to control his spirit: “*neither as being lords over God's heritage*” (verse 3). Spiritual leaders have authority which they exercise in love. They lead with the spirit which says, “*Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ*” (I Corinthians 11:1).

(4) He is to model his actions: “*being ensamples to the flock*” (verse 3). Some may “*say and do not*” (Matthew 23:3), but the man of God must be “*an example of the believers, in word, in conversation, in charity, in spirit, in faith, in purity*” (I Timothy 4:12). In all things he must show himself “*a pattern of good works*” (Titus 2:7, 8).

D. The leader will be amply rewarded (verse 4). The chief Shepherd will reward him. Think of that! The Lord Jesus himself will “*gird himself, and make them to sit down to meat, and will come forth and serve them*” (Luke 12:37). What an honor that will be! The Lord Jesus, as the Great Shepherd of the sheep, will give to all the faithful undershepherds “*a crown of glory that fadeth not away*” (I Peter 5:4). It will be worth it all when we

see Jesus.

Are you a leader in your church? Are you a pastor, teacher, or other elected officer? If so, take as a divine commission the work to which you have been elected. Serve God faithfully there. One day you will give an account to God for the quality of your stewardship.

II. THE POSITION OF FOLLOWSHIP (I Peter 5:5-10)

Submission is the key to being a good follower. To be a good follower in Christ, one must do five things.

A. The follower must submit to his fellow Christians. *“All of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility”* (verse 5). Humility should cover one's spirit as a garment covers his body. It is not showing human authority, but reverence for God (Ephesians 5:2). *“Obey them that have the rule over you, and submit yourselves”* is the command of God himself (Hebrews 13:17).

B. The follower must submit to God. *“Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God”* (I Peter 5:6). Submission to spiritual leaders is an act of submission to God. To receive God's messenger is to receive God; to reject God's messenger is to reject God (Matthew 10:40; Mark 9:37). Following your divinely appointed leadership is the way to follow God.

C. The follower must surrender all anxiety. Cast *“all your care upon him; for he careth for you”* (verse 7). That is the way to be free from fretting, fears, and all anxious cares (Philippians 4:6). Follow your spiritual leader with confidence that he is following God, whether or not you fully understand all that is involved. Trust God to direct him and you. Do not draw back in hesitation or rebellion. Pray for your leader, commit him and yourself to God, and continue to follow and support him as he leads you in the way of God.

D. The follower must guard against Satan (verses 8, 9). That involves being calm and self-controlled. But it also involves being alert and watchful. Watch against his attacks.

He is *“your adversary the devil.”* Call him your enemy. When you are tempted, remember his desire to destroy you. Jesus warns, *“Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak”* (Matthew 26:41). Give him no room to operate in your life (Ephesians 4:27) or you may be *“destroyed of the destroyer”* (I Corinthians 10:10). *“Let him that thinketh he standeth take heed lest he fall”*

(I Corinthians 10:12).

E. The follower must live in grace knowing that after trials God will “*make (him) perfect, stablish, strengthen, settle*” him (verse 10). He can “*be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus*” (II Timothy 2: 1). He promises, “*My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness*” (II Corinthians 12:9). Whatever one needs to be a good follower of spiritual leaders, God will supply.

III. THE STEWARDSHIP OF EFFECT

What is the end result of the leaders leading and the followers following, each being faithful in his assigned position? The effect of such a stewardship is that to God will be ascribed “*glory and dominion for ever and ever*” (verse 11). It can happen in your church and in your life.

The purpose of our salvation is to glorify God (Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14). The result of faithful living is to glorify God (Matthew 5:16). So by life or by death (Philippians 1:20), in our bodies and in our spirits God will be glorified (I Corinthians 6:20). That is the ultimate end of Christian stewardship.

Praise God for the opportunity to serve Him as a follower or as a leader among His people. It matters not which position you may hold, as long as God's will is done. There can be no higher honor than to reflect the glory of Him who has called you and claimed you as His own.

Questions

1. What position do you hold in your church?
2. How does Philippians 3:17 teach the responsibility of leadership?
3. How does Philippians 4:9 teach the responsibility of followship?
4. How does the leader “*feed*” those who follow him?
5. What four requirements for leaders are given in I Peter 5:2, 3?
6. How can you be subject to your fellow Christians?
7. How can you be subject to God?
8. How can guarding against Satan be an act of stewardship?
9. How can you glorify God in your life this week?
10. How can you be a better steward of your position?