



“He gave Joshua the son of Nun a charge, and said, Be strong and of a good courage: for thou shalt bring the children of Israel into the land which I swear unto them: and I will be with thee” (Deuteronomy 31:23).

Developing Future Leaders

Central Truth: Spiritual leaders should train those who will succeed them.

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Topic: Leadership; Moses.

Leaders change, but God's purposes continue. Moses led Israel for forty years, but the time of his leadership ended. As a truly dedicated leader, he was not angry that his ministry was ending. Neither was he jealous of the younger man who was moving up to take his place. His primary concern was for the welfare of the people of God and the fulfillment of God's purpose in them. He gladly trained Joshua as his successor and prepared him to fulfill his mission. He gave Joshua opportunities to develop his leadership skills while he was personally still in charge. He set an example to be followed by every leader of God's people.

What is your position in your church? Are you in a place of leadership, or are you one of the blessed followers? If you are a leader, follow Moses' example toward those who will become leaders. If you are a follower, be willing to release former leaders and accept the new one whom God sets over you.

CONCERN: The Welfare of God's people (Numbers 27:15-17)

God selects the leaders of His people. A church may speak of “calling” her pastor, but in very truth God selects him and sets him over the congregation (Acts 20:28). The vote of the church is simply an expression of her willingness to accept the man God has impressed on her as His choice.

That is why Moses prayed, *“Let the LORD, the God of the spirits of all*

flesh, set a man over the congregation” (Numbers 27:16). Who was to select the man? God. Who was to set him as leader of the nation? God.

That is why Moses prayed. He may have known that Joshua was the man God would choose, but he waited for the Lord to express His will.

The welfare of the people of God depends largely on the leadership of the man of God. That is why God selects the leader, not depending on His people to make their own choice.

The man God selects must set a worthy example for His people. He must “*go out before them, . . . go in before them, . . . lead them out, . . . bring them in*” (Numbers 27:17). Israel's leader was to go where he sent the people. He was to go first where he expected the people to go. To be a leader, he must be one with them.

Without a good leader, God's people become “*as sheep which have no shepherd*” (Numbers 27:17). God made man capable of ruling everything except himself. So He set him under the authority of civil government, and He sets Christians under the authority of spiritual leaders in a New Testament church.

QUALITIES: “In whom is the spirit” (Numbers 27:18)

The one absolutely essential quality of a spiritual leader is that he must be a spiritual person. The way to be a spiritual person as a Christian is to be filled with the Holy Spirit. It has always been so. Thus Moses asked God to give the nation a leader “*in whom is the spirit*” of God.

Moses was qualified for leadership by the Spirit of God which rested upon him. The seventy elders who assisted Moses as officers over the congregation were men who received the same Spirit as Moses (Numbers 11:16, 17, 24-29). The Spirit was their source of enabling, not their natural talents or acquired skills. The position of leadership of God's people is a spiritual ministry enabled by the Holy Spirit of God now, as it was then.

What do you look for in a pastor, a deacon, a Bible teacher, or a church officer? The first quality to look for is the evidence of the presence of the Holy Spirit in that person's life. Do you remember the qualifications of the first deacons? They were to be “*men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom*” (Acts 6:3). God, give us such men as leaders in our church, our denomination, and our nation.

INSTALLATION: Consecrate the New leaders (Numbers 27:18-20)

Have you participated in the installation of a new pastor in a church?

Some congregations have a special service in which a new pastor is received by the congregation and is consecrated in the office of shepherd/overseer. It is a beautiful and solemn occasion. Such was the occasion when Joshua was installed as the leader of Israel in the place of Moses.

There were five elements in Joshua's installation. (1) He was recognized by present leadership as Moses' successor with Moses' blessings. That great man of God laid his hands on Joshua. (2) He was consecrated to the service of God. Eleazar the priest received him and placed his blessing upon him. (3) He was given a commission to do the work of God. Moses charged him with the duties of his office. (4) He was elevated in the presence of the people. Moses transferred his own honor (authority) from himself to Joshua. (5) He was received by the people as their duly appointed leader under God. They agreed to cooperate and support him as the leader of the nation.

How about such a ceremony of installation of church officers today? It would greatly elevate the importance of the positions they hold. It would make them more serious about their duties. It would bring God into the choices of selecting leadership.

CHARGE: “Go with this people” (Deuteronomy 31:7, 8)

What charge did Moses give to Joshua as he assumed leadership of the nation? It is the same charge which should be given to servants of God in New Testament churches today. The charge involves four things.

1. Be strong in faith. *“Be strong and of a good courage, fear not, nor be afraid of them: for the LORD thy God, he it is that doth go with thee; he will not fail thee, nor forsake thee”* (Deuteronomy 31:6). God would give to Israel every place where the leader had faith to walk (Joshua 1:3). Move out in faith.

2. Be faithful in your ministry. *“Thou must go with this people unto the land which the LORD hath sworn unto their fathers to give them; and thou shalt cause them to inherit it”* (Deuteronomy 31:7). Be steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord and fulfill your ministry (I Corinthians 15:58).

3. Rely on God always. *“The LORD, he it is that doth go before thee; he will be with thee, he will not fail thee, neither forsake thee”* (Deuteronomy 31:8). You are never sufficient in yourself; your sufficiency is of God (II Corinthians 3:5).

4. Keep up your courage. *“Fear not, neither be dismayed”* (Deuteronomy 31:8). Follow the Lord who goes forth as a mighty man of

power. Have no fear when the Lord is on your side; man can do nothing to the one whom He defends (Psalm 118:6). That is like the charge I received upon ordination to the gospel ministry. The demands upon God's servants in ministry never change.

RESPONSE: “Israel hearkened . . ., and did as the LORD commanded” (Deuteronomy 34:9)

Here are the two divine requirements God places upon the people over whom He sets His appointed leaders: (1) Hearken and (2) Do. To hearken means to receive instruction. To do means to act upon those instructions. A nation (like Israel) that will do that is certain to possess her possessions. A church (like yours) that will do that is certain to fulfill her mission.

To know and obey is to gain great blessings from God. To know and not obey is to receive severe discipline from God. Read Luke 12:42-48 to hear Jesus' statements on that subject.

This study has drawn three great principles on leadership which are as applicable today as they were fifteen centuries before Jesus was born. (1) Present leaders are responsible for training those who will follow them in leadership. (2) New leaders must be given opportunity to work in training now. (3) All of God's people must follow the leaders He has chosen and set over them. Here is the attitude you must cultivate regarding leadership in your church: “I am ready to step aside, to step up, or to step after, as God assigns the leaders of His church.