

Leadership in Biblical Perspective  
*A Service of Ordination*  
“Leadership Counts”  
Various Texts  
Dr. Harry L. Reeder III  
November 28, 2021 • Sunday Evening Sermon

During this time, I want to share with you an exhortation that perhaps you can share with others. Our mission is to make disciples and there are four ministries embedded in that Great Commission. Jesus discipled for three years and what had He done? One, He had evangelized as He brought the disciples to Himself. Secondly, He had enfolded them and thirdly He had equipped them as He taught them. When Jesus met them at the Mount by the Galilee to give them the Great Commission, the Bible says at that moment that the disciples worshipped Him, which is exaltation, the fourth ministry. There are four ministries that are necessary and are the testimony of discipleship. I have my own way of referring to these four ministries. There is the ministry of upreach which is the ministry of worship (exaltation). There is the ministry of outreach which is evangelism. There is the ministry of inreach which is loving one another (enfolding) and there is the ministry of downreach which is the ministry of discipling (equipping). These are all embedded in the Great Commission.

Matthew 28:16–20 says [16] *Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them. [17] And when they saw Him they worshipped Him, but some doubted. [18] And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Me. [19] Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, [20] teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”* Jesus tells them to make disciples and then we are given these three participial phrases that modify the phrase ‘make disciples.’ Go or going is evangelism. Baptizing is enfolding and bringing into the body of Christ the people of God – the believer and their household. Teaching is equipping, discipleship, the learning that is going on. Then the end product was they worshipped Him even though some were dealing with doubts.

In God’s kind Providence in as much as we see the deconstruction of our culture in many ways through secular progressivism and theological progressivism, still in the Advent season there is this Christmas. People are looking to this, thinking the holiday will do it and we know the holiday is there to tell us about the One who came to do it, who alone can do it and that is Jesus Christ. So, we have this cultural bridge available to us to bring people to join with us. Our evening times during this season are used as evangelistic tools to invite people to so they can hear the Gospel through the various programs that will be presented. These are opportunities for enfolding, evangelism and for furthering our walk with the Lord as we keep building on what we are learning through the Advent sermons. Many are more than willing to walk through these bridges that we make available during this time of year.

Now I’d like to take this one step further. If we are committed to the mission of making disciples through the ministries He has ordained I see no reason why we can’t out of a love to Christ and a love to others, want to be a part of such events and take advantage of this to invite people to hear the Gospel. One of the things that can help you and your family are the Advent devotionals. Use these upcoming events as a way to further conversation with them about the Gospel as you perhaps invite them to dessert afterwards to ask them questions about what they

saw and heard. Most of those who are open during this Advent season to coming to things like this, are looking at the experiences hoping that this year there will be something that happens that will actually minister to their soul. None of those experiences can minister to the soul but the One who does minister to the soul is the One you can introduce them to. Think about it, pray about it and make it a project for you and your family. This is my encouragement to you. Don't lose the opportunity to plant the seeds of the Gospel of the Kingdom of our Savior to those around you.

We'll start this study by looking at I Timothy 3. This is an ordination service for Stephen King and it has been a great privilege to watch the Lord at work in his life throughout these years. Stephen started with our student ministry then moved to overseeing our graduates and career ministry and now to see your work through the seminary having come to fruition and then the trials of presbytery whereby we are bringing that to the consummation of an ordination, an installation of Stephen into the Gospel ministry. You are now being put into the position of leadership, not just leadership in general but ordained leadership which is the authority of the church being entrusted to you. Another phrase our Savior uses for this is, the keys of the Kingdom – the ministry of the Word of God, the discipline of the church, the sacraments of the church and all those things of the church now come under the purview of those who have been ordained. There are the ruling elders and the teaching elders and Stephen is being ordained to the teaching elders, the preaching of God's Word.

In this study I will give insight into this matter of leadership which is something that has consumed me my whole life because I have seen the importance of leadership as a historian and from looking at the Word of God itself. When God does things, He raises up leaders and this is seen throughout the Bible. By the way, He raises up a plurality of leadership when He does things and that's important because with any one leader's strengths you also get their weaknesses which is why a plurality of leadership is crucial for the benefits of God's people and the mission that Christ has entrusted to us.

One of the most amazing moments in the history of the church was the Reformation itself and what a glorious time that was. What did God do? He raised up a Reformer by the name of Martin Luther and when he nailed the 95 Theses on the Castle Church at Wittenberg, he was 33 years old. John Calvin was 4. Zwingli was 7. Here was a leader stepping forward and his leadership was surfacing other leaders that would step forward. When the Lord would put them into ministry He didn't send them alone, even Luther with all the wonderful talents he had, his ministry was enhanced by Malinkin or a Calvin. Calvin was an amazing theologian, pastor, preacher and leader of Christ's church in the Reformation, but Calvin had Theodore Beza. Zwingli had Bullinger. John Knox had Christopher Goodman. Thomas Cranmer in the English Reformation had Hugh Latimer and Nicholas Ridley.

When you look in the Old Testament and a leader is raised up you will notice that leader is never alone and when they leave as God calls them home, they don't leave a vacuum. They leave leaders to take their place. When Moses is called to the completion of his task there is Joshua and Caleb that were not only with him but were left in charge, along with the elders of the tribes that had been established when God called Moses home. Then there is King David, a man after God's own heart and when the Lord called him home there were three chief men and thirty mighty men that had surrounded him and were ready to carry on. Then there is Elijah and when he is taken to be with the Lord he leaves behind the school of prophets, all of those he had trained to carry on ministry when he had finished his ministry.

In the New Testament there is the Apostle Peter who nurtures a young man named John Mark who assists him in the writing of I and II Peter. Then John Mark goes back to assist the ministry of Paul. When the Apostle Paul goes to be with the Lord, left behind is Timothy, Titus, Silas, Luke, Aquila and Priscilla who was leading women and others. The greatest example we have of this leadership to learn from, observe and model is our Savior. I think I can safely say that if you were to go and catalog the life and ministry of Jesus as it is depicted, described and affirmed in the narratives of the Gospels, you will see that most of His time was given, not simply to discipleship but the discipleship of leaders. It seemed the bigger the crowd did not call for His time.

If you were going to set in motion something that was going to turn the world upside down in 25 years, what would you do? What did Jesus do for three years? There were the 70, the 12 and the 3. The smaller the group the more time He gave to it and the more intentional time He gave to it. Here is why and Jesus has already taught us this. Leadership works and I make no qualifications, but I will expound on it. Leadership always works. Bad leadership – bad results. Good leadership – good results.

Jesus gives us a word picture of this. Jesus said in Matthew 15:13–14, [13] *He (Jesus) answered, “Every plant that my heavenly Father has not planted will be rooted up. [14] Let them alone; they are blind guides. And **if the blind lead the blind, both will fall into a pit.**”* It works because they will both fall into the pit. Jesus said in Luke 6:40, [40] *A disciple is not above his teacher, but everyone when he is fully trained will be like his teacher.* Jesus said in Matthew 10:24–25, [24] *A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. [25] It is enough for the disciple to be like his teacher, and the servant like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign those of his household.* Leadership works.

We don't simply need one ordained to the office of ordained leadership at the church and that office has power assigned to it. It is not the power of the state for the state has lethal power. It is not the power of the family but it is the power of the church. The power of the state is the sword. The power of the family, in my home when I was growing up, was the rod – to curb that which is wrong and to promote that which is right. In the church the power is the towel. God's leaders are servant leaders who wash feet.

In my office where I meet with people is my degree; a master's of Divinity from Westminster Seminary hanging on the wall and in a moment like this that Stephen is going through, I went through after my graduation. At my ordination and installation, I was handed a towel with my initials sewn into it and it's also hanging in my office. I was informed that I had finished seminary, undergone the trials of ordination and had been installed – welcome to leadership in Christ's church, you are now qualified to wash feet. Stephen, you are called to be a servant so I'm going to give a couple of thoughts from a passage of Scripture about leadership for all who are reading this at some place or another are engaged in leadership and hopefully this will be helpful for you as well but it will also help you know how to pray for those in the ordained leadership of ruling elders but also in particular teaching elders.

I'm going to start by giving two words because I'm going to come back to them at the end – thick and thin, thin and thick. I'm not talking about a hamburger at Hardy's. There are about 18 young men I meet with to mentor on a monthly basis for the Gospel ministry and Stephen is one of them and the text I'd like to go to is one I have gone through with these men. It is I Timothy 3:1–7 and we have looked down into the qualifications of leadership in this text

but in this study I just want to give you the framework of the qualifications of a leader from this text and not just the qualifications.

I Timothy 3:1–7 says [1] *The saying is trustworthy: If anyone aspires to the office of overseer, he desires a noble task.* [2] *Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,* [3] *not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.* [4] *He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,* [5] *for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?* [6] *He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.* [7] *Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*

Stephen has been examined by the presbytery on things pertaining to his life here and in this passage from I Timothy 3 there are 17 qualifications listed. Interestingly, 15 of them deal with character and conduct. Only two deal with competency and gifts – able to manage and apt to teach – but everything else deals with character and conduct. That is why Paul will also say that while giftedness is important, godliness is more important and that is the first lesson on leadership for this study. I am not saying giftedness is unimportant. This same Paul will also tell you to stir up, fan the flame of the gift that has been given to you. We need to be constantly growing and developing the spiritual gifts that God has given us to use in the Gospel ministry as leaders but what we learn immediately is that godliness is more important than giftedness.

I'm grateful for a recent overture that has been given to the PCA that calls us and gives us a whole paragraph on examination committees. In our denomination and I know it's true in many others, when we put a man through the trials of ordination we almost always focus and give great attention to the content 'what does he know?' Does he know his theology and that's right to give attention to that because you can't preach what you don't know. So, we need to make sure he is within the bounds of Biblical, confessional Christianity. We spend a lot of our time with oral and written exams, in the area of content but many times such committees spend very little time about life and character. What is the man when no one is watching, when the lights have been turned out? Circumstances do not dictate your character; they reveal it and when we falter, they become the opportunity to refine it.

The second lesson I want you to see from this about leadership is that leadership is aspirational. We see this in I Timothy 3:1 and when he aspires to the office of overseer it is a fine work he aspires to do.

I want to give you a third lesson now because I want to talk about lesson two and three together. The third lesson is that leadership is inspirational as well. Did you know that the call to leadership is very much like the call to your conversion? When you became a Christian there were two callings that converged in your conversion to Christ. One is an external calling and we call that evangelism. Somebody by the Spirit of God brought the Gospel message to your mind, heart, eyes and ears. In my life, I heard that external call for years and years and at age 20 was when the sovereign hand of God came to me, and there was not only the external calling that was inspirational but there was an internal calling that was aspirational. That is, He gave me eyes to see and ears to hear.

Many times, we'll have a new member who joins our church and they will say something like this; "I just became a Christian and I grew up in a church but I never heard the Gospel like I heard it here. Praise the Lord, thank you Pastor!" I always tell pastors that when somebody says that who is becoming a member of your church, don't get excited because you have young men

and women who grew up in your church that are telling another pastor the same thing at another church. I do understand that there are people raised in churches where the Gospel is not preached but perhaps it was like me where I was raised in church where the Gospel was preached and I just didn't hear it. I had no eyes to see or ears to hear and call that an internal calling when the Spirit gives you eyes to see and ears to hear.

Now, what happens in conversion also happens in leadership. There is an external call – how can they go if they are not sent? God's church communicates an external call in the power of the Spirit of God, we believe the gifts have been placed within you. Then there is an internal call and Paul confirms this with this phrase; 'woe be unto me if I do not preach the Gospel.' So it is aspirational and inspirational – the external call and the internal call – as God is moving that person into life and ministry.

As I said I became a Christian at 20 years old and the Lord very graciously brought me from death unto life. I became a Christian in a small presbyterian church and if you're young with athleticism then what is next for you? You become the youth director. I then got this external call that I was going to be the youth director. So I started working with the kids and then I was told 'we think God has called you to the ministry' but I said 'no, you have the wrong address on that one.' That is what the Lord begins to do. Sometimes the external precedes the internal and sometimes the internal precedes the external, but to lead in Christ's church, both must be in place.

To recap, one, godliness is more important than giftedness. Two, the office does not seek the man, for the man seeks the office, because he has been called externally and internally by the hand of the Lord. Thirdly, leadership is work and it is work that can't always be scheduled. Leadership in Christ's church is being ready to go to work continually. As we saw from I Timothy 3:1, if anyone aspires to the office of overseer it is a fine work he desires to do. That is what God has called us to give and give ourselves to.

Fourthly, from the text, a leader in Christ's church is not an officer wearer, a leader is an office bearer. You don't wear the office and the title, but the man is aspiring the office for the work to bear and that's what he has been called to do.

This fifth one I think is very important. Salvation is free, discipleship costs and leadership will cost you everything in Christ's church. You can't negotiate it. It is a full commitment. As Paul puts it – I have been poured out as a drink offering. Paul did not see his life in leadership in Christ's church as a burnt offering but as a drink offering. In a burnt offering there are ashes left but, in a drink offering there is nothing left. You are poured out on the altar of love to Christ who poured Himself out to redeem you.

Before we close, I want to do two more things. Here is the first one. In the rest of this I Timothy 3 text where the man must be above reproach and then gives these qualifications of what it means to be above reproach. I commend you to go through those 17 qualifications as a study on your own for they are wonderful studies to go through and each one of them is jammed packed. I don't have time to do that in this study but I do want you to see an order here.

I Timothy 3:2–3 which says [2] *Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,* [3] *not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.* The listing of these gifts all deal with personal conduct.

I Timothy 3:4–5 says [4] *He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,* [5] *for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?* He must be able to manage his own

household where his very children are under submission. So we see this glorious picture of a man above reproach in his personal life, a man above reproach in his family life and then what does it say?

I Timothy 3:6 says [6] ***He must not be a recent convert, or he may become puffed up with conceit and fall into the condemnation of the devil.*** In other words, his reputation is not 'I've come to Christ now let me take over.' No, he has a track record. This is where we make gigantic mistake and I see it week after week after week. Some celebrity, athlete or other well-known person comes to Christ and the next thing you know we give them a platform to start pontificating about Christianity. We are doing them a disservice. They need, like Paul, to go to the wilderness for three years – they need to be trained. Why do we put people on platforms based upon what they were in the world?

I'm more than happy they have come to Christ and I anticipate them having a great ministry, but I love what Chuck Colson did. After he became a Christian, he went to R. C. Sproul and said 'teach me' and he refused the limelight that was being given to him. Colson wanted to know; People are going to ask me questions that I have no idea how to answer them Biblically and yet Colson already as a leader in the world would probably have an answer for most leaders have the gift of gab, but he didn't know how to answer them Biblically without being trained in the Word of God, even in the midst of adversity and to understand the Word of God in its fullness. So, the leader is to be above reproach in the church as well, now let's look at the next verse.

I Timothy 3:7 says [7] ***Moreover, he must be well thought of by outsiders, so that he may not fall into disgrace, into a snare of the devil.*** He must have a good reputation with those outside the church.

My first congregation was Pinelands Presbyterian Church in Miami, Florida and there were around 50 people with no children except my three children. I loved it. I got there in January and was playing golf on January 7 for it was 82 degrees and I was wearing shorts, with no humidity. Someone has to do this for Jesus and I was ready to do that. It was certainly a challenge because during one good flu season I was out of a church. The average age in my congregation was 69 and the lady that figured that out had been 59 for about 15 years. So that survey was suspect. God did a great work to give us that multi-ethnic, multi-cultural congregation and I still hear about it today. They were actually going to close the church down when I came but I said 'let's give it a shot for six months' and the Lord did a wonderful work for His praise and His glory and I thank Him for that.

As I was at Pinelands, I inherited five elders and that was interesting because there were only 11 men in the church. When I met them, of the five only two of them knew the Lord. The other three were all named John so I had first, second and third John, they just didn't know the Lord. I went out evangelizing one day and this man at this house I was visiting was really open as I was sharing the Gospel. Right before I thought I had a convert he said 'Did you say you were from Pinelands Presbyterian' and then he named one of the Johns, asking if he went to the church. I said 'yes he is an elder' and I thought at that moment I was going to be in a fist fight and he put me outside the house and he said to me 'A Christian? Are you kidding me? You can just get out of here. I wouldn't go to a church that has him as an elder or even a member.' I realized that one of my elders did not have a good reputation with those outside the church. If the government goes and asks questions about people before they entrust them with a job, should we not do that investigation as well? A leader is to be above reproach.

I bring this out to you because I want you to see the framework here. When I was in Miami at that church I went to a Christian banquet at the Hotel Fontainebleau and the reason it is called that is because it's a hotel with a bleau Fontaine – a blue fountain. The water goes up and lands in a top tier which overflows to another one and then another one and then recycles. I remember looking at that and thinking what that fountain does is kind of like the Christian life. The streams of water flow into you personally and then from you flows rivers of living water as it comes out and then overflows into your family, then your church and then into your community.

A leader is a man of priorities. I can't make an impact in a community without an impact in the church and an impact in my family and then I need to start with me. Your personal life leads to your family life which leads to your church ministry and that leads into the community. That's the call a leader in Christ's church has been given to.

Stephen, I want to give you a charge – thick and thin. Here is one of the things that leadership in the church is going to cost you. It will cost you sleepless nights. It will cost you introspection. It will cost you disappointment. Many times the people you pour the most into, all of a sudden they are not there and people will tell you not to take it personally but you will, so you just need to know how to deal with it personally and that's thick and thin. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus for when you do that, then you can have a thick skin and a thin heart. If you don't develop a thick skin with a thin heart, it will be just a matter of time before you develop a thick heart with a thin skin and the answer is not therapy and technique. The answer is to stay fixed on Jesus – your Leader triumphant – and He will lead you into leadership for His bride. Let's pray.

Prayer:

Father, thank You for the time we could be together in Your Word. Help us as we now set aside this precious trophy of grace that You have called to Gospel ministry and we do so in the name of the Lord Jesus, Amen.