

Church Life Notes

Study 3 – Leading

These notes are to accompany our series, Church Life, on Sunday mornings. Their purpose is to give you a summary of the message, bible passages referred to, and some questions for further study.

These will also be available on the church website (www.bethel-laleston.co.uk).

Almost the first thing Jesus did at the start of his ministry was to appoint those who would become leaders of the church, the apostles. They in turn would appoint other leaders. The NT tells us that leaders are God-appointed, gives us qualifications for leaders, holds up exemplary leaders and commends the desire to be a leader (1 Tim. 3:1). It is therefore important to the life of the church how it is led.

Church is led...under the leadership of Christ

Important to begin here as this has profound implications for any leading in the church. All leadership in the church is derived from him who is the head of the church. These bible passages are helpful: Col 1:15-20; Rev 1:4-8; Eph 5:22-30. They show us the absolute authority and headship of Christ.

This sets the tone, the character, the limits, the qualifications for leadership in the church of Christ.

1 Pet 5:1-4 speaks about overseers as under-shepherds of the chief shepherd, the Lord Jesus Christ. Jesus had to remind his disciples about the difference between their leadership and other rulers (Mark 10:42-45). Christian leadership is characterised by a servant heart.

Leadership of Christ's church is not about hierarchy but servanthood. Leaders serve under Christ and answer to him.

Church is led...by grace of Christ

Must beware of modelling structure of church on other organisations that are NOT the church. Might be tempted to copy company structures, government structures or even military structures. But the bible casts church leadership in a different light:

Eph 4:7-8 *"But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: "When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.""*

Leaders are gracious gifts to help the church. 1 Cor 12:28 tells us that God has given a variety of different gifts to his church but all appointed by him. That they are given by God doesn't mean they are above reproach or never make mistakes. First point maintains Christ's headship. But we should thank God he has given leaders to church. Leaders should also recognise that they lead only by grace of Christ.

Church is led...for the glory of Christ

Our church constitution answers the question – what is the aim of the church? To glorify God. This is the goal of every saved person and is what we were made for. It is the goal of the leadership of the church; to point the church towards this ultimate aim. We may not do this perfectly and are always in need of the enabling and guiding of the Holy Spirit, but this must be the direction we are headed.

When Paul writes to the Ephesians, he speaks about their unity together and the different gifts that God has given (by his grace) to the church. Why have these been given?

Eph 4:12 *"...to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up"*

Who are the full-time workers in the church? You are! The agents God uses to fulfil ministry of the church are ALL its members. You could summarise the goals of the ministry of the church under three easy-to-remember headings – ministry to God (worship), ministry to the church (nurture) and ministry to the world (witness). We are ALL to do these.

This is a reminder of our mutual responsibility towards each other. Leaders are to cultivate this. They are to recognise this, to use people to help equip the church, to enable the building up and maturing of the whole church.

Church is led...according to the word of Christ

Last point but certainly not least! Bible is not silent on what is required of elders. When you study the lists of qualifications, what shines through most brightly is not abilities or gifts but character of the person.

1 Peter 5:1-4 Difference between God's leaders (shepherds) and other leaders (Peter contrasts the two).

Some other passages to consider:

1 Timothy 3 – character and qualities of overseers and deacons.

Titus 1:5 and following – character of those who lead as elders.

God has appointed leaders and they must lead according to his word. Church must take God's word seriously and appoint suitable leaders.

Thank God for leaders, pray for them, submit to them and remember Paul's instruction to the Thessalonians:

1 Thess 5:12-13 *"Now we ask you, brothers, to respect those who work hard among you, who are over you in the Lord and who admonish you. Hold them in the highest regard in love because of their work. Live in peace with each other."*