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PRESENTS

# *My Personal Notes . . .*

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Ed Smithson, Editor

## **“THE CART BEFORE THE HORSE”**

The title of this article is an expression I have heard all my life. It has been used in all kinds of situations. For instance, wanting to get paid before one does work to earn it is “getting the cart before the horse.” A couple living together before marriage is “getting the cart before the horse.” Expecting a diploma before graduation is “getting the cart before the horse.” You get the idea. It is doing things backward, putting one thing ahead of its order.

I was thinking about this the other day when I had breakfast with a friend of mine. He was heading up to Oklahoma to speak to a “retreat” of “church leaders,” preachers and elders, on the subject of “Leadership.”

I did not ask him what he was going to say but it is a subject we have been talking about for years. Leadership in the church is a real problem and has been as long as I can remember. I wonder if we are not “getting the cart before the horse” where leadership is concerned.

One thing I might mention at the beginning. I don’t know if we think of leadership in the church in the way it should be. For the most part I fear we approach leadership in the church much the same way the world does. Church leadership is different and we should realize that.

## **HOW TO DEVELOP LEADERS**

For the most part leadership development should start early in life, in the home. While that might not always be possible, it is the ideal. The world thinks of developing leadership in this way: find people with the aptitude and the qualities thought to make leaders and train them.

I think it was somewhat different in days gone by. Most businesses promoted people from within the business. One great business leader, whose family was also involved, insisted that his offspring worked in the business starting from the bottom. He wanted them to know everything about it so when they reached the “boardroom” they would know what they were doing and talking about.

When you look at the qualifications of elders and deacons in the scriptures, do you get the idea that these offices are “training grounds.” Notice, “[not self-willed, not soon angry, no brawler, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but given to hospitality, as lover of good, sober-minded, just, holy, self-controlled; holding to the faithful word which is according to the teaching, that he may be able to exhort in the sound doctrine, and to convict the gainsayers.](#)” (Titus 1:7-9)

Now how would you know that a person was not “self-willed” if you had no experience with him? How would you know he could control his temper, “not soon angry,” without some background? If you will notice on most of these qualities that a prospective elder should have, you will not that almost every one of them could not be present unless a person had some experience. Consequently to use the words of Paul, “let them first be proven,” then let them serve.

The way true leadership is developed, over time, is by experience gained in the work the Lord has given us to do. Leadership, the kind the church needs, is not developed just by taking a class or a course on the subject.

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