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PRESENTS

## *Frankly Speaking Notes . . .*

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Ed Smithson, Editor

### HOW WE HAVE FAILED NO. 2

#### WE HAVE FAILED IN OUR DEVELOPMENT OF LEADERSHIP

**Today we look for leaders in the business and professional world.** One reason for this is that we are approaching “leadership” in the wrong way. If a man can be a success in running a large business or he is a successful engineer, doctor, or other professional, we think he should be an elder in the church. Make no mistake about it, I have known and know such men who have made excellent elders, but not because of their success professionally.

When we read the scriptures we can see where the emphasis is placed on those who want to be elders. “Faithful is the saying, If a man seeketh the office of a bishop, he **desireth a good work**. The bishop therefore must be **without reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, orderly, given to hospitality, apt to teach; no brawler, no striker; but gentle, not contentious, no lover of money; one that ruleth well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity;** but if a man knoweth not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God? **not a novice**, lest being puffed up he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover he must have **good testimony from them that are without;** lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.” (1Timothy 3:1-7)

“If any man is **blameless, the husband of one wife, having children that believe,** who are not accused of riot or unruly. For the bishop must be blameless, as God’s **steward; 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.** For there are many unruly men, vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision, whose mouths must be stopped; men who overthrow whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre's sake." (Titus 1:8-11)

The reason the qualities of those who serve as elders are in **bold** type is for emphasis only.

Upon reading these scriptures and others it is obvious to me that the Lord had two things in mind for future elders. He wanted them to be men of the Book and he wanted them to be genuine Christians with experience.

**Our first failure in leadership is we have ignored Paul's instructions.**

There was a time in my recollection that elders in the church were older men who attended all the services and people **liked**. Then some of the time it was just who people liked. Little consideration was given to his knowledge of the scriptures or other qualifications. I remember one time, in trying to get elders appointed in a congregation, forms were made up with the qualifications specified, for people to "nominate" men with those qualifications. I noticed one form handed in where the person was not qualified in any sense of the word. I asked the lady who turned it in "Why?" Her reply, "Well he is just such a nice person and so is his wife." She had not even considered the qualifications.

Then somewhere down the road we changed our thinking to a different qualification, other than Paul's. We wanted successful men, men who had built a successful business, or were successful in their profession. It made little difference if they knew anything about the scriptures. Many of them had never taught a class. I have heard it argued that "apt to teach" did not mean that they could teach a class. In my judgment every man who serves as an elder must not only be able to teach a class but effectively address the congregation as a whole. If he cannot do these things how can he be thought of as a leader?

Now that we have businessmen and professionals leading the church, the emphasis has changed. Building a church has little to do with "building up the church in faith" but more to do with the size of the congregation. When

these men talk about building a church they think the size of the congregation and how big a building they will need. There is nothing wrong with being a business man or a professional, but being successful in those areas is no criteria for choosing men to lead the church.

### **Leadership is more than “management.”**

We have forgotten, if we ever knew, how to “think spiritually.” Thinking spiritually is more than “better felt than told,” and it is also more than “fuzzy warm feelings.” Thinking spiritually means thinking biblically. It is the foundation of leadership to know what the Bible says and act accordingly. We are dealing with souls.

From my earliest recollection most of the elders in churches I have known and worked with have been “figureheads.” By that I mean, they were the “managers,” the “decision makers” with relation to the physical property the church owned. Far more time was spent in their meetings about the property, building and upkeep than was spent on the spiritual welfare of the congregations under their charge. I have not seen changes in this respect. In fact, I think it is worse today than ever before because we have more and larger facilities to oversee.

God wants His leaders, elders, to be knowledgeable, interested in his people, kind, loving, generous, not self-serving, no slave driver, interested in what God wants, law abiding (meaning abiding by the scriptures), hospitable, able to put the church first in their lives, and much, much more.

### **When it comes to elders we have become pragmatists.**

I am not sure of all the reasons but there seems to be an attitude in the church that we MUST have elders for the church to survive. This is what I mean. Some people have the idea that a church without elders is not a true church. There is no scripture to suggest that. It is just something that has been developed in the mind of some.

Another thing that has developed over the years is that we appoint elders for the wrong reason. When I was in the military in Ft Chaffee, Arkansas many years ago I worshiped with a church in Ft Smith for a while. They were having trouble and they finally decided the way to solve the problems was to appoint elders. Now they had a problem finding men who were

qualified and wanted to serve. Finally they decided on two men, one of whom had no children. When I arrived these two men were serving as elders for the church. Perhaps they were doing a good job. I was not there long enough to know.

The problem was that the congregation completely ignored one of the qualifications in order to be “organized.” I cannot tell you the number of times I have known of churches that appointed men to the eldership just simply because they wanted to keep the eldership intact.

To me there is a fundamental flaw in this idea and action. Above all, we are to be people of faith. It appears however, in these circumstances, that our faith in God is not strong enough to rely on His wisdom. It is God’s church, it is His word, and it seems to be we should have enough faith in His word to let Him have His way.

More later...

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ed Smithson". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline.

Ed Smithson

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