

Sermon: Church Leadership

Text: [Ephesians 4:11-16](#) ESV

adapted *Church Leadership* by Joe Ellis, *Essentials of Christian Practice*

Gary L. Wackler

April 19, 2020

Text: [Ephesians 4:11-16](#) (ESV) ¹¹ And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, ¹² to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, ¹³ until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, ¹⁴ so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. ¹⁵ Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, ¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

Introduction: There has never been a more important time in the Church for men and women alike to accept the role of leader. In a time of both isolation and so-called tolerance, the Church must lead.

Illus. Discuss person's attire for racquetball, has BADGE that says RACQUETBALL PLAYER, but when the person is asked about playing, says: "Oh, I don't actually participate in the sport. What would you say?"

SØREN KIERKEGAARD the Danish religious philosopher and minister, wrote a multitude of works in the middle of the 19th-century. Among his papers, is a story he wrote entitled the *Tame Geese*. In this story he asks us to imagine that these geese could, like us, talk and think and do the kinds of things that we do. The geese went to church every week. Each week they were inspired by a powerful, motivating sermon by the high goose. The sermon always went the same. The high goose would tell the assembled geese of their high destiny and about what a high goal the Creator had appointed geese for - he had given them wings. As he said all this, the geese would honk and squawk their approval. The geese curtsied and the ganders bowed their heads in honor of the great words. With their wings, the high goose told them, they could fly anywhere they wanted around the world. They were most pleased to hear this. And each week after church, as they dispersed, the geese would ... *waddle* ...home. Why didn't the geese fly?

After hearing and understanding such a powerful message about the opportunities available to them, they seemed to ignore it. They didn't fly home. The message made no impact on their lives. They continued to do what they had always done. They waddled home. Why, when there were so many good reasons to change, didn't the geese fly? It seems a part of the human condition that we don't always do what we know we should. We don't always act in our own best interest, even when we know better. In fact, we sometimes even deliberately do things that we know we are going to end up paying for in the long run.

Or like another Kierkegaard story about a sign in the store window that read: "pants pressed here." When a potential customer went into the store with a pair of pants to be pressed, he was told: "Oh, we don't press pants here, we only make up signs."

We tend to apply the term "leader" to almost anyone who holds an office, has a title, or is publicly visible. The fact is: such people may or may not be leaders. So, leadership is not primarily an office, a title, or a position. The Bible insists it is a function - i.e., it is something you do.

Nicholas Murray Butler former President of Columbia University offers this definition for leadership: There are three kinds of people in the world - those who don't know what's happening, those who watch what's happening, and those who make things happen.

GLW - "We can watch change, manage change, or create change."

Anyone who desires to be a church leader should understand the purpose of the Body of Christ, and why the Church exists.

Church leaders should understand their people.

Church leaders should understand their times and circumstances. This is the 21st century and things that worked in the 1950's may no longer be valid approaches or methods.

The potential that truly exists here at Weston Church of Christ, even after 125 years of ministry, will not fulfill itself. Possibilities will not automatically become realities. The world will not fall, like a ripe plum, into the lap of any church that remains passive.

First of all I affirm to you that we have godly elders (shepherds) that I both love and respect. We have deacons who have had a lot of opportunity to prove themselves. The days ahead will reveal what we will exhibit in the way of sweat and commitment toward our godly goals.

Every church, including here at Weston Church of Christ, has a huge need for:
I. Leadership

John Maxwell said once “everything rises and falls with leadership.” That is true in the corporate and business world and no less true in Jesus’ Church. People like George Barna and other Christian pollsters have complained about the LACK of leadership.

Illus. “The person who can’t lead and won’t follow makes a dandy roadblock.”

The last thing we really need is more consensus takers or a trip back in time to where the Minister did everything (that is called *sacerdotalism*; R.C model).

There is a need today for the biblical role of “equipper.” Some of my peers even use the title “Equipping Minister” as a way to explain what they are called to do.

The objective of biblical (Church) leadership is to free the people to use their God-given abilities and spiritual giftedness to function in the body of Christ for the cause of Christ so as to grow His Church.

If leadership is to be developed there has to be:

1. opportunity (permission) given
2. gifts evaluated
3. training to improve where we are strong

No one is omnicompetent!

In a culture of continuing fragmentation and specialization, there is a need for strong effective leadership. A (1987) *Time* magazine article observed though, “The nation calls for leadership and there is no one home.” Over thirty years later have the conditions changed? A lot of articles recently complain about the lack of leadership.

Illus. An important rule of leadership is: “Don’t allow the patient to prescribe the medicine.”

(Discuss need for strong women and men.)

Biblically only men can be elders and deacons, but EVERYONE should be in ministry. And everybody is a leader for someone. If we are working and praying together for the saving of the LOST and the nurturing of the SAVED, God will bless us personally and as a Body.

To a large extent, correct leadership determines whether the church flourishes, stagnates, or declines.

There are two roles of leadership:

1. expressive role

To use biblical terms, this is the role of the shepherd or overseer and it should reside especially with elders, preachers, and teachers of the church. Their main jobs are:

- a. establishing vision**
- b. encouraging the church toward its vision**
- c. correcting those who become passive or misdirected**

Another role of leadership is the:

2. instrumental role

This function focuses especially on deacons who serve (or minister) in administering programs to help achieve the goals of the church set by the shepherds.

Both roles are equally important, just as all gifts are needed for the Body to be effective in her ministry. If there is a God-given vision and direction for the church, but no one to carry it out, what do you have???

A very important principle is: “The right to lead should first be earned, and then granted official standing.” Elders for example should always be men who have proven themselves by a good track record. The Scripture says: “not novices” (NIV) or a recent convert (ESV).

Then there is the issue of:

II. Power and Authority

Illus. Stay one step ahead of your people and you are called a leader. Stay ten steps ahead of your people and you will be called a martyr.

Leadership cannot exist without power *and* authority. Power and authority for Church leaders come from God. Power is the energy, and authority is the right to use it.

Joe Ellis says, “If the church is not driven by its purpose and led by its leaders, it will be driven and led by some other influence such as habit, tradition, institutional expedience, or the critics. One or more of these “squeaking wheels” will set the agenda, independent of the purpose of the church.”

There is power that overrides others’ freedom (abuse of power):

physical power (the ability to impose one’s power)

monetary power (and the control of it)

political power (manipulating of relationships)

social power (use of guilt and shame or prestige to influence others)

There is power that actually produces freedom and helps create teamwork:

Charisma (personal magnetism)

Traditional power (people who occupy respected social positions and roles)

Rational power (wisdom, competence, knowledge or skills)

Every leader in the Church over whom Christ is the Head, who is the author of power and the grantor of authority, must ever be aware of the SERVANT MODEL that Christ gives us and modelled for us.

POWER AND AUTHORITY SHOULD BE USED WHEN IT HONORS GOD!

With any amount of power and authority must come:

III. Responsibility

Joe Ellis wrote - “American churches are floundering for lack of leadership. They are passive, maintenance-oriented and internally focused. They perpetuate programs, structures, practices, and communication styles that developed in the century prior to 1945 but are no longer effective. Like the dinosaur, they have failed to turn a corner when the world did. Such congregations, according to Lyle Schaller, are doomed to be seen as irrelevant by most Americans born since 1945.” Isn’t that a lot of us?

It is not that these people that Schaller describes:

aren’t good, or even Christian,
nor aren’t sincerely wanting to save the lost
It’s not that they aren’t preaching the gospel.
These in many cases are God-fearing people.

**BUT THEY WILL FAIL IN CARRYING OUT THE GREAT COMMISSION
BECAUSE THEY ARE PERCEIVED AS IRRELEVANT.**

What a terrible epitaph: “They died because they would not change.”

We must change and most of us will probably be uncomfortable as we try our best: to involve everyone in the effort; everyone must put their ego aside for the cause of Christ. We must die to our self if we want to live.

Illus. “I’d rather get ten people to do the job than to do the job of ten men.”
(D.L. Moody)

If we truly want to “be the Church,” **EVERYONE SHOULD BE INVOLVED.**
Ephesians 4:16 ESV says that the church “when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

Our goal should be to meet the universal needs of mankind in a way that is innovative and attractive without compromising God’s Message.

Kennon Callahan contrasts traditional ministry, as it has been conducted for generations, and ministry as it must become in the hands of “missionary” leaders. The former have focused on maintaining institutional forms that have outlived their usefulness. The latter focus on fulfilling God’s mission in an America that has, in reality, become a mission field - **POST-CHRISTIAN**. Third world countries are now literally sending missionaries *here* to convert America to Christianity.

Conclusion: Leadership must be a multiplying process. It is one where we train others to do what we do, trust them to lead, and then release them to train, trust and teach others.

The Apostle Paul gives Timothy this wise advice: **II Timothy 2:2 (ESV)** ² and what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men,[a] who will be able to teach others also.

Footnotes: **II Timothy 2:2** The Greek word *anthropoi* can refer to both men and women, depending on the context.

(To the congregation) **Pray for our leaders** - that they will be more than officeholders. Pray they will be God's leaders. God is going to richly bless this church **IF WE WILL ONLY STAY FOCUSED.**

Years ago in some circles this was a catch phrase, and it is still true and needs to be heard again:

**THE MAIN THING IS
TO KEEP THE MAIN THING
THE MAIN THING.**

“Our task is to lead people on a journey with the ultimate aim of bringing the Lord God glory.” - Copyright (c) 1995 Baptist Press.