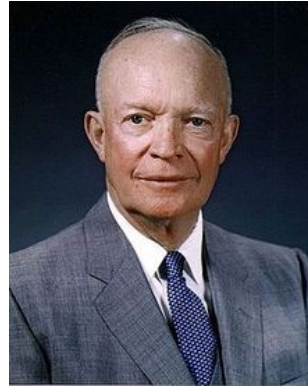


The “Followship” of the Eldership

In order to be a leader a man must have followers. And to have followers, a man must have their confidence. Hence the supreme quality of a leader is unquestionably integrity. Without it, no real success is possible, no matter whether it is on a section gang, on a football field, in an army, or in an office. If a man's associates find him guilty of phoniness, if they find that he lacks forthright integrity, he will fail. His teachings and actions must square with each other. The first great need, therefore, is integrity and high purpose. -Dwight D. Eisenhower, the thirty-fourth President of the United States



For a short time, Dwight Eisenhower was a leader in college football; for many years he was a leader in the military service; for eight years he was a leader of our nation. He was a man of the last century who understood leadership. In regarding leadership, he said that “Leaders must have followers; and that followers must have confidence in those leaders”.

Without confidence in the leaders, there would be no followers and without followers, there would be no leaders. If there is not a group of followers who are following the leaders, then who are they leading? Leading leaders are confirmed by following followers and following followers are confirmed by leading leaders. Above all there must be confidence in the leaders by the followers.

This principle is never so true than when following Christ, for we can have great confidence in His leadership. This is why He is called the “*Shepherd and Guardian of your souls*” (1 Peter 2:25). We respect and have confidence in Him; therefore we want to follow Him. Jesus never proclaimed following Him was going to be an easy life, for discipleship carries a cost.

- Loss of sleep:
Matthew 8:19-20, And a certain scribe came and said to Him, "Teacher, I will follow You wherever You go." And Jesus said to him, "The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air {have} nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."
- Loss of family:
Matthew 8:22-23, But Jesus said to him, "Follow Me; and allow the dead to bury their own dead." And when He got into the boat, His disciples followed Him.”
- Loss of worldly lifestyle:
Matthew 16:24, Then Jesus said to His disciples, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.
- Loss of possessions:

The “Followship” of the Eldership

- Matthew 19:21, Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, go {and} sell your possessions and give to {the} poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow me."

Because following Christ is not easy, Jesus plans for every congregation to be led by leaders called elders. They are specific leaders of the church who through maturity have developed appreciative qualities as spelled out in Timothy 3 and Titus 1. They call them leaders because they are mature in areas of their life, causing them to stand out among those that do not. This is what is communicated in *Acts 14:23, And when they had appointed elders for them in every church, having prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.* The followers believed in the leadership of the elders that they chose based on their godly qualities. If the qualities of godliness are not in the lives of the elders, then the followers will not be what God wants them to be in the end. A church family must trust the leadership which is brought forth.

Following the Elders means putting trust in their....

Instruction:

To be a good follower of an eldership means trusting their instruction.

- 1Thessalonians 5:12, But we request of you, brethren, that you appreciate those who diligently labor among you, and have charge over you in the Lord and give you instruction,
- Acts 6:2, And the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, "It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.

Correction:

To be a good follower of an eldership, one must be willing to trust in their correction.

- Titus 1:7-9, For the overseer must be above reproach as God's steward, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not addicted to wine, not pugnacious, not fond of sordid gain, ⁸ but hospitable, loving what is good, sensible, just, devout, self-controlled, ⁹ holding fast the faithful word which is in accordance with the teaching, that he may be able both to exhort in sound doctrine and to refute those who contradict.

Note: Elders are also subjected to discipline when needed.

- 1 Timothy 5:19, Do not receive an accusation against an elder except on the basis of two or three witnesses.

Protection:

Being a good follower of the eldership means trusting in their protection.

- Acts 20:28, "Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood."
- Heb 13:17, Obey your leaders, and submit {to them} for they keep watch over your souls, as those who will give an account. Let them do this with joy and not with grief, for this would be unprofitable for you.

The “Followship” of the Eldership

Collection:

Being a good follower to an eldership would mean trusting in their decisions with the collection.

The elders are responsible for making money decisions for the church.

- Acts 11:29-30 And in the proportion that any of the disciples had means, each of them determined to send {a contribution} for the relief of the brethren living in Judea. ³⁰ And this they did, sending it in charge of Barnabas and Saul to the elders.

The elders can even be compensated for their labors if needed.

- 1 Timothy 5:17-18, Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who work hard at preaching and teaching. 18 For the Scripture says, "You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing," and "The laborer is worthy of his wages."

Contention:

There will be many conflicts that will arise in the church, but the followers must trust the leader in issues of conflict resolution.

- Acts 15:1-2 And some men came down from Judea and {began} teaching the brethren, "Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved." ² And when Paul and Barnabas had great dissension and debate with them, {the brethren} determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem to the apostles and elders concerning this issue.
- Acts 15:6 And the apostles and the elders came together to look into this matter.
- Acts 16:4 Now while they were passing through the cities, they were delivering the decrees, which had been decided upon by the apostles and elders who were in Jerusalem, for them to observe.

Example: Bob Williams mediating conflict in Africa.

Direction:

Direction in example

- 1 Peter 5:1-3, Therefore, I exhort the elders among you, as {your} fellow elder and witness of the sufferings of Christ, and a partaker also of the glory that is to be revealed, ² shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to {the will of} God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; ³ nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock.

Direction in sickness

- James 5:14-15 Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the

The “Followship” of the Eldership

Lord; ¹⁵ and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.

Closing Story: Will Someone Be A Follower?

S. I. McMillen, in his book None of These Diseases, tells a story of a young woman who wanted to go to college, but her heart sank when she read the question on the application blank that asked, "Are you a leader?" Being both honest and conscientious, she wrote, "No," and returned the application, expecting the worst. To her surprise, she received this letter from the college: "Dear Applicant: A study of the application forms reveals that this year our college will have 1,452 new leaders. We are accepting you because we feel it is imperative that they have at least one follower."

Following the eldership means trusting them in areas of INSTRUCTION, CORRECTION, COLLECTION, PROTECTION, CONTENTION and DIRECTION. Too many times when appointing elders, we tend to neglect the fact that we also recognize followers at the same time. We did not make that mistake this time.