

Spiritual Leadership Series #1
What Is Spiritual Leadership?
By Bill Denton

INTRODUCTION

A. Titus 1:5 (NASB95)

5 For this reason I left you in Crete, that you would set in order what remains and appoint elders in every city as I directed you,

1. It is widely held that one of the responsibilities of the evangelist or preacher, is to do what Paul charged Titus to do
 - a. set things in order
 - b. appoint elders

2. In today's church, preachers or evangelists often have little to say about setting things in order, and few churches would even think about depending on the evangelist to appoint elders (we want to vote!)

3. Still that passage is there, and others point to a very real and serious responsibility on the part of those who preach the word to help congregations develop spiritual leaders

B. Our congregation is currently without elders, and I think we know that somehow we need be moving in a positive direction to prepare men to serve in this capacity

1. When we lived here 30 years ago, the church was in the same situation, and we worked together to appoint elders

2. We can do the same thing today

C. I would say there are some things different today than back then that will affect what we do and how we go about reaching this goal

1. The situation is different
 - a. the church was larger back then
 - b. I think we had a better pool of men prepared and ready for the job

2. This time around, I come to the task with 30 years experience I didn't have when we took on the goal of appointing elders
 - a. since then I have participated in either adding to an existing eldership, or creating an eldership from scratch in five or six different churches

 - b. I know preachers who have participated in such a process once or twice, maybe even three times – and many who have never been part of such a process

 - c. we have gone about the process in a variety of ways – some good, and some not so good

3. I have seen results that were wonderfully positive, and some that were woefully disappointing
 - a. in just about every church, whether the results were good or bad, I have always thought the way we did it left a lot to be desired
 - b. the main reason for thinking that way is that it has always seemed that we were using flawed standards, and looking for the wrong things in the men being considered

D. We need to be much more concerned with looking for spiritual leaders

1. Too often, the search for elders degenerates into something less
 - a. a popularity contest
 - b. power struggle
 - c. a “pay-back” opportunity
 - d. other similar kind of thing
2. We often get into too big a hurry
 - a. I would rather take extra time and find good men to serve as leaders than to hurry and appoint leaders who aren’t ready for the job
 - b. some take the view that a church is not “scriptural” without elders
 - 1) a church is as legitimately a church with or without elders
 - 2) being a church has to do with having a group of people who are saved and who have been added to the body of Christ
 - 3) that church can be immature in many ways, but the idea that it’s not a scriptural church is simply unfounded
 - 4) that many things need to develop might be true, but lacking anything does not prevent a church from being a church

E. I want us to begin dealing with some of the things that I intend to purposely move us toward preparing both our men and our congregation for the major goal of appointing elders to serve this congregation

1. The first thing we need to do is dispense with a timeline
 - a. do we want to prepare, identify, and appoint good, solid leaders or just tag a few guys with the job so we can say we did something?
 - b. hopefully, you see the benefit of taking the time necessary to do it right
2. We need to utilize a multi-faceted approach
 - a. I will preach sermons – more than just this series – over the next several months (or however long it takes)
 - b. I am planning to teach some Bible classes to happen soon
 - c. we may have some leadership training for selected individuals

F. Today I want to briefly deal with the question, “What is spiritual leadership?”

1. That’s sort of a foundational question, don’t you think?
2. If we can’t answer that one, then how can we ever give anyone a role or responsibility as a leader?

I. THE SHORT ANSWER TO THE QUESTION

A. Spiritual leadership is helping move people from where they are to where God wants them to be

1. Not all methods are acceptable (we’ll talk more about this later)
2. You might prefer for a definition to provide more information, but this is really the idea in a nutshell

B. Many of us would probably like it if we could turn to a passage of scripture and read a definition of spiritual leadership, but it’s not there in that sense

1. In a way, all of God’s word is designed to produce in believers, both the character and the ability to lead other people where God wants them to be
2. We could say that as disciples of Jesus, the closer we follow Him, the more we will be where God wants us to be, and the better equipped we will be to help others get to where God wants them to be

C. You can find any number of ideas that explain spiritual leadership, and many of them are quite good and helpful, but I think this simple explanation is powerful

1. Sounds easy, doesn’t it?
2. Yet the truth is, spiritual leadership is one of the most difficult and demanding forms of leadership you will ever encounter

II. WHERE DOES A SPIRITUAL LEADER START?

A. A spiritual leader starts where all believers start

1. **Matthew 4:18–19 (NASB95)** —

18 Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. **19** And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

2. **Matthew 9:9 (NASB95)** —

9 As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector’s booth; and He said to him, “Follow Me!” And he got up and followed Him.

3. **Matthew 16:24 (NASB95)** —

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross and follow Me.

B. What's the point of using those passages?

1. Two of them involve the calling of specific disciples by Jesus – the first thing they did was follow Jesus
2. The last reaches beyond the band of twelve disciples to anyone who would follow Jesus – deny himself, take up his cross and then follow

C. Spiritual leaders all begin at the same place by becoming followers of Jesus Christ

1. Some things this does not mean
 - a. it does not mean wearing a particular name or attending a church with the right name on the sign outside
 - b. it does not mean only making a claim to be a follower of Jesus
 - c. it has nothing to do with what other people may or may not be
2. What does following Jesus mean
 - a. it means you're serious about renouncing yourself, and all worldly forms of gaining power, authority, position, etc.
 - b. it means you're serious about learning from Jesus how to live and relate to both God and other people
 - c. it means you're serious about becoming like Jesus
3. **Acts 4:13 (NASB95) —**
13 Now as they observed the confidence of Peter and John and understood that they were uneducated and untrained men, they were amazed, and began to recognize them as having been with Jesus.

D. Why is this so important?

1. Because anyone who would be a spiritual leader must look like Jesus
 - a. I know some who think of themselves, and want other to think also, that they are spiritual leaders
 - b. but they don't look like Jesus
 - c. they don't sound like Jesus
 - d. they don't treat other people like Jesus would treat them
 - e. there is nothing about them that brings the life of Jesus to mind
 - f. those people can call themselves whatever they want, but they are not true spiritual leaders

2. Today's church is often taken in by a kind of spiritual leadership that is not what God has in mind for his people

III. THIS IS WHERE WE MUST START TO DEVELOP SPIRITUAL LEADERS

A. Note the following scriptures

1. **Romans 8:28–30 (NASB95)** —

28 And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose. **29** For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; **30** and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified.

2. **Philippians 2:5–7 (NASB95)** —

5 Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Christ Jesus, **6** who, although He existed in the form of God, did not regard equality with God a thing to be grasped, **7** but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men.

3. **Matthew 10:25 (NASB95)** —

25 “It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more will they malign the members of his household!

4. **Colossians 1:9–10 (NASB95)** —

9 For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, **10** so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please Him in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God;

5. **Colossians 2:6 (NASB95)** —

6 Therefore as you have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in Him,

B. Here is where we start – there is no other beginning place, no other standard for those who would be spiritual leaders

1. Anyone who wants to become a spiritual leader must have as their foremost goal in life to become like Jesus
2. Nothing else will do

CONCLUSION

A. My greatest fear in developing and appointing spiritual leaders is that we'll forget this

B. Invitation