

Effective Leaders For The Church
II Corinthians 8:15-24

INTRODUCTION:

Let's meet Titus! Even though his name is well-known to every student of the New Testament, he is not that well-known. He is one of the companions of Paul, who served well as a servant of the churches. There are several references to him in the letters of Paul, even though his name does not occur in the Acts of the Apostles. A study of these references indicates that he was an even stronger leader than the better known Timothy.

Titus was a product of Paul's missionary activity. He came to Christ as a Gentile in response to Paul's presentation of the Gospel. Like Timothy, Paul entrusted some very important tasks to Him. This association with the special offering is an example. To deal with the troublesome Corinthian Church, he had to be a strong leader. The church is always in need of strong leaders.

Titus was an effective leader. Because of men like him and the two unnamed leaders in the text, the churches of our Lord made a great impact upon their world. As we assess where we are in First Baptist Church, we must be concerned about leaders. So many of our leaders come from the senior part of our fellowship. If we are to reach this community, a new generation of effective leaders must be developed. What qualities make a man an effective leader? In this personal word from Paul about Titus and the others, three important qualities are emphasized. They are still dependable signs of an effective leader.

I. EFFECTIVE LEADERS ARE ENTHUSIASTIC IN THEIR WORK.

Paul put much emphasis upon this quality. "I thank God who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative." The word ' translated "concern" is closely related to the word translated "enthusiasm". Both words mean to do your work diligently, eagerly, zealously.

God is the source of their enthusiasm. "I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern." Paul knew about the source of this enthusiasm personally. He recognized that which he observed in Titus to be the same that he knew in his life. So, he gives God thanks for it. Interestingly our word "enthusiasm" comes from two words that mean to have God in you. Without this God given zeal in his heart, a man will never be an effective leader in the church.

The thrust of this enthusiasm-is toward people. "The same concern I have for you." The zeal of both Titus and Paul was directed toward being of help to the people of God. Since Titus was being sent to Corinth to take an offering, it might have been easy to get excited-about the offering. Many people can have that kind of zeal. They can have zeal for a program or project, but not people. The Church needs leaders whose first concern in with people. Titus was enthused about the opportunity to receive the offering in Corinth because he knew what the offering would do for them.

The expression I of this enthusiasm is in a willingness to work. Some people are constantly telling you how enthusiastic they are but you can never get them to accept any responsibility. When Paul mentioned the need in Corinth, Titus was more than ready to go. "For Titus not only welcomed your appeal but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative." "Welcome" is a strong word. He was really excited about this opportunity to be of service to the work of the Lord. The church needs leaders who can really get excited about tackling something big for the Lord.

The world has recognized the importance of this quality in leaders. Business want men who work ' hard and enthusiastically. Should the greatest work in the world be content with leis; The most difficult place in the church to get good leaders is in the pre-school departments. Adults just feel they need a greater challenge. The First Baptist Church, Texarkana, has the best pre-school worker I have ever met. She will be involved in child-care and teaching for the church at least 40 hours every week and enjoys every moment of it. We helped here celebrate her 80th birthday over a year ago. She has a contagious spirit of enthusiasm about her work. If I could infuse every worker in this church with this, we would reach this city for our Lord. Effective leaders always have it!

II. EFFECTIVE LEADERS ARE CAREFUL IN THEIR CONDUCT

In the actions of Paul and his friends we can see a very important quality of leadership. When you are handling money, you are always In a vulnerable position. Paul knew this. Since all of the Gentile churches were involved in this offering, a rather sizeable sum would be Involved. This prompted Paul to take some important steps. He selected Titus to be responsible in this matter and the churches selected two unnamed leaders to help him. They formed a finance committee for this project. Why didn't Paul do it himself? "We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men." This supporting statement by Paul is really a paraphrase of a verse from the book of Proverbs. He found his principles for conduct in the Holy Scriptures.

The principle is clear! There are two sides to the concern about conduct. First, is it right in the eyes of the Lord? The Lord does not look at appearance, but at the heart. It must have His approval before it can be right. But men look at the appearance of things so it must also be right in appearance. A wise leader is always concerned about how a certain action will be perceived by others. He is careful about his public conduct.

Many church leaders have blundered at this very point. They have followed a course of action on the bases of their conviction that it was best without regard to how it appeared. The results of such action can be devastating to the work. But this carefulness of conduct also involves their personal lives. Paul says an interesting thing about these unnamed leaders in the text. He writes, "As for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ." This

last statement refers to their conduct. It is literally, "The glory of Christ." The New International catches the spirit of it. Their conduct is such that Christ is honored through them. Their private walk matches their public walk. Christ-likeness is the mark of their lives.

III. EFFECTIVE LEADERS ARE COOPERATIVE IN THEIR SPIRIT

This paragraph gives us some helpful insights into first century church life. Obviously, there was a high degree of congregational cooperation. This offering required it. Each congregation was a church, but felt itself to be closely related to every other congregation.

However, it is what Paul writes about Titus that catches my attention. "As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you." "Partner" is related to the word "fellowship". He is one who shares with me in the work with others cooperatively. "Fellow worker" says the same thing. He is more than a worker ... he is able to work harmoniously right along side others. This is an important quality for an effective leader.

I have known some good workers who were not "fellow workers". As long as they were working by themselves where they could have their own way, they were fine. But if a project required cooperation, they were in trouble. Woe to the church that has called such a person as a staff member or placed them in a position of leadership.

What makes a man a good "fellow worker"? Maturity! As a man matures in love, faith, and hope he will be a good fellow worker, a good partner in the work of the Lord. We must be patient with people until they have matured to this point before we place upon them the burden of leadership. Interestingly, the New Testament leader is a servant not a Lord. As a man matures in servanthood, he will be prepared for leadership.

CONCLUSION:

This passage speaks to those of us who are now wearing the mantle of leadership. This gives us a standard by which to measure ourselves. Are we enthusiastic about our work? Are we careful in our conduct? Are we cooperative in our spirit? No number of spiritual gifts will compensate for the absence of those qualities.

This also gives the Church some guidelines to follow in seeking potential leaders. We must be concerned about more than ability. These qualities, where present, will make up for a shortage of ability. May God bless us with such effective leaders.