

Now this idea brings us to yet another trait necessary for leaders. A good leader will have the *ability to perceive* when there is a problem. He will recognize the fact that if an individual (or congregation) keeps going in the same direction he or she (or the congregation) is going, disaster is almost certain to follow. It is times such as these that a leader will have the resolve to make every effort possible to adjust that direction. That takes vision and perception. While a good leader is always sensitive to the wants and desires of a congregation, he also will have the vision and perception to know that it may not *always* be in the best interest of a congregation to *ask* where they *want* to go. How can members of a congregation *know* where they want to go if they *ought* to be going someplace they've never been?

Too many congregations in the Church today have abandoned *God's* qualities for leaders and accepted the world's qualities for leaders. The result is a recipe for disaster in the Church. The Church must not choose men to be Elders and Deacons because they are successful businessmen or because they have acquired great personal wealth or have other traits that are viewed as important in the *world's* eyes. Those things may serve very little purpose when it comes to tending God's children. Elders and Deacons must meet *God's* requirements. So even if a man has *every* quality for an Elder or Deacon listed in the Scriptures, if he doesn't have a thorough knowledge of the Word, it will be impossible for him to carry out his task. On the contrary however, no matter how knowledgeable a man may be in the Word of God, failure to meet other qualities listed in the Scriptures, will prevent him from being able to serve in a leadership capacity in the Lord's Church.

There are serious compromises being made in the teaching of Truth in congregations of the New Testament Church these days. Those compromises are being advanced because of an extremely low regard for the *authority* of the Bible and a lack of knowledge of the Word. Many Christians don't even know that there are "denominations" and then there is the New Testament Church — and *they are not the same*. Bible study is at an all time low in our churches. Many of those selected to be Elders and Deacons are chosen for the wrong reasons. Truth is of little matter anymore to many who call themselves "christians." Let us all take heed of these words to Israel.

*"Hear the word of the Lord, you Israelites, because the Lord has a charge to bring against you who live in the land: There is no... acknowledgment of God in the land... 'my people are destroyed from lack of knowledge. 'Because you have rejected knowledge, I also reject you as my priests; because you have ignored the law of your God, I also will ignore your children. (Hosea 4:1 and 6 NIV)*

Do you think it's possible that God will ignore His children today because of failure to acknowledge Him and because of a lack of knowledge of the Word?

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Dennis and Sherri Owens — Cincinnati, Ohio  
diligence@gorfsystems.com — <http://www.gorfsystems.com/diligence/>*

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# DILIGENCE

*"We want each of you to show this same diligence to the very end, in order to make your hope sure." — Hebrews 6:11*

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## Leadership

*"Leadership is taking people to places they haven't been and teaching them things they didn't already know."*

— Unknown —

*"...if the trumpet does not sound a clear call, who will get ready for battle? So it is with you..."*

— (I Corinthians 14:8-9 NIV) —

*"A leader takes people where they want to go.*

*A great leader takes people where they don't necessarily want to go but ought to be."*

— Rosalynn Carter —

*"The art of leadership is saying no, not yes. It is very easy to say yes."*

— British Prime Minister Tony Blair —

It has become an unfortunate fact that far too many of those in the pews of our churches are not good Bible students. Many in fact don't bother to bring their Bible with them to worship or class — or even *come* to class at all. So they certainly don't do any preparation for a class. That means — as dangerous as it is — that many individuals simply accept *whatever* they are told by the leaders — whether it be an Elder, Deacon, Preacher, Sunday school teacher or just another Christian whom they look up to or admire. Although the focus of this article concerns Elders and Deacons, there's no getting around the fact that *everyone* is a leader to *someone*. It might be something as simple as being an older brother or sister, a good friend, or just being an example to those with whom we come in contact. So, the traits that make for a good leader are important to all of us and no matter what is the context of our environment, the principles of good leadership are the same.

A trip to any bookstore will indicate that there is a lot of interest in reading about "leadership." Many of the books in those stores however, are written by authors who have either very little, or no understanding at all about God's expectations for those who are leaders in the Lord's church. We saw in an earlier issue of *Diligence* (June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2006) that the requirements for Elders and Deacons in the Church are far different than what many secular books would probably say are necessary attributes for a good leader. Perhaps those who are — as well as those who seek to be — Elders and Deacons in the Lord's Church should not rely as heavily on the secular books as they should on the one Book that is inspired by

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God — the *Holy* book. That's not to say that the secular books don't contain good ideas and suggestions. You'll notice that some of the principles of the secular quotes on page 1 are woven into this article as principles necessary for being a good leader — but *God's* requirements, qualities and instructions can *only* be found in the book inspired by God. Reading all of the secular books in the world written about leadership can *never* qualify *anyone* to be an Elder or a Deacon in the New Testament Church — only God's Word can do that.

One need only look around at various congregations to realize that the New Testament Church is in the midst of a leadership crisis. There is a serious shortage of men who not only *meet* the Scriptural qualities required to be Elders and Deacons but are also *willing to accept* the responsibility of serving in those capacities. Leadership in the Lord's Church is a daunting responsibility so it's not a surprise that even some of those who might be qualified are reluctant to accept the charge. Leadership in the Church is often a nearly overwhelming responsibility that requires thought, effort, vision, time investment, knowledge of the Word, confidence, stamina, moral resolve, conviction, steadfastness, humility, honesty, perseverance, integrity, time control, compassion, firmness, courage, boldness, knowledge of the Word, trust, constraint, tolerance, patience, knowledge of the Word, persuasiveness, wisdom — and that's just the beginning. We haven't even included here most of the qualities mentioned in I Timothy 3:1-13. *Those* were discussed briefly in that earlier issue of *Diligence*. And — oh — yes — there is that one *other* requirement for leadership. There will be followers — followers listening to, and listening for the shepherd's voice. Those who are following a good leader recognize the clarity of the call. Leaders who have to *announce* to the followers that they are the leader — *aren't* a leader! Followers *know* their leaders without having to be told.

*“My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me:”*  
(John 10:27 KJV)

We must never forget however, that followers don't follow a leader because of loyalty to that leader — the loyalty of a Christian is to God — not any man. Paul made this clear in the following verses.

*My brothers, some from Chloe's household have informed me that there are quarrels among you. What I mean is this: One of you says, 'I follow Paul'; another, 'I follow Apollos'; another, 'I follow Cephas'; still another, 'I follow Christ.' Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Were you baptized into the name of Paul?... (I Cor. 1:11-13 NIV)*

In Acts 17:11 we see that the Berean believers understood this concept since they “*searched the Scriptures daily*” to be certain that Paul was teaching according to the Word of God. They *knew* their loyalty was to God and not to Paul since he was a mere man and therefore certainly capable of veering off of the correct path.

A real leader recognizes the fact that followers don't always know where they *need* to go. Which brings us back to that first quote at the beginnings of this article. Leadership is not *just* leading. It's *accepting responsibility* for taking followers

to places they've never been and for teaching them things they didn't know that they didn't know. (That's not a misprint — read it again).

Paul gave some very specific instructions to Titus about those whom would be appointed as Elders in Crete. Let's read those verses from Titus 1:5-11.

*“The reason I left you in Crete was that you might straighten out what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. <sup>6</sup>An elder must be blameless, the husband of but one wife, a man whose children believe and are not open to the charge of being wild and disobedient. <sup>7</sup>Since an overseer is entrusted with God's work, he must be blameless — not overbearing, not quick-tempered, not given to drunkenness, not violent, not pursuing dishonest gain. <sup>8</sup>Rather he must be hospitable, one who loves what is good, who is self-controlled, upright, holy and disciplined. <sup>9</sup>He must hold firmly to the trustworthy message as it has been taught, so that he can encourage others by sound doctrine and refute those who oppose it. <sup>10</sup>For there are many rebellious people, mere talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision group. <sup>11</sup>They must be silenced, because they are ruining whole households by teaching things they ought not to teach — and that for the sake of dishonest gain.” (NIV)*

It would be easy to write an entire article on *each* of those requirements listed in verses 6 through 9 but for now we want to focus on verses 9, 10 and 11. You must have noticed — over on page 2 of this article — that “knowledge of the Word” was included more than once in that long “overwhelming responsibility” list.

That's because it is absolutely necessary that leaders in the Church have a *thorough* grasp of the Word. As we stated earlier, all of the secular leadership books in the world will not help if an Elder or Deacon is not knowledgeable in the Word of God. Without knowledge of the Word a leader can not possibly carry out Paul's instructions included in verses 9 through 11. Neither can those instructions be carried out by a leader who is concerned about his popularity. It's not difficult to guess that when Titus carried out Paul's instructions in verse 11, he wasn't going to be real popular or well liked by “*those of the circumcision group.*” A good leader will understand that he isn't in a contest to win votes but is instead, engaged in a challenge to protect the “flock” from the snares of the devil. Those who accept the responsibility of leadership in the church must be prepared to face *numerous* situations and circumstances that require courage and boldness tempered with gentleness and a keen sense of compassion for the souls of those who *must* be corrected for their teachings and/or actions. A true leader *can not* fear making decisions that may be unpopular if those decisions are for the purpose of protecting the flock or taking them in a direction they may not “*necessarily want to go but ought to be.*” Accepting the responsibility of leadership in the Lord's Church is a high risk decision. There are times when decisions must be made that may not be popular. A good leader will be prepared to say “no” with resolve and boldness when the situation warrants.