

## Following, leading and other ways of serving God.

There has been much discussion around the topic of leadership since our AGM, some good, some critical, some bizarre. One thing I have been concerned about is the attitude to leadership.

Modern Christian Churches have a problem with leadership. We spend so much time developing leaders, evaluating leaders, reading about leadership, and critiquing leaders that we have forgotten a Christians primary task.

### Following Jesus

This church has a reputation of being hard on its leaders. That is because this congregation has a character of enquiry. People here are confident enough to question. That is not a problem to me. Sure there is a fine line between questioning and being disrespectful we need to work on that, and sometimes it is how questioning is done that causes the issue.

Now, this sounds like a criticism and I suppose it raises some red flags for us. I am not going to only talk to leaders today but to followers and if you know me, **We are all to be first and foremost followers – OF CHRIST.**

Definitely there are some questions raised.

1. Who is leading who?
2. What is our responsibility to leaders as Christians?
3. IS our leadership structure suitable for our church?
4. If the leadership have the responsibility do they have the authority?
5. Does the membership have say in the direction of the church?

Big questions and some will be touched on today others as we go through things early next year.

As I said, I think modern Christianity has a problem with its leadership focus. What I want to present to you today is a number of thoughts on where we sit as Christians.

1. We are first and foremost followers of Jesus.

### **Matthew 16:24-26 (ESV)**

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me.

<sup>25</sup> For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.

<sup>26</sup> For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what shall a man give in return for his soul?

NOTE: It is not about me, it is about following Jesus – We are instructed to deny ourselves. Put ourselves without authority so as to be under Jesus authority. But where does that put us in relation to those who oversee us?

Here is a bit of my perspective.

## 2. Leadership is a strange word for those responsible for church servants.

Let me just say leadership is not a term used in the bible for those who participate in the directing of the church.

The descriptions of what we call leadership, the metaphors, the explanations are not a traditional western culture leadership concept.

Western culture concept of leadership is one of power, control and direction.

That is why I think the church has a wonky view of leadership these days. We want the church to be run like a business, a footy team or a club, and the church is designed differently by God,

Sure we need some of these aspects (after all we have to deal with officialdom, government and wh&s regulations) but the church is about Jesus.

The words used in the bible about leadership are different.

i. Diakonos = servants

ii. Presbuteros = what we call elders or but means more like wise dude.

Sometimes we take the word elder to mean an old person, the greek word has more of a flavour of a senior person in responsibility for a set task. It would refer to a person in charge of a business, or a leader in government, particularly an ambassador etc. In our case in church it refers to a person whose set task is facilitating for the spiritual development of the people - 1 Peter 5:1-4 Here it says elders are to be an example. Or a Role Model. (well look at that in a minute)

Let's unpack it a bit.

## 3. Deacons = Servants

**Acts 6:2 (ESV)**

<sup>2</sup> And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, "It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.

Deacons are servants – thus leaders are servants.

They are to release people to ministry.

Here is my theory.

The deacons do their thing so you can do your thing.

Because they do the admin, logistics, paperwork, and organisation you are free to do your ministry.

Notice I said so you can do your thing – Ministry. Deacons are not there to do the work, but to make sure the work functions.

Get that – you are free to do your ministry – what God has called you to do.  
The contemporary way of putting this is releasing people to do ministry. The deacons as we have it now are there to let you do what God has called you to.

#### 4. Elders = spiritual mentors and coaches.

##### **1 Peter 5:1-3 (ESV)**

<sup>1</sup> So I exhort the elders among you, as a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, as well as a partaker in the glory that is going to be revealed:

<sup>2</sup> shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly;

<sup>3</sup> not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock.

The Elders are similar but from a different perspective. They release you for ministry but they are part of the training process. They encourage, teach, spiritually direct, spiritually coach so you can do your ministry effectively.

##### Notice the wording

##### Shepherd the flock – Being examples.

This is a bit different from what most churches have as elders. Eldership is usually about visitation and pastoral care. I think the focus needs to be more on building the people up spiritually as a main focus but also building people up into their giftings and abilities for Jesus. Now we don't have time now to unpack all of this. We don't have elders at present anyway. Well other than me. I am technically an elder and an overseer (to use biblical terminology.) but one thing I want to say as we have a members meeting in a few weeks. Don't nominate someone just to fill the space. We are better off not having any elders than having people who don't have the passion, giftings and call to do it.

So what is our reaction to all this.

Well it must be **BE Followers of Jesus first and foremost**

**Deacons do their job so you can do yours. – So do yours!**

If you don't have a job, you need to ask why not? All Christians are called for ministry.

**Be willing to be mentored.**

(actually we are doing a mentoring thing in Night Church starting next week if you are interested in helping others grow, discipling and developing people's spiritual lives come along.)

Consequently, we follow Jesus primarily and follow our leaders because they are in the role using their gifts to assist us to use ours for God's benefit.