

**Healthy Things Grow: Godly Leaders
Forgetting, Pressing and Holding True
Pastor Dave Scherrer - July 13, 2014**

The rite of ordination, as we have been celebrating this morning, recognizes three things;

- First there is the test **of scholarship**, sufficient academic and theological training on the part of the candidate that he or she can rightly divide the word and can be trusted to be scholarly in their approach to matters of faith and Christian conduct. It is no small thing and the Evangelical Covenant has high standards for their preaching pastors. My training is in the field of Psychology and I am a class and a dissertation away from my Ph. D. in that discipline. So these past nine years of my pursuit of ordination have included classes in theology from North Park Seminary to bring my theological studies up to the equivalent of a Masters of Divinity, the standard for the ECC.
- There is also the test **of experience**. Those who are ordained typically have 5 to ten years' experience in ministry before they are considered worthy of this status. I am just completing 40 years of experience so that wasn't such a problem. One of my interviewers in Chicago in February said "Excuse me for asking but aren't you a little old for this?" I agreed!
- Finally there is the test **of call**. About ten years ago the Council voted to call me to ministry here at 4Cs and then voted to approve me as a candidate for ordination. Then this church body at an annual meeting voted to approve my call and affirm me as a candidate for ordination as well. Following that, last year an interview with the ECC MW conference and a vote of the MWC Ministerium to affirm my call and then a national interview and vote. It is quite a process. Two weeks ago this stole was fitted on me and I am grateful for God's faithfulness in my life. When I was in high school I remember I once said to myself it would be good to be ordained and to earn a Ph. D. Half there I guess.

So having passed these tests I stand before you today, grateful and humbled by God's sufficiency in Christ.

My stole is decorated with these emblems. They are difficult to see. On one side is the cross adorned with yellow flame. Below that the Holy Word with the alpha and omega, Greek letters reminding me that Jesus is the First and the Last. There is one with the cup and bread, symbols of the communion table, and of the high worship standing of the sacraments. And finally below that is a dove breaking the chains of sin. I especially like this symbol. A favorite hymn of mine is **And Can It Be** and it will be sung someday when I die and there is a stanza that goes:

**Long my imprisoned spirit lay, Fast bound in sin and nature's night;
Thine eye diffused a quickening ray— I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;
My chains fell off, my heart was free, I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.**

In the few moments we have left I want to weigh in on the idea of godly leadership. Normally, I study the writings of theologians and biblical scholars as well as the Word as I prepare for a sermon. I didn't do that this time. Today, I'm going to offer **my opinion**, my stream of thought as I lingered before God in prayer, meditation and in His Word on this subject. I didn't ask another man's opinion so much. You may have another list and that's ok. This just happens to be my list this week. Stop me in another week and you might get another list.

Godly Leaders: Are men and women well found in Christ – the Godly part of godly Leadership

John 15 ⁴ Remain in me, as I also remain in you . . . "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. ⁶ If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned. ⁷ If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. ⁸ This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples. ⁹ "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love.

First and foremost godly leaders are found in Christ; they linger with Him and remain in Him. That seems obvious and safe. Secondly godly leaders must translate that abiding nature into action and behavior. Their home and private life matters above their professional life. They must walk in a manner worthy.

1. Godly leaders: Walk in a manner worthy of their call

Colossians 1:10¹⁰ so as to walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing to him, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God.

1 Timothy 3:2-5² Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach,³ not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.⁴ He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive,⁵ for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?

Notice how an overseer is not asked to be a scholar or even a church volunteer – they are expected to be a person mature in their faith and to have personal integrity and character and to have a household that is honoring to God. That's it.

2. Godly leaders: Have more than knowledge, skills and experience – they have the spiritual gift of leadership

Romans 12:6-8⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith;⁷ if service, in our serving; **the one who teaches, in his teaching,**⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

The gift of leadership or teaching (this word is used interchangeably in the New Testament) doesn't guarantee that you will make a good pastor, but without this gift you will struggle to demonstrate to your flock that you will lead them to green pastures and still water well.

I want to put these next two together

3. Godly Leaders: Are more concerned about the Kingdom of God than they are methods and

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4. Godly Leaders: Define success as not having more Christians in the church but having *larger* Christians in the church

I love that idea of being large in Christ. Do you feel that in your fellowship here you are growing larger in Him? I hope so.

Dallas Willard, when asked in an interview “**What practices would you like to see in the churches for making disciples?**” answered easily:

“I'll tell you something very direct and very simple: Preach on the Kingdom of God. People just don't do it. My general counsel for making disciples—and something I follow as much as I have opportunity—is to preach what Jesus preached in the manner Jesus preached it.”

Week to week I have tried to bring to you the Kingdom of God, to advance its boundaries and to celebrate its character and to claim its hundred fold blessings. This talk of the Kingdom of God should be very familiar with you. I cherish that walk with you all.

Godly Leaders: Recognize their own frailty and wounded ness and yet minister with the confidence of Christ that the Truth of Scripture are real ‘Even if I can't do them’

I suspect that by now you have seen my frailties and perhaps even know of my wounds. That you know of the hardships and events in Susan and my lives that have shaped us in Christ. I know these frailties sometimes get in your way. When that happens I am sorry. The reality is I am charged with telling the truths of Christ even if I struggle to live them perfectly. The position of pastor is tricky. I am just like you, broken and wounded. We are all saints, forgiven in Christ and equal before God. Still the office of pastor is a position of honor and must be treated with respect by you and by me.

1 Timothy 5:17 ¹⁷ Let the elders who rule well be considered worthy of double honor, especially those who labor in preaching and teaching.

And in this day and age pastoring is hard work. It always has been:

2 Timothy 4: 1-5 I charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by his appearing and his kingdom: ² preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching. ³ For the time is coming when people will not endure sound teaching, but having itching ears they will accumulate for themselves teachers to suit their own passions, ⁴ and will turn away from listening to the truth and wander off into myths. ⁵ As for you, always be sober-minded, endure suffering, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

5. Godly Leaders: Are called to lay down their lives but they do not need the job

John 15:12-13 ¹² "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. ¹³ Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.

Finally there is an abiding sense of worship and the prayer presence of God in the godly leader:

6. Godly Leaders: Worship the Father in word and deed, experience an abiding love relationship with Christ, and are empowered and comforted by the indwelling Spirit

Claiming the fullness of the entire Godhead, godly leaders linger in His presence and draw their strength and wisdom from Him in every form and in every moment.

Conclusion: If I have a life verse this is probably it . . .

Philippians 3:8b-14 . . . For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things and count them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ ⁹ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which comes through faith in Christ, the righteousness from God that depends on faith—¹⁰ that I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and may share his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, ¹¹ that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained this or am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me his own. ¹³ Brothers, I do not consider that I have made it my own. But one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and straining forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Forgetting, Pressing and Holding True: These are each of our calls as godly *leaders* and godly *followers*, set aside from the world and doing the enduring work of the Kingdom.

Prayer