

A Worthy Goal

Introduction. The American women's relay race team was favored to win the gold medal in the 4-by-100 relay race in the 2004 Summer Olympic Games in Athens, Greece. The team featured Marion Jones, a sprinter who had won four gold medals at the previous games in Sydney. The American team was off to a strong start when Jones took the baton for the second leg of the race. She gained ground as she ran her 100 meters and approached Lauryn Williams, who would run the third leg.

Williams began running as Jones got close, but when she reached back to receive the baton, the women couldn't complete the handoff. Jones thrust the baton forward three times, but each time Williams failed to grab it. Finally, on the fourth try, the runners made the connection. But by that time, they had crossed out of the twenty-meter exchange zone and were disqualified. Everyone knew they were the fastest team on the track, but because they couldn't complete the handoff, they lost the race.

It is important for one generation to set the pace for others, but at a certain point a handoff has to be made to the next generation. That handoff is not as easy as it looks. It is the result of thousands of practice runs.

There is a crucial need among God's people for good, qualified men to serve as elders. Such leadership does not come by accident, it has to be developed. However, it takes a long time (as long as ten years) to develop a leader. This lesson will provide answers to two questions: Who is responsible for the development of elders and what can be done to develop elders?

I. Who Is Responsible For The Development Of Elders?

A. The congregation.

1. They should "seek out" from among themselves men with potential (Acts 6:3).
2. They should provide the proper environment for such development to be desired and to take place. A divisive, gossipy, disrespectful group teaches young men to shun being an elder.
3. If a congregation presently has elders it should respect them and count them worthy of honor (1 Timothy 5:18) thus encouraging young men to want to serve in that same capacity someday.

B. Those presently serving as elders.

1. See that young men are being taught the necessity of elders and how they can handle the duties of leadership.
2. They can present an example to be admired and imitated by young men.
 - a) Show they are happy to serve.
 - b) It can be a tough and thankless job, and grumbling and complaining discourages the desire to develop.

C. The evangelist.

1. He should teach, develop, and stimulate young men to be concerned with becoming elders (Titus 1:5).
2. He must be fair and even-handed in his dealings with and treatment of elders (1 Timothy 5:19-21).

- D. Children.
 1. They may disqualify their father from becoming an elder by their unfaithfulness or their unruliness.
 2. They may help to qualify their father by:
 - a) Being receptive to his efforts to teach them (Proverbs 1:8).
 - b) Being faithful (Acts 16:1-2).
 - c) Doing their part to have a peaceful and happy home (Colossians 3:20).
- E. Wives and girls who may become wives of elders.
 1. She, more than anyone else, may help to qualify him (1 Timothy 3:11).
 - a) She can encourage him to realize he has the potential to do the job.
 - b) Her knowledge of scripture and strength in the Lord will help him grow in knowledge as well.
 - c) Her subjection will give him confidence in his ability to lead.
 - d) Her faithfulness and love will give him security and peace of mind.
 2. A wife may disqualify her husband in many ways.
 - a) She may be gossipy, not given to hospitality, not in subjection to him, always belittling him, damage his reputation, etc.
 - b) She could be demanding so much from him, either in time or money, that he cannot devote himself to the work of the Lord.
- F. Young men.
 1. At a young age a man needs to become aware of the qualifications found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9.
 2. At an early age good habits and attitudes must be developed, including wanting to be the kind of person who is qualified to serve as an elder.
 3. He should choose a young lady who as a wife will be a true help and not a hindrance. He should also begin raising his children in righteousness while they are young.

II. What Can Be Done To Develop Elders?

- A. An elder is one who has come to maturity in Christ.
 1. The principles of a Christ-like personality can be found in his life.
 - a) He has become a “partaker of the divine nature” as opposed to worldly corruption (2 Peter 1:2-4).
 - b) He has been renewed in mind (Ephesians 4:23-24).
 - c) He has been conformed to the image of Christ (Romans 8:28-29).
 - d) He has Christ living in him (Galatians 2:20).
 2. Therefore, he thinks, wills, and acts as did Christ.
- B. The specifics of the Christ-like personality and their relevance to being an elder.
 1. An intellect educated in truth (Matthew 11:28-30; Ephesians 1:15-18; Colossians 1:9-10).
 - a) The person enlightened in truth is a capable person.
 - b) Therefore, he provides leadership that is adequate and sound.
 2. Emotions fixed on God and godliness (1 Timothy 4:8; 6:11; 2 Peter 1:6-7).
 - a) He hates as God hates, and loves as He loves (Proverbs 6:16-19; Matthew 22:37-39).

- b) Therefore, because he is a stable person, he provides leadership that is objective.
- 3. A will submissive to God (Romans 6:16-18; 2 Corinthians 2:9; 10:5-6).
 - a) His life has become an example of righteousness.
 - b) Therefore, he provides guidance which “shows” as well as “tells” (1 Peter 5:3).
- 4. A conscience void of offense (Acts 24:16; Hebrews 9:11-14; 1 Peter 3:18-21).
 - a) When the conscience is clear, the life is content.
 - b) Therefore, he provides leadership without frustration and guilt (on the part of the one leading).
- 5. The appetites of the flesh under control (1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Galatians 5:16-21).
 - a) If one can control himself, he is a confident person, and not recognized as a hypocrite.
 - b) Therefore, he provides leadership that generates confidence in those being led.
- 6. A life dedicated to service (Matthew 4:10; 6:24; 1 Thessalonians 1:9).
 - a) He has a lifestyle that exhibits commitment.
 - b) Therefore, he provides leadership that can be followed (Jesus both did and taught, Acts 1:1).

Conclusion. To develop or groom men to be elders, we need to develop in them, and in all, a Christ-like personality. Parents, I know that you’re interested in their excellence in academics, sports, music, clubs, and careers. And I know that you’re interested in them becoming faithful Christians. But I also want to stress that your home should be the focus of our young men because it is a proving ground for godly leadership, and it can build a desire for our young men (and women) in this noble office.