



## We Need Your Help!

Your input is requested! As we travel around and talk with elders, one theme continually surfaces: the overwhelming load that elders often carry. With work commitments (for those not retired), family responsibilities, meetings, study of the Word, ministry efforts, problem solving and individual counseling, overload can easily eclipse the joy of the Lord. An elder recently confessed that when he attends leadership or elders' conferences, he often goes away weighed down by hearing more

things he "should be doing."

How do you, our readers, handle this pressure, the feeling that you should be doing more, or that you are not living up to what is expected of you as an elder? What counsel have you received that has helped you in this struggle? *I'd like to compile your feedback in an upcoming issue of ShopNotes. So, please send or e-mail me your thoughts at [crgianotti@gmail.com](mailto:crgianotti@gmail.com).* Chuck



## Biblical Qualifications Wise Leading

by Chuck Gianotti

Wisdom psalms teach wise living, in contrast to psalms of praise or lament. Psalm 1 instructs us about creating a godly context for spiritual growth. As a wisdom psalm, it provokes us not so much to praise or petition, but challenges us to a wise lifestyle. While not speaking directly about integrity, as Psalm 15 does (which has been the subject of our last four articles in this series), Psalm 1 presents basic character traits of a godly man. Like the list of elder qualifications in 1 Tim 3 and Titus 1, these traits should be normative for all godly people. However, elders, as leaders of God's people should model what is normative. In fact, the serious lack of such will undermine an elder's integrity as well as his ability to shepherd and lead.

*1. How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked, nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!*

First, our passage assumes that we need counsel; pathetic is the elder who thinks he needs no advice outside of himself. Secondly, the quality of his spiritual leadership is affected by the quality of those from whom he seeks advice. While Proverbs 13:10 (NASB) tells us that, "Wisdom is with those who receive counsel," Psalm 1 instructs us to consider carefully whose counsel we embrace. King Rehoboam, the son of Solomon, did not heed this warning when he listened to his companions rather than his father's seasoned counselors.

Many of the difficult issues elders face don't fit into neat categories with easy solutions. Often these issues do not match exactly

the ancient situations or examples of Scripture. It seems that every problem has a unique twist to it. So elders' decisions often do not have the luxury of a clear-cut "Thus saith the Lord..." kind of response that addresses every detail of every issue. Many times we are called upon to exercise godly judgment. This calls for godly wisdom. So Psalm 1 in-

fers the sequence that the counsel one receives determines the path he takes and the ultimate place he occupies. Godly counsel will lead a person in the path of the righteous and he will take his place among those who rejoice in wisdom.

*2. But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.*

Elders should be characterized as men of the Word. The disciples confessed to our Lord, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have words of eternal life" (John 6:68). All teaching in the local church should be characterized as "words of eternal life." That is, teaching should convey not just *knowledge about* Scripture, the Lord or life. Teaching must connect people with true life on an eternal level. That kind of teaching draws us closer to the Lord and helps us live "life indeed" (John 10:10), living by the Spirit of God. Elders can't cause this to happen by sheer force of determination. Rather we simply create the context for this as we meditate on the Lord and His communication to us.

On a practical level, this is more than simply studying the Bible so that we can then teach others at an intellectual level. It means we immerse ourselves in the Word, we bathe in it, we digest it, we live it and we are transformed by it—continually! Outsiders may see

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# Leadership Principles

## Men of Vision

by Jack Spender

The church down through history has been blessed with men of vision; men who can discern great needs and great opportunities; men who through faith and hard work find solutions to hard problems. The need for such men still exists today; in fact it is greater than ever before, for a number of reasons.

### The Great Need for Men of Vision

First, as days grow darker spiritually and morally, the need for clear minded leadership increases. People have lost their way and the true church knows the Light of the world and the way back to God. But God's love and truth cannot be locked up in mothballs, in outdated forms and methods that have long ago lost touch with the real world. The Lord Himself warned His disciples about this danger when He described a servant who wrapped what had been entrusted to him in a napkin and buried it in the ground. (Luke 19:20 KJV). No, God's truth and it's bearers must, like the Lord Jesus, come to the people and reach out to them where they are, and in a way they can receive. This in turn requires the church to be among other things, a center for training and equipping messengers, all of which requires thoughtful, creative design. For this, we need men of vision.

Second, true spiritual vision comes only from intimate communion with the Lord through spending time in His Word and in prayer. Busy schedules, computers, and "emergencies" have a way of stealing away precious quiet time with the Lord. One hears much of preachers, teachers and administrators in the church today, but leaders with spiritual discernment and vision for the work of God are not common. As a Gentleman, the Lord does not shout over the competition.

Third, because of misuse, many are fearful of the word "vision." How many times have I heard Prov. 29:18 ("Where there is no vision, the people perish....") reduced to something like, "Where people don't have a Bible, they stumble...?" Now that is true, and many other Scriptures tell us that, but is that all that is meant by this verse?

In any case, the way to correct misuse of a word is not to abandon it, but to use it correctly. Our English words "provide" and "provision" speak of seeing needs in advance, and making timely arrangements

to address them. Where no one leads or anticipates the needs of God's flock, both people and churches suffer. History is filled with examples. We need men of this kind of vision.

### The Nature of Vision

A growing local church will constantly face new challenges arising from the needs of people being added to the fellowship. The early church experienced this as described in Acts chapter 6. Luke supplies an important context: "...when the number of the disciples was multiplied....."(Acts 6:1).

Sadly, however, many church leaders

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and elders are uncomfortable with the changes growth can bring. They are much more inclined to adopt the role of the maintainer than of the innovator. One confirms our present level of comfort; the other challenges it. Life has enough storms, why rock the boat?

Now if it were simply a matter of how best to keep the peace, I wouldn't pursue the subject. But the failure to anticipate and provide for the needs of the church and its people, much less discern that those needs exist, has been responsible for the slow decline of many a work for God. Indeed, some Christian leaders act as if the challenge of spiritual warfare is to make sure there isn't any, which is best accomplished by keeping the peace with the foe. But this cannot be right.

### An Old Testament Example: King David and the Temple

Let's consider an example of spiritual vision from the Old Testament and then suggest some applications for elders and Christian leaders today.

In II Sam. 7, David shares some early thoughts about a permanent resting place for the ark of the Lord with his friend Nathan the prophet. Nathan's simple answer gives David the encouragement to move ahead: "Go, do all that is in thine heart, for the Lord is with thee" (vs. 3). This of course led to the creation of detailed plans, the gathering of materials, and eventually the actual construction of the temple by Solomon his son.

Years later, speaking at the dedication of the new temple, Solomon reveals an interesting insight not given to us in the II Samuel account. "And the LORD said unto David my father, 'Whereas it was in thine heart to build an house unto my name, thou didst well that it was in thine heart.'" (I Kings 8:18). Several points are worth noting:

1) The Lord did not suggest the idea of a temple and provide the plan for David as He had done with the building of the tabernacle in the days of Moses. The Lord acknowledged that the idea came from David's own heart.

2) The Lord did not criticize David but commended him. True, David's plan needed some mid-course correction which the Lord supplied, but we don't hear the Lord saying, "The tabernacle has always

worked; let's just stick with that."

3) We don't know many of the details that led to David's idea, but the text does offer some clues. In II Sam 7:1, 2 we learn that David had come to a time of rest from warfare; that he "sat in his house" which may imply that he was doing some thinking, and finally that it didn't seem right to him that his own palace was more elegant and durable than the Lord's dwelling. Here is the soul of an innovator! It's not difficult to reconstruct his train of thought.

As a tent, the tabernacle was designed to be portable, carried by men whenever the congregation moved. Accordingly, the various pieces of furniture had handles. But now, settled in the promised land, the need for portability no longer existed. Further, it was designed to be repeatedly dismantled and set up again, another obsolete feature. Finally, there was not much rain in the wilderness to cause rapid wear of the animal skin coverings. But Mount Zion would enjoy alternate sunshine and showers from heaven. Curtains were no match for the durability of cedar wood and gold!

The conclusion? A new structure was called for, larger, more accessible, immovable; one that would better serve the needs of a nation settled permanently in its own land. The tabernacle furniture, which so clearly demonstrated God's great spiritual lessons for worship of the Lord, could all be carefully preserved and incorporated into the new temple. But the building itself must

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## Wives' Corner

# Sacrificial Giving

by Ruth Spender

How well would your assembly function if everyone was as involved in the body life of the church as you are? Sometimes women express dissatisfaction because they feel that there are few ways for them to serve unless they are washing dishes, teaching SS or caring for children in the nursery. A young woman approached the leadership in an assembly she was attending and asked how she might serve while she was in their area. The elders seemed to be at a loss for a reply. Everything was apparently cared for in their fellowship from the Sunday morning coffee being made to the janitorial maintenance of the building. When this young woman spoke to me about her frustration, I shared the following ideas with her.

As healthy growing believers, we all need to serve and be served. If we are not a part of this dynamic, there is a lack of satisfaction and our spiritual growth is stunted. God made us relational beings. He seemed to especially gift women with a wonderful capacity to relate and empathize. There are many unique ways we as women can serve, but are we willing to sacrifice the time and energy necessary

to minister to others in a meaningful way? The word sacrifice reminds us that there is a price to pay for serving effectively. 1 John 3:16 tells us that as the Lord Jesus laid down His life for us, so we ought to lay down our lives for each other. Imagine how it would revolutionize our assemblies if we practiced sacrificial giving of ourselves? Not only would the fellowship be blessed, but who knows how many others might be "provoked to love and good works" (Heb 10:24). The Lord has given us the command to serve!

I hear someone ask, "How do we get started?" First, ask the Lord for a servant's heart. As we pray He will not only give us a greater love and desire to minister, but He will show us the needs He would have us to meet. Consider the following suggestions:

- Ask someone how you might pray for her then follow through.
- Send a card or email encouraging a struggling saint.
- Phone someone who is ill or shut-in and let her know she is missed.
- Involve others in organizing a meal for a needy family.

- Ask a sister to go with you to visit someone in the hospital or nursing home.
- Offer to babysit for a young family so a Mom and Dad can spend some quality time together.
- Mail an anonymous gift card to someone who is struggling financially.
- Disciple a younger believer.
- Send an email or package to a missionary your church supports.
- Use whatever talents you have to encourage others; be creative.

We can serve as the Lord lays a need on our hearts. We don't have to wait for "authorization" from the leadership to bear one another's burdens. We see a need and we quietly go about meeting that need. It's exciting to know that we can have an active part in helping our brothers and sisters grow spiritually. Of course, we are not to be doing what we do for the praise or recognition of people, but rather for the honor and glory of our Lord. When we see Him glorified, joy fills our hearts. Life becomes all about Him, rather than all about me. He must increase and I must decrease.



## Men of Vision (cont. from page 2)

reflect David's desire for the presence of the Lord to be the very center of the capitol city, easily accessible to all those who would seek God's presence. Best of all, the Lord's dwelling would be grander than David's own palace!

### Spiritual Lessons Before Practical Application

What lessons can we glean from the above account? Let me suggest three.

1) Godly leaders must seize opportunity for contemplation and reflection about needs and opportunities in the Lord's work. The storms and trials of life are no time to dream! But the Lord in grace does provide some seasons of rest. These must not all be devoted to diversion and relaxation. The needs of people are great and ever changing, and rarely will the sheep take the lead in solving the problems growth and change bring, nor should they have to!

2) Are we at least as concerned for the care and expansion of the Lord's house as we are for our own? In New Testament times, the house of God is identified as the Church. Are there any areas in which we enjoy prosperity while the work of the Lord in and through the church struggles or lags

behind? Those who travel in the Lord's work often see the stark contrast between the outdated, worn furnishings and rest rooms of the assembly meeting place and the modern and, in some cases, luxurious appointments in the homes of those who lead the church. Of course the church is not a building of brick or stone but of people, but these things can be indicators of spiritual priorities.

3) The great principles of the church as God's revelation and gift to His people are perfect and need no adjustment. But the packaging (or structures) in which that gift is made relevant to and useable by the people must be constantly changing according to their needs. This does not mean that bigger or more modern is better, but only that, like David, we want the Lord's things to be as lovely, as accessible and of as good report as our own things. It is a strange logic that requires our personal dwellings and possessions to be comfortable and up to date for ourselves and our guests, while the facilities and amenities of the local church are permitted to be unattractive and obsolete, fit only for "pilgrims who are just passing through." Of course, the problem is

not confined to material things but can extend to every aspect of the life and ministry of the church. Could it be that in the same way, the actual spiritual work of the Lord in the local church suffers from this very dichotomy?

To summarize thus far, becoming a leader with spiritual vision for the Lord's work means making time to "consider our ways." True, not all elders are innovators, but thankfully, vision and creativity are not spiritual gifts! Two great objectives must be kept in mind continually: being faithful to the Lord and His house (the church), and at the same time being relevant to the needs of people.

If we give serious thought to these things, and make real sacrifice so that they become a reality, we will be able to say with king David, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honor dwelleth" (Psalm 26:8).

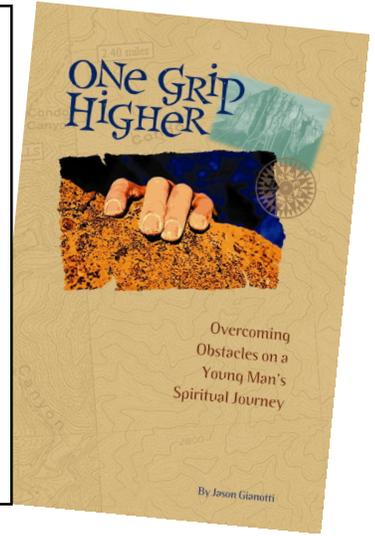
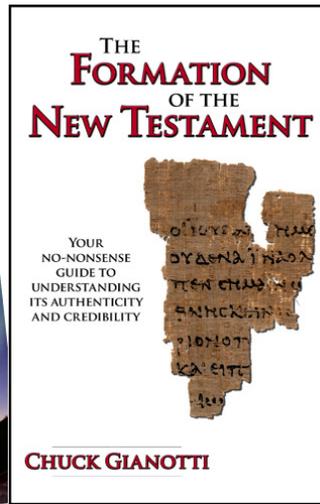
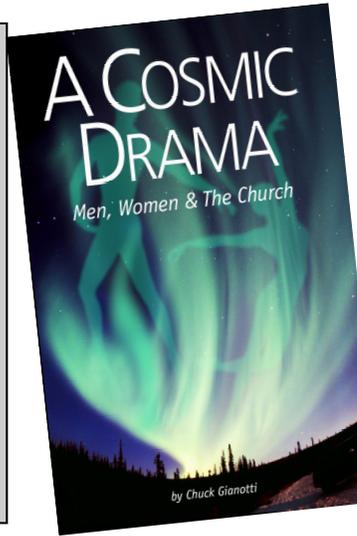
In the next article, we'll look at some practical applications of the above principles that can open new avenues of joy and blessing in the local assembly work.



## Great Resources

1. The Formation of the New Testament helps you understand how the NT documents came to be recognized as authentic and credible, by Chuck Gianotti
2. A Cosmic Drama, a comprehensive look the roles of men and women in the church, by Chuck Gianotti
3. On Grip Higher, a study for young men based on 1 Timothy, by Jason Gianotti

For more info and ordering information, [www.bible-equip.org/bookstore](http://www.bible-equip.org/bookstore).



## Wise Living (cont. from page 1)

this as being obsessed or unbalanced—or a super-spirituality beyond the reach of ordinary men. But the man called by God to be an elder of His people delights to be “obsessed” with His law. Elders who help connect people with the Word of Life are themselves reading God’s word, memorizing it, quoting it in conversation as well as teaching it.

*3. He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.*

As a result of this kind of commitment to godly counsel and to the Word of God, elders become true pillars in the church, offering godly stability. When the assembly experiences confusion, conflict, doubt or uncertainty, they are assured when they know the elders, in grace, stand strong, unwavering before the Lord. In time, such godliness will produce fruit “in its season.”

*4. The wicked are not so, But they are like chaff which the wind drives away.*

Churches fail when there is lack of stability in the leadership, where ungodly counsel is followed. They are easily blown away, as it were, by winds of false doctrine, popular movements, superficial teaching, strong personalities or dysfunctional relationships. There is a plethora of people who claim to have found the secret for successful church leadership. Books, magazines and conferences are innumerable. It seems that anyone who experiences some numerical growth in his congregation becomes the latest expert on “church growth.” The variety is quite amazing. Godly wisdom, however, is needed today more than ever, because the alternative will harm the true working of the church.

*5. Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the*

*assembly of the righteous.*

The Old Testament is replete with examples of the people of God falling because of ungodly leadership and poor counsel. Let it not be so among us, lest we fall under God’s judgment.

*6. For the Lord knows the way of the righteous, But the way of the wicked will perish.*

In the end, elders are accountable as under-shepherds to the Great Shepherd (1 Peter 5:4). He is the judge of the quality and faithfulness of our service as elders. He alone is our Master—not a denomination headquarters, not a movement, not an influential preacher, not other assemblies. If we want the light of our local testimony to make an impact on our world, and not just flicker and die out, if we want our service for Christ to catch His notice (as it were), then let us recommit to walking in wise counsel and to living and teaching the wonderful Words of Life.



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