

How to Recognize a Spiritual Leader

1 Timothy 3:1-13

Introduction:

1. This section of 1 Timothy is all about leadership! So much has been written about the subject of leadership, but you won't find a greater handbook on leadership than God's Word.
 - You can look into God's Word and find great leaders, bad leaders, godly leaders, wicked leaders, strong leaders, and weak leaders.
2. Just as every business or workplace needs strong leaders, God's work is no different. One of the primary things that every church must have is godly leadership. But what does a godly leader look like? Thankfully, God's Word has the answers. 1 Timothy 3 is all about this subject.
3. What is leadership in the spiritual realm? Leadership is spiritual maturity that others can examine and follow. Hebrews 13:7
 - I love that definition because it demonstrates that true leadership begins from within as the believer grows and matures in his walk with Christ.
 - But it also demonstrates the fact that true leadership involves others. I've heard it said that, if you are leading, it is a good idea to look behind you every once in awhile and make sure that somebody is following!
4. Spiritual maturity begins from within, but it always evidences itself externally to others.
5. The first ones to observe it are your own family. Good spiritual leadership always begins in the home. A believer's spiritual maturity and Spirit-filled life will first be noticed by his family.
6. But there are others that will observe your spiritual maturity too. Spiritual maturity should be seen in the church.
7. This does not simply mean on church property or in these buildings. It includes that, but the Church is the body of Christ. In other words, the Church (the people) should see our spiritual maturity evidenced by the way we conduct ourselves.
 - You would think that church would be one of the easiest places to demonstrate spiritual maturity, but some of the most immature, childish behavior occurs at church.
 - We get angry when somebody offends us, we get our feelings hurt, the pastor disappoints us, the youth pastor picked on our kid, somebody sat in our pew, nobody recognized the work we did, the leadership didn't take my advice, somebody else was chosen for that position, nobody called me when I was sick, the pastor didn't wave at me in my car (through my tinted windows), the pastor preached right at me, etc. Do you get the point?
 - Leaders for God do not allow these types of things to derail them and cause a bad attitude.
8. Let's examine two characteristics of spiritual maturity that should be seen by fellow believers:

A leader's behavior is exemplary. Verse 2 says, "*of good behavior*"

1. "*Blameless*" (vs. 2, 10) – This doesn't mean sinless, but carries the idea of "unrebukeable." There is nothing in his life that causes people to lose respect for him. He may make a mistake, but he's honest about it and deals with it in an honest, straightforward way.
2. "*Vigilant*" and "*sober*" (vs. 2, 11, 13) – "*Vigilant*" means "attentive to discover and avoid danger." "*Sober*" means "sound in mind and under control." So spiritual leaders are on their toes spiritually. Therefore they make good decisions, even under unexpected pressure.
3. "*Given to hospitality*" (vs. 2) – You love people, and it shows. The ministry is all about people, so if we haven't grown in our walk with Christ to where we genuinely love people, then we are not ready for spiritual leadership.
4. "*Apt to teach*" (vs. 2) – Being a leader is not about bossing people around, giving orders, and rebuking people. It is about teaching - helping people to grow in Christ and become all that they can be in Christ. This includes difficult people. **2 Timothy 2:24-25**

A leader possesses an inner peace that is obvious. Verse 3; cf. Philippians 4:7

1. "*Not given to wine*" (vs. 3, 8) – People use alcohol to forget their problems, chill out, and relax. The leader for God has the peace of Christ within and doesn't have to look to any substance for a relaxed peace. His control comes from Christ within.
2. "*No striker*" (vs. 3) – When the leader for God is done wrong by someone else, his first reaction is not to strike back in some way. Why? He has an inner peace. He doesn't **have** to strike back. He chooses to forgive and extend grace. He begins to react to life on the basis of truth rather than his emotions and feelings.
3. "*Not greedy of filthy lucre... covetous*" (vs. 3, 8) – Lucre speaks of financial gain (a lucrative deal). A leader for God is not obsessed with money, nor a slave to money. He has learned that life is not about how much money and things we can acquire. It is about relationships and impacting people for Christ. The peace of God within frees him from the entanglement of materialism.
4. "*Patient, not a brawler*" (vs. 3) – Titus says, "*Not soon angry.*" People who are quick-tempered and always blowing their stack demonstrate that they lack the peace of God within. People like this are always stirring up others (Proverbs 29:22). A leader for God has learned to be patient with others and take the path of peace, not strife and contention.
5. "*Not double-tongued... not slanderers*" (vs. 8, 11) – People that lack inner peace find it necessary to constantly criticize other people. They are always finding fault. They are inwardly insecure and lack the peace of Christ. When you possess inward peace, you feel no need to bring down others with your words, gossip about others behind their backs, or have a critical spirit. You are too busy walking with Christ and serving Him to notice everybody else's shortcomings.

In Conclusion:

1. Spiritual leaders are not born, they are grown! Nobody gets saved one day and becomes a spiritual leader the next day.

2. Spiritual maturity takes time. It takes growth. How do we grow into a spiritual leader?
We have a sincere desire for God's Word. We truly desire to pray and walk with Christ.
3. As we desire Christ, the Holy Spirit begins working on us daily, chipping away the rough edges and removing that which doesn't exalt Christ.
4. As we grow and mature, our family notices, but so do our fellow believers.
5. Remember, leadership (in the church) is spiritual maturity that others can examine and follow.