

The Process of Becoming a Leader of Christ Fellowship Bible Church

Geoffrey R. Kirkland

The church belongs to Jesus Christ! He resides as the sovereign Head over His Body, the church and He has spoken clearly and sufficiently in His Word, the Bible. What He says has total authority over all that happens in His Church. The Scriptures very clearly present qualifications for the leadership offices of elder and deacon. But the practical question remains: *how* does one become a leader? What is the *process* by which a man becomes a leader in the church of Jesus Christ?

At CFBC, we have condensed this process in a few practical headings.

First, *Selecting men.*

Leaders *prove* themselves to be leaders long before they're *appointed* to leadership positions. That means that these men will evidently demonstrate themselves to be *doing* the work of service long before they are publicly affirmed with a leadership title. They're not in it for the title, the prestige, the position, or the authority. They want to serve and they do the work with or without the recognition or official leadership title. So the leadership of CFBC selects men who *already* are showing themselves to be doing the work of ministry. For a deacon, it is one who shows a life of integrity, one who is consistent in his speech and commitments, one who is willing to serve, aid the shepherds, and help do the work of ministry to free up the shepherds to maintain prayer and the study and teaching of the Word as their foremost calling. For an elder, here is one who already is living out the qualifications (of personal life, home life, marital life) as well as a man who shows himself to be shepherding folks in the Word (teaching biblical truth with clarity and accuracy) as well as defending against false and harmful doctrine. So the selection of men consists in the recognizing of those men who *already* are doing the work in the local church. We seek them out, the leadership meets with them and asks if they have a desire for leadership in the local assembly.

Second, *Examining men.*

Then after the selection of men comes the process of examination. The Apostle Paul talks about leaders being tested and examined. This can be both formal and informal. Informally, it refers of course to the examination of the man's life by observation and by careful scrutiny. It also, however, includes the necessary examination formally. This refers to a written examination (for both elders and deacons). We also, at CFBC, choose to examine the man in an oral interview where we ask specific questions about the prospect's spiritual life (sexual purity, Bible reading, prayer time, marriage, family worship, financial condition, repentance, evangelism, etc.). For an elder and deacon, we would interview the wife privately (without the husband there), and children (if applicable). For an elder, we would also go to his workplace and interview at least two co-workers to gather their impressions on the prospective leader. The oral and written examinations will help the existing leadership team in testing the candidate for a ministry position. This is a crucial element of the process of becoming a leader. This stage in the process

is not to be rushed; nor is it to be overlooked. A man must be examined first before becoming an official leader in the church.

Third, *Approving men*

After a man has demonstrated a godly life, faithfulness in service in the local church, and after he has been examined, the CFBC leadership will bring the man before the church congregation in a corporate worship service and present him as a viable candidate for leadership. The leadership then calls on the church as a whole to give input to the leadership team about the candidate over a set period of time (say, a month or so). This includes the flock and their impressions, perceptions, concerns, or affirmations in the leadership process. After this set period of time, the leaders may approve the man by mentioning to him the weightiness and responsibility of leadership in Christ's church.

Fourth, *Recognizing men*

Then after a man is approved by the leadership, he is recognized publicly in a public worship service and appointed to the leadership position (of elder or deacon). This is a public recognition and the existing church leaders will pray for the new leader and commit him, his family, and the ministry to the Lord for His glory and for the health and protection of the church. No church makes a leader. No church raises up leaders. The Spirit of God does this. We view our job to disciple, pray for, train, and encourage men to serve in many ways. As they serve, the Spirit of God makes it clear over time who is already *doing the work of service*. And the more these faithful servants do the work, it becomes overwhelmingly clear both to them, to the leadership, and to the congregation as a whole, whom the Lord is raising up to be a leadership (either a deacon or an elder).