

# LeaderLesson 7: Disqualified to Serve

A Guest Article by Joe McKeever

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***“Now, I urge you brethren, keep your eye on those who cause dissensions and hindrances contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.”*** (Romans 16:17)

Not everyone is qualified to serve and lead in the Lord’s church. Don’t miss that– “to serve and to lead.” In the Lord’s work, serving and leading often consist of the same activities, performed by the same people. The Lord’s best servants are the congregation’s best leaders. Those who lead best are humble servants willing to stoop and wash the feet or rise and lead the charge, whatever the situation requires. The one unwilling to serve is unqualified to lead.

The list of factors which disqualify people from serving and leading in the Lord’s church is endless, as it would include unbelief, a carnal lifestyle, moral problems, criminal records, a history of violence, and so on. **However, there is a more selective list of conditions which disqualify otherwise good and respectable church members from serving and leading:**

## **1) You are not qualified to serve/lead if you are unwilling to work in the background without recognition.**

If you require recognition and appreciation, we will continue in our search for workers, thank you. It’s not that you might be required to work in the unseen background, but your unwillingness to do so says volumes about your spiritual condition. A couple of verses come to mind... “If anyone thinks he is something when he is nothing, he deceives himself” (Galatians 6:3). “Through the grace given to me I say to every man among you not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment...” (Romans 12:3).

## **2) You are unqualified to lead if you do not like change.**

If you get saved, you change. If you grow, you change. If you go to Heaven, you change big time. To restate, all growth is change. Growth into Christlikeness is major change. Eventually, the ultimate change comes when we see the Lord and become like Him (see 1 John 3:2). Speaking of that moment when we see the Lord and become like Him, the Apostle Paul said, “We shall all be changed” (1 Corinthians 15:51,52).

To repent is to recognize the need for change in your life. No one satisfied with how things are repents. The leader wed to the status quo is no leader, but a dead weight on the Lord’s program.

## **3) You are unqualified to lead if you have too great a tolerance for conflict and division.**

If you enjoy a good church fight, we will not be needing you, thank you. The health of the body should be paramount with one called as its shepherd, its protector and provider. The “leader” who sees division and ignores it, senses trouble brewing and turns away, is no friend to the Lord’s people. When trouble threatens the Lord’s flock, you find out in a heartbeat whether you are a shepherd or a hireling (see John 10:11-13). Our Lord calls no one as a hireling.

I am a strong proponent of godly laymen handling most of the internal dissent that arises in churches from time to time. Some member is creating a stir with his/her criticism of the pastor. They receive a visit from two or three of the sweetest, most mature leaders who ask, “What’s going on?” They will listen, gently probe into the situation, then deal with it in one of two ways: go to the pastor with the issue for further handling, or ask the member to cease their murmuring for the cause of Christ. Sometimes leaders (pastors and others) insist that this is an unpleasant chore, that they find it difficult to do. I respond, “Good. We do not want leaders who love a good fight. If you hate conflict, you will deal with it promptly.”

## **4) You are unqualified to lead and serve if unity of the body is not a priority with you.**

If you could not care less that a little group within the church is constantly upset about something, you are failing them and the Lord. In Gethsemane, Jesus prayed that “they all may be one”—and for a specific purpose: “that the world may believe that Thou didst send me” (John 17:21). The overriding reason for unity within the congregation is so outsiders may believe. Likewise, nothing drives away the unchurched like dissension within the Lord’s family.

“You are all one in Christ Jesus,” Paul said (Galatians 3:28). He urged the Philippians to stand “firm in one spirit, with one mind striving together for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27). The true servant of the Lord will work for harmony within the local church fellowship and Christian love within the larger body (i.e., believers everywhere).

## **5) You are not qualified to serve/lead if you are not in full support of the pastor and the other leadership.**

Recently, I learned of a staff member who dedicated himself to ousting the pastor and worship leader from the church. The only good part of the story—as I got it—is that he is gone and they are still in place. If this wicked staffer is serving any church anywhere, I pity the present pastor. When a staff member or deacon decides he can no longer support the pastor, unless there are serious transgressions of a moral, scriptural or legal nature, he should resign and leave quietly. (When the pastor is indeed immoral or guilty of criminal activities, the church should have in place leaders able and willing to deal with it.) Otherwise, a leader who works to oust others becomes a troublemaker himself and should be dealt with promptly.

### **6) You are not qualified to lead if you are not setting the example.**

“Proving to be an example to the flock” (1 Peter 5:3). You cannot lead people to do what you are not doing. To attempt it is to earn the label of “hypocrite,” one not practicing what he preaches.

Devotion to your church should not be restricted to your leadership activities, but also financial support, your attendance, positive attitude, etc. He who would lead others to do anything must demonstrate how it's done.

Is it necessary to point out that the ministers should never tithe or pray or go to church or witness just to set an example? As with every other believer, we show our love for the Lord by keeping His commands (John 14:15,21,23,24 and 15:10,14). This is so basic it should go without saying, but I confess to having known more than one minister who, like the Pharisees of Jesus' day, laid burdens on the backs of their people which they themselves would not bear (Matthew 23:4).

### **7) You are unqualified if you are unwilling to pay the price to keep your heart pure, your example strong, and your reputation spotless.**

“I felt the rules did not apply to me. They were for other people. We were special.” A number of fallen evangelical leaders, disgraced before the world for their hypocrisies, have uttered those words in one form or other. I say that to our shame.

“An episcopos (overseer) must be above reproach.... He must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (1 Timothy 3:1-7). “Deacons likewise must be men of dignity, not double-tongued, or addicted to much wine or fond of sordid gain....” (1 Timothy 3:8ff)

***The Lord is looking for a few good men and more than a few good women, may I say. However, He would rather a church remain leaderless than staff it with the ungodly, the immature, the headstrong, the glory-seeking, and the pleasure-loving. The damage they do is not worth any good they bring.***

On Facebook the other day, a friend commented (to someone else, not to me), “Well, old Charlie has just been terminated by another church. I don't think he stayed at this one six months.” Knowing nothing at all about Charlie or his situation, what I thought was, “The Lord may be trying to get Charlie out of the pastoring business. He could be one of those unqualified to lead. To continue recommending him to other churches and peddling his resume around indiscriminately is almost criminal, and certainly unwise.”

To lead the Lord's church is a great honor and high privilege. Let us treat it that way and seek to honor Him in all we do.

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*We are grateful for this guest article by Dr. Joe McKeever, who has served as a pastor, associational missionary, and now in retirement continues in very active ministry as a speaker, cartoonist, and author. For more from Joe, visit [www.joemckeeper.com](http://www.joemckeeper.com), and watch for his regular cartoons at Baptist Press, and in many other locations. You can also find him on Facebook.*

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