



# The Messenger


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### "LEAD — FOLLOW — OR — GET OUT OF THE WAY"

— W. R. Jones

I recently saw a bumper sticker which made good sense. It consisted of three statements; **Lead -- Follow -- or -- Get out of the way.** I suspect this slogan originated on some production job where a great deal of "leadership" and "cooperation" is needed. The slogan states a great truth which is not only needed in the world of production, but also in the church of Christ. If a local church is to make spiritual progress the aforementioned suggestions must be in place.

#### LEAD

Webster defines lead as; "To guide or conduct; hence, to direct in action, thought, opinion, etc.; instruct." Also; "To proceed and direct in movement; as to lead an army." This definition will have to be taken in some moderation because we are not talking about a business or an army, but the church of our

Lord. The warning to elders given in (I Peter 5:2--3) precludes a dictatorial approach by leaders in a local church. "Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constant but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.." To my knowledge, the congregations which are making the most progress spiritually and numerically, have leaders who are **out front** directing the members into **sound practices** and **challenging them with great works for the Lord.** Sadly, others are fully content to just "keep house for the Lord." This means, they are content to just "**drift along**" and never try to "**make things happen.**"

But, what if a congregation is not fortunate enough to have elders? In such cases we must conclude that the men of the church will have to supply this "**leadership**" for the local church. But, how? —*Continued on page 3.*

## LEADERSHIP....from front page.

Even though, in the absence of elders, the "leadership" must be supplied by the men of the church, it is still vital to the progress of the congregation. Business meetings, if we are not careful, can be damaging to God's work, because one man has just as much say as another. If all the men are dedicated to the welfare of the church and put God first, then this arrangement can work very well, but never as good as godly elders. Nevertheless, "leadership" is vital even when things are run by the men's business meetings. If good positive leadership is not supplied by some of the men it is likely the group will sit in silence, dismiss as quickly as possible and accomplish nothing. Worse still, some brother will introduce some "lame-brain" idea that no one really likes but they go along with it to avoid conflict and the stress of the situation. When brethren, who have "**leadership**", come to the meeting they will come with some **sound, well thought out suggestions** which are designed to move the church forward. Such men will have little patience with a bunch of nonsense which consumes a lot of time, but accomplishes nothing. I recommend we study the life of Moses. He was an excellent leader. He was devoted to doing the will of God. That came first. He was also deeply devoted to the welfare of his people. He would rebuke them sharply for their disobedience, but plead that God would be merciful to them. Sometime he got disgusted with the people, but he never gave up. True leaders have to **think**, not about **themselves**, nor an **individual friend**, but **what is best for the the Lord's church**.

## FOLLOWERS

There always have been and always will be good people in the church who do not have leadership qualities, but they do a good job of following. They are informed and will not follow just any and everything presented, but if a suggestion is sound they will follow with full cooperation. Most of the people in the church are not leaders, but faithful followers. These **followers** are very vital to the spiritual and numerical **growth of the church**. A Christian does not have to be a leader to go to heaven, but he must be a faithful follower of God's righteousness. **God bless our faithful followers!**

## GET OUT OF THE WAY

I have known a few who seem to have no talent except to get in the way of spiritual progress. They are the "**rule or ruin**" people who must have everything their way or not at all. They are often the "**negative**" people who contribute nothing but cold water dashed on the burning fire of spiritual progress. They may be accurately described as "**discouragers of men**" who talk against every worthwhile undertaking. They are the doubters who can never see that anything worthwhile can be accomplished. Through the years I have known men with "leadership" who were working to increase the church numerically. Visitors would attend with some interest in working there, but they were turned away. They were turned away by some person who suggested they would find younger people, excitement, friendlier people and a younger preacher in another church. —Continued on page 3.

## LEADERSHIP....from page two.

Needless to say these potential workers did not come back. They were victims of the discourager. Other visitors are sometimes turned away because they observe members of the church who they know to be hypocrites. The greatest thing all these stumbling blocks could do is to "repent." If they are not willing to change then the next best thing they can do is "get out of the way" and let God's church move forward.

### GOOD LEADERSHIP WILL CURE MOST PROBLEMS

**First**, good leadership will put the followers to work and lead the way for them. When the followers are all busy and productive they are happy and there will be very little conflict within the congregation. Some, who claim to be leaders, are like a "setting hen" who seeks to cover all the eggs. They feel like they are losing control if others start doing something. Some "so called" leaders think all the best ideas belong to them alone and therefore they do not listen to others. This attitude is likely to deprive them of some of the finest suggestions ever made. As a friend of mine says; "nobody has the corner on all the 'smarts'."

**Second**, the best way to silence these negative discouragers of Christians is to have a leadership that is sound, filled with vision, has a love for the souls of men, and is out front showing the way. In most cases discouragers step aside in stunned silence when confronted by aggressive leadership.

Brethren, if you humbly observe that you have traits of leadership and your life is an example of righteousness, please use them to the "glory of God." Don't rob God of what is rightfully His! If you don't **use it** — you will **lose it!**