

Biblical Standards for Leadership in an Age of Scandal: Part 1

Note: This is part 1 of a two-part series.

In an age of an evangelical church culture that is fraught with scandals, we must continually remind and ground ourselves in the biblical criteria for leadership. Otherwise, we will lose our credibility within our churches and before the world. In addition, every church's board of trustees should insist their pastor be accountable to a higher body of leadership or presbytery. This can aid in steering clear of unnecessary challenges related to ministerial integrity.

There is an urgent need in contemporary Christianity to overhaul our assessment and criteria for leadership. This has been made abundantly clear by all the scandals that continue to take place in the church. Those who attempt to bring correction (like I am doing here) are often accused of being legalists or judgmental. I am not advocating that ministers caught in sexual or ethical sin should step down permanently. But there needs to be a body of leaders to which fallen ministers are accountable so they may be restored to their ministries after demonstrating true repentance and inner healing.

The following are some of the ethical and ministerial standards as related to priests, kings and New Testament elders. These are qualifications that we can still apply in principle to today's church.

Old Testament Standards

For the Priests (Lev. 21)

Originally, all the children of Israel were to serve as priests of the Lord (Ex. 19:6). But this privilege was evidently taken away and given to the tribe of Levi after the people turned away from the Lord. Among the many laws related to the standards for the priesthood (which relate to all present saints, according to 1 Pet. 2:8-9) are some ministerial and ethical principles that we can allegorically extrapolate (although the actual ceremonial qualifications are no longer relevant).

Standard: They shall not dwell among dead bodies and make themselves unclean (Lev. 21:11). This has to do with not fellowshiping with folks while they are involved in the works of darkness. (Jesus called unconverted people “dead” in John 5:25, Luke 9:60 and Eph. 2:1-3.)

Principle: I can’t tell you how many Christians I know of who think nothing of going out and partying with the world—getting drunk, listening to ungodly music, gambling or other worldly pursuits.

Standard: They shall not marry a prostitute or a divorced woman but only a virgin (Lev. 21:13-15). The basic idea of this passage is this: Marriage is not a free-for-all. Priests are commanded to marry women of God without previous marital issues. This is so the priestly class is protected from unnecessary distractions and so they nurture their children in a godly environment.

Principle: Jesus modified this view in Matthew 5:31-32 and 19:8-9 for the kingdom age of the church when He forbade divorce, except for sexual immorality, and forbade marrying a person divorced for an unbiblical reason. (It is now common in the body of Christ for people to divorce just because they don’t get along with their spouse. Jesus strictly forbids this.)

Various laws highlight physical defects (Lev. 21:17- 24).

Physical defects or blemishes are related to spiritual deficits that hinder a person from ministering for the Lord. For example, lameness represents those whose walk with God doesn't allow them to minister; blindness represents those who have no discernment and no real revelation of Christ in their lives; those with crushed testicles represent those who are not winning souls or bearing any fruit in their ministries; hunchbacks represent those who are not walking uprightly before the Lord (Prov. 2:21); and dwarfs represent those who have not grown in stature and maturity in Christ (Eph. 4:13).

Standards for Kings (Deut. 17:14-20)

While the principles for priests relate to all believers, the standards for kings relate specifically to those serving in church leadership.

Standard: A foreigner who is not your brother may not serve as king (Deut. 17:15). Those serving in leadership positions in the body of Christ must be "born again" and demonstrate clear fruits of salvation.

Principle: Often, churches place people in leadership positions without any assurance of their salvation! This dilutes the church of its effectiveness and power to witness to the world!

Standard: Kings must not acquire many horses for themselves (Deut. 17:16). In the Bible, horses represent strength and pride. Thus, God is warning His leaders not to acquire possessions that symbolize their elitism and raise themselves higher than the people in their congregations. For example, there are church leaders who drive very expensive cars or wear \$5,000 suits (even though their congregation is very poor) to show people that God is blessing them above everyone else.

Principle: This goes against the principles of humility and simplicity that Jesus and His apostles modeled in Scripture. God forbids kings from acquiring too many horses because it

would cause people to turn back to Egypt, which is a symbol of returning to previous ungodly lifestyles they had before experiencing salvation in Christ. Leaders who need material excess in order to be satisfied in this life will produce people who will also get caught up in materialism. This will turn their hearts away from the Lord and back to the things the world values.

Standard: Kings shall not acquire many wives. God was teaching against polygamy and telling the leaders to go back to the one-wife standard, as found in the union between Adam and Eve (Gen. 2:19-22). Although church leaders in America today don't practice polygamy (having more than one legal wife at the same time), more and more leaders in the church are violating the spirit of this passage because they get married, divorced and remarried numerous times. This is causing unrest, disgust and alarm among many leaders (including me) in the body of Christ.

Principle: Ever since the 1980s, when certain national ministers began divorcing and remarrying without adultery or infidelity being cited as the reason (and then on television telling the world that they are blessed), the standards of church leadership regarding marriage and divorce have been sliding down into an abyss.

Come back for part 2 tomorrow!

This article is from chapter 10 of Poisonous Power, Bishop Mattera's latest book. For more like this, you can purchase your copy on Amazon [here](#).