

The Next Generation of Christian Leaders

Many believe that the next generation of Christian leaders has unprecedented opportunities to complete the Great Commission. I agree. But I believe those who desire to successfully appropriate these opportunities must fit the following profile.

First, the new leaders must achieve their highest potential in body, mind and spirit. No longer enslaved to self-destructive habits and world-conforming thought patterns, their physical “temples,” ways of thinking and compelling motivations will be continuously informed by the presence of the Holy Spirit. They will care for their bodies through diet, rest and exercise.

They will ensure that their thinking is transformed by the Word rather than conformed to the world’s values. With their bodies offered as living sacrifices and minds renewed, they will “prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God” (Rom. 12:1-2, NKJV).

These leaders must be wholly Christ’s and, as a result, His holy bride—a “peculiar [set-apart] people” laying hold of the sacred responsibility to be a “chosen generation” and a “royal priesthood” (1 Pet. 2:9, KJV). They will serve as salt and light because they refuse “to fulfill the lust of the flesh” and are filled with the Holy Spirit’s fruit of “love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control” (Gal. 5:16-23).

Second, these leaders must be guided by the Holy Spirit in initiating a positive, practical and respectful dialogue with the world about the implications of Christ’s claims. They will take seriously their mission to transform the world’s cultures. They will speak the truth in love—holding

uncompromisingly to biblically anchored convictions with one hand while freely extending the broken bread and the cup of salvation with the other.

Third, the new leaders must connect intimately to the purposes of God with relation to creation. Liberated from selfishness, they will possess an understanding of their roles as stewards of all God has created and will embrace the responsibility to care for it, recognizing that their Father's world is filled with potential to reveal His nature and plan of redemption.

However, this commitment to be the earth's stewards will not deflect them from the obligation to the dignity and sanctity of human life. They will not only promote the right to life but also champion a quality of life worthy of those for whom God's Son paid the ultimate price.

Committed to life's sanctity and dignity, they will be motivated by the great commandment to address poverty, illness, exploitation, discrimination and oppression in the world. They will possess a burden for those who are denied the basics of life's opportunities.

They will be driven to resolve meaningless human suffering by understanding, going, teaching, serving, loving and, if necessary, dying. And they will not be timid as they demonstrate the gifts and graces of the Holy Spirit needed to do the impossible for the glory of Christ.

In summary, these 21st-century Christian leaders must live and serve in ways that reflect the major biblical themes of justice, mercy and humility (see Mic. 6:8). Having experienced justification, they will long to see justice achieved for others.

The justice they demand, however, will be saturated with the mercy that has been extended to them in Christ—offered with the humility that acknowledges that except for God's grace they too would be under judgment. The quest for justice, mercy

and humility will be the irrefutable proofs of the transformation that comes when minds, hearts and hands are whole and holy to serve God's purposes in the world.

Several current Christian leaders are suggesting that we may be in the final lap of the human race. Several are sensing a new Spirit blowing as the next generation of Christian leaders steps into the arena. May they embrace the disciplines of wholeness and holiness as they stand to declare, "Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!"

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