

Priorities of Godly Leadership

Every church has its problems. The early church was no exception, but it's the call of God on the leaders to face the problems head-on because that's what it takes to care for God's people.

GODLY LEADERS GO TO GREAT LENGTHS TO CARE FOR GOD'S PEOPLE.

The question I want to ask is how? We know leaders are supposed to care for the flock, but how? How can leaders care for their fellow Christians in their local church?

In Acts 15:22-35 we have our answer. The leaders of the early church focused on **3 priorities**.

Priority #1 - Protect and communicate the grace of God. **15:22-27**

That must be of extreme importance for godly leaders - protect and communicate the grace of God.

22 Then it seemed good to the apostles and the elders, with the whole church, to choose men from among them and send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leading men among the brothers, 23 with the following letter: “The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the brothers who are of the Gentiles in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. 24 Since we have heard that some persons have gone out from us and troubled you with words, unsettling your minds, although we gave them no instructions, 25 it has seemed good to us, having come to one accord, to choose men and send them to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, 26 men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. 27 We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth.

They selected leading men from the church of Jerusalem to go back with Paul and Barnabas and they set down their conclusion in writing so that no one could twist the story.

In the letter, they settled the mind of the Gentile believers - calling them brothers. They disavowed the

false teachers who demanded circumcision. They gave full support to Paul and Barnabas. They gave the new believers practical ways to live upright lives.

Priority #2 - Promote and demonstrate the righteousness of God. **15:28-29**

28 For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay on you no greater burden than these requirements: 29 that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols, and from blood, and from what has been strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

Christian testimony matters. God has declared us righteous by faith, are we living like it?

*1st Peter 2:24 - He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might **die to sin and live to righteousness**. By his wounds, you have been healed.*

In the letter from Jerusalem, there are 2 major principles are shown. Christians must stay away from idolatry and sexual immorality.

Beyond those two principles, there is another principle of the Christian life that the apostle Paul will develop later in 1 Corinthians 8-10 and Romans 13-14.

There is a principle in the Christian life that says you are free in Christ, but for the sake of loving others, you should surrender your freedom if you cause someone else to stumble. James had a deep concern for the Jews. He knew how offensive eating meat that was involved in idolatry would be to Jews, so he said, abstain from that for the sake of winning Jews to Christ and for the sake of having fellowship with Jewish Christians who are still hung up on that issue. The governing principle is love: Are you willing to set aside your freedoms for the sake of another person's conscience? It's a mark of maturity in the Christian life.

Priority #3 - Preach and teach the Word of God.
15:30-35

³⁰ So when they were sent off, they went down to Antioch, and having gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. ³¹ And when they had read it, they rejoiced because of its encouragement.

32 And Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, encouraged and strengthened the brothers with many words. 33 And after they had spent some time, they were sent off in peace by the brothers to those who had sent them. 35 But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also.

I can't help but see the parallel of what we should be about on Sunday mornings. They had an inspired letter of God. They opened the letter and they read it, and in response, there was rejoicing and encouragement. God's Word of grace is truly encouraging.

The leadership of the early church believed that the way a local church is strengthened is through the preaching and teaching ministry of the Word of God. That's where spiritual strength comes.

What we've looked at today, as I see it, is the ministry philosophy of the early church leaders. **Godly leaders go to great lengths to care for God's people.** Caring for God's people - how is that done? 3 priorities.

- 1) Protect and communicate the grace of God.
- 2) Promote and demonstrate the righteousness of God.

3) Preach and teach the Word of God.