

## How Do You Recognize a Future Leader? #2

sermonaudio.com

*Joshua*

By Don Green

**Bible Text:** Joshua

**Preached on:** Tuesday, February 10, 2015

### **Truth Community Church**

4183 Mt. Carmel Tobasco Road  
Cincinnati, OH 45255

**Website:** [truthcommunitychurch.org](http://truthcommunitychurch.org)

**Online Sermons:** [www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm](http://www.sermonaudio.com/tcomm)

Welcome to all of you as we continue this study that we started last week on "How do you recognize a future leader?" and as we consider these things, we're really seeing some of the essentials of Christian character. It's not just about men. It's not just about young people. We really see the things that animate every true Christian and so there is something in here for all of us and basically I want to wrap this up tonight and just kind of build on and quickly review the three questions that we looked at last night to ask and then add three more to them from the life of Joshua. As I said last time, we are presupposing our teaching on elder leadership from the book of Titus from a while back and we're just kind of expanding that and pushing that into new boundaries. You know, a church is only going to be in the long run as strong as its leadership. A weak leadership will lead to a weak church and weak Christians and so we want to honor these principles from God's word as we think about what leadership should be like and not let the way a world defines leadership or the way that the church broadly defines leadership, we want to see some principles directly from Scripture that we can build our future on. That men and women can look at and say, "This is where I want to direct my life focus and my affections and try to direct and know what it is that I'm supposed to do and when life circumstances come up, when challenges come up, when opposition meets me, when sorrow and crises hit me, I can come back to these kinds of principles and find direction for the way that I respond as the life that God has given me unfolds," and so this is what we want to cultivate.

Last time we asked 3 questions. The first one we asked was: how do you recognize a future leader? We said we should ask this question first: do you see ability in that man or in that woman? Do you see manifestation of proven ability? We first saw Joshua in Exodus 17. Moses appointed him to battle and Joshua won the victory by the power of God. This is all review. So when Joshua later at the beginning of the book that bears his name, at the beginning of the book of Joshua and he starts to lead the people into the Promised Land, we should remember that as we're watching this unfold in the scriptural narrative, we should remember that a long time earlier Joshua had manifested proven ability to lead troops into battle and to win victories. So a man doesn't simply appear on the scene and drop-down and parachute out of heaven as a leader, there is a whole sequence of life cultivation that has gone into place first and as we are watching men over time, as we're watching young people develop, as you young people are starting to say,

"What direction am I going to pursue in my life?" you start by cultivating ability and being faithful and successful in the opportunities that are immediately in front of you. It doesn't matter what the opportunities may or may not be, you just take the opportunities that you do have and exercise those well and let the further steps develop from there.

So do you see ability is the first question that that we would want to ask. Secondly, we said last time that we would ask the question: do you see loyalty? Do you see a principle of faithfulness in this man's life? In this young person's life? And we saw that from Exodus 24, that Joshua was Moses's personal assistant. He served side-by-side with a proven godly man for nearly 50 years before he was established into leadership in his own right. And it's not a question of the time element, per se, it's not that there is a 50 year requirement before a man is established in leadership but what we want to see, what we look for, what stands out is we see, "Oh, here's a man, here's a young person that was willing to serve under existing leadership. He learned at the side of a leader." That gives us a sense of his trajectory. If a man has served under a leader and has served faithfully under a leader, then you have a sense, "Okay, I have an idea of where he's going to go from here." One of the things that we said last time is that when it comes to the people of God, when it comes to leading God's people, we just don't have the liberty to take chances. The price that Christ paid to purchase his people was too high for us to treat lightly the delegation of oversight to Christ's people by taking chances on unproven men. So we look for something that says that there is an element of proven faithfulness, of proven loyalty, and when we see a man that is serving faithfully alongside existing leadership, we say, "Okay, when he has leadership himself, we have confidence that he will continue in that same trajectory." There are no guarantees in this but we're just looking to establish things to give us a sense of confidence as we move forward.

Then the last question we asked last time was: do you see courage? Do you see courage? Do you see ability? Do you see loyalty? Do you see courage? Because spiritual leadership inevitably brings opposition. Inevitably, spiritual leaders will find conflict coming from those who do not like the direction that things are going. In Numbers 14, we saw Joshua stand on principle when it was unpopular to do so. The whole nation wanted to go back to Egypt because the 10 spies brought back a bad report. Joshua and Caleb in the teeth of fierce winds against what they had to say, stood like men and said, "No. We should go into the land. We can conquer them. The Lord will bless us. The Lord will deliver them into our hands." Joshua did that when it was immensely unpopular for him to do that. Joshua manifested a willingness to stand for principle even when it was bringing opposition to him. He had the courage, he had the intestinal fortitude, to stand on principle, to courageously stand on principle even though people were calling for his execution when he did so. So what we want to see, one of the questions you ask about: is this a man that might one day grow into leadership? Well, do you see him manifesting courage in the face of opposition because a developing leader shows that he can stand firm in adversity and that he prefers fidelity to Christ over his own self-interest.

So these are very deep and searching principles that we ask that go to the very nature of what character is like. As I said last time, one of the things that we have to learn to do together as a congregation, as a church family, is that we have to be willing collectively

to ask hard questions that may make people feel a little bit uncomfortable as they move and aspire after leadership. We need to ask these questions and not assume things simply because, you know, we are familiar with each other. We need to be willing to ask these questions not because we don't trust the people that are involved. That has nothing to do with it. We ask these questions because we're seeking to honor Christ and to protect his people over the long term and we simply can't be careless with that responsibility. So these questions are a way for us to try to screen things in a way that give us a sense that, "Okay, we know the direction that we are going." And these things are asked in love. They are asked in a spirit of support with people that we know when that happens, but we still process these things and ask these questions so that we can be faithful to Christ rather than simply bowing before men.

Now, that hasty review brings us to new material for this evening and here's the fourth question that I would say that we ask as we look at the life of Joshua and the question is this: do you see godliness? Do you see godliness in that person's life? There is an interesting mention of Joshua that is found in Exodus 33 and I would invite you to turn over to that chapter with me. Exodus 33 and specifically looking at verse 7. Exodus 33:7, this is after Israel has walked through the Red Sea and the Egyptian army is behind them under the waves of the Red Sea and they are getting ready, preparing to move on and here in Exodus 33:7, you will see that it says that, "Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp, a good distance from the camp, and he called it the tent of meeting. And everyone who sought the LORD would go out to the tent of meeting which was outside the camp." And so this tent of meeting was a physical manifestation, a physical place to go in order to seek the Lord.

Now, it's very interesting as you read through the rest of the narrative to see an almost incidental mention of Joshua that takes place later on. Look at verse 8. We'll come to Joshua in a few verses. It says, "And it came about, whenever Moses went out to the tent, that all the people would arise and stand, each at the entrance of his tent, and gaze after Moses until he entered the tent. Whenever Moses entered the tent, the pillar of cloud would descend and stand at the entrance of the tent; and the LORD would speak with Moses. When all the people saw the pillar of cloud standing at the entrance of the tent, all the people would arise and worship, each at the entrance of his tent." Verse 11, "Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend. When Moses returned to the camp," look at this, "his servant Joshua, the son of Nun, a young man, would not depart from the tent." You have this tent of meeting which is specifically described in verse 7 as the place that everyone who sought the Lord would go out to the tent of meeting. This is where you'd go if you wanted to seek out the Lord and God manifested himself there to Moses and spoke to Moses with open candor as the picture of face to face would indicate. Then just incidentally you see this mention of Joshua that says that he wouldn't leave there. There is an indication that there was a heart desire for God that motivated Joshua to stay in the place where God could be found. There was this desire for godliness in his life. So A. W. Pink, speaking on this passage said this, he said and I quote, "This is most important for those who are called by God to occupy positions of leadership. Before a servant of God is qualified to minister unto his people, he must

himself seek unto the Lord. Power for service is obtained only by maintaining intimate fellowship with God."

So Joshua here in this early picture of his early life, long before he ascended to leadership, the Scriptures tell us that Joshua was a man who was seeking the Lord incessantly. That he was known, this was a matter of public record that if you wanted to find Joshua, you would find him in the place where God himself would meet with his people. That tells us something. That indicates that Joshua was manifesting the most essential spiritual characteristic of them all. What did Jesus say that the greatest commandment was? To what? "Love the LORD your God with all of your heart, with all of your soul, and with all of your mind," Matthew 22:37. Well, this should be very self-evident. This should be something that is very obvious and yet we need to state it. Sometimes you need to say the most obvious things so that they are not taken for granted, so that they are not overlooked: a man who would lead God's people into spiritual growth must be someone who has manifested an appetite for his own spiritual growth first. Spiritual leadership within the people of God, spiritual leadership in the church, is not a reward for men who are successful in earthly life. Spiritual leadership is not given to men simply because they are the most suave, eloquent speakers. Those things may or may not attend to a man in leadership but the primary aspect that you look for is a man who has shown a desire for God himself first when there wasn't a position attached to his seeking. A true spiritual leader is someone who when you look at their life, you would find in them a desire for God that was completely independent of any thought of spiritual leadership being in his future, otherwise, the supposed desires and the exercises of spiritual interest, you don't know without that if it's simply a means of self-promotion at that point. So you ask questions like this and for you young people, remembering as I have said multiple times, I am on your side as I say these things. These are to help you and to give you and to shape your aspirations in life. I'll be very blunt with you: I am trying to shape your life aspirations with what I'm saying here today and in these messages and we're shaping them according to God's word, not according to my agenda for your life.

So we ask questions like this when we say: do you see godliness? Well, you ask questions: when do you hear this man talking about biblical doctrine? When do you hear him talking about his own spiritual growth? When do you see him preoccupied with Scripture? Where in his life does he manifest a care for the soul of others either in being swift to support them within the body of Christ and supporting those people who have their own spiritual desires and being alongside them to be an encouragement and a strength to them without regard to his self-interest? Or pursuing the unsaved people in his life and when do you hear him manifesting a desire for the lost and to see the lost come to Christ? You see, it's more than simply showing up physically in this location. It's more than that and so we ask these questions: where do we see this coming out of the life of this man? And when you see that in early form, when you see it when there is nothing to be gained from it other than the fact that this is just what defines the man's life, then you say, "Okay, I see the real thing there." And I'm grateful that we have young people in our midst here, both preteen and teen and in the years afterwards, I'm grateful that we have men like that. We have young people like that that are showing that here in our

congregation already. That's a great sign of the spiritual health of our church and I affirm that and I recognize it and I rejoice in it.

You know, we have people like this in our midst now which gives us reason to believe that we have future leaders in our midst right now. We just want to water that and affirm it and encourage those of you who are not quite like that, who are standing on the sidelines spiritually and come here maybe because you have to but your mind and your heart isn't engaged in the things of God that we're talking about here. You're the ones that I worry about. You're the ones that I care about. You're the ones that need to take a long healthy look in the mirror and ask yourself, "What is the trajectory of my life? Where is my life going to go? Maybe it's time for me to get serious about godliness in light of the things that I am hearing." And if this convicts you and you say, "My life isn't like that," well, here's your opportunity to turn away from the spiritual mediocrity and indifference that has marked you up to this point and come to Christ and humbly cry out to him and say, "I want to be a man like that. Would you please make me into one?" Then start to look for and start to gravitate toward the people that you know who manifest that kind of godliness, who manifest that kind of spiritual interest, that kind of spiritual hunger, and associate with people like that so that you would learn from their life example, "This is what a man who is after godliness looks like." Isn't that what we should all be wanting? I mean, this is Christianity 101. This is the basic thing but we can't just assume it in everyone.

I'm grateful for the consistent spiritual desire that is shown by the vast majority of you being here on a Tuesday night and that this is a reflection of your own desire for godliness that I know that I'm going to see some of you week after week after week after week after week. It's cool and it's great to be able to walk in this direction together, isn't it? I love it. I love it. But having said that and as we're just looking collectively and it's not so much as I'm asking these questions, it's not so much that this is what we ask as individuals although that's true, we're really cultivating, we are trying to cultivate a corporate mindset about what leadership should look like and about what the trajectory of leadership should look like and we want to understand this in common with one another. So we don't want to mistake mere busyness for godliness. We want to see, we call our young people, we call each other, we require of future leaders by common, settled expectation that those who would aspire after leadership at Truth Community Church would be those whose lives show unmistakably that the things of God are a priority in their affections. And if collectively that's our expectation, if there is a solid core of scores of people who say, "That's the way we do it here," and they say, "This is where we stand," well, then we set the bar, we set the expectation going forward and that has long-term consequences for us. So individually we say, "Yes, I agree with that. I embrace that. That's what I want to be personally. I want that to manifest and come out of my life but it's also what I expect from the environment of our church." Look, look, look, did I say look? Look: the bar that we set, people will aspire after the bar that is set in the midst of a church and so, yeah, without apology we're setting the bar high. We're expecting you young people to aspire after a high level of godliness if your family is going to make you a part of the life of Truth Community Church. That's the expectation here and we don't accept mediocrity and we don't excuse, "Well, I'm young, you know, and there is the

indiscretion of youth." We don't accept that. We don't accept that as a standard as if there is a low standard for young people and that the call of God on your life is somehow lower than it is for adults. We don't accept that here. We expect our young people to aspire after a high pursuit of God because that is what God is worthy of.

So we ask ourselves: do you see godliness? That was point number 4. Joshua's life manifests another important trait to look for in a future leader and this may be, we set this out for young people to see and to recognize but it also, this may be a little bit more pertinent to those of us who are a little further along in life because it's just by the nature of the question. The fifth question that we would ask is this: do you see perseverance? Do you see perseverance being manifested in this person's life? You should see an element of perseverance in a man's life if you are going to judge him as somebody who may be a potential future leader for the people of God.

Now, we have seen Joshua in the book of Exodus. It's important to remember that between the book of Exodus and the beginning of the book of Joshua there is an elapsed period of time of 40 years that takes place. Forty difficult years between these events that we have looked at from Exodus in the life of Joshua and his ultimate appointment to his position of leadership in the Promise Land. Let me just remind you of the chronological markers in the Pentateuch that help us see this. Turn to Exodus 40:17. We're just looking at time markers here. Exodus 40:17 says that, "In the first month of the second year, on the first day of the month, the tabernacle was erected." The first month of the second year and they had already been going for a year, obviously, by that point given the time marker. So that's at the end of the book of Exodus. Then Leviticus takes place and that's about 30 days. And then you have Numbers taking place and then in Deuteronomy is Moses's farewell address, his farewell sermon to the people of Israel. Now, with that in mind, you say, "Well, what happened between Exodus and Deuteronomy? What was the time lapse?" Here's what I want you to see, beloved, turn to Deuteronomy 1:3. I just want you to see these time markers so you know where to find them. In Deuteronomy 1:3 it says, "In the fortieth year, on the first day of the eleventh month, Moses spoke to the children of Israel, according to all that the LORD had commanded him to give to them."

So, just walk through this with me here. The end of Exodus, Joshua introduced in some of the later chapters of Exodus, Exodus 40 says, "Okay, first month, year 2," and then you continue on and before you get to Joshua you find Deuteronomy saying, "In the fortieth year." Well, that's a long period of time and here's the key for us, beloved: those intervening 40 years were a time of hardship for the entire nation. It was a period of judgment as God judged the entire generation from 20 years old and upward for their unbelief in the desert, for their rebellion. So those 40 years were a time of wilderness wandering. It was a time of incessant death. When you do the math, you come out to about 50 to 75 people dying in Israel each day in the wilderness. That's a lot of death. It's a lot of wandering, eating a lot of manna along the way and just persevering step by step through hardship without a whole lot day by day happening to encourage you along the way. Here's what I want you to see: in Joshua you see a man who persevered through all 40 years of those wilderness wanderings and came out strong on the other side. He didn't falter under the weight of that. In fact, when you think about it, in a crisis moment he

displayed courage when he gave the minority report from the spies going into the land. In a crisis moment, he stood strong. Most of our life is not lived in crisis moments, it is lived in the day to day routine, the struggles and the successes that come along with that. A little bit up, a little bit down and that's where the bulk of our life is lived. Well, Joshua showed he could be faithful in a crisis and he could be faithful over the long term in the midst of hardship.

Faithfulness defined the way that he lived and here's what I want you to see, beloved. This is a very important point and we're going to spend a little time and go into some things in the New Testament on this. Very important. Very, very, very, very important for us to grasp and to honor: God tests men over time. Maybe another way to say it is that God proves his men over time and not simply in a moment of success, not merely in moments of crisis. You see, when we think about our position as a church, we want to know whether a man is in it for the long haul or not. And not simply being attached to our church, that's rather secondary to what I'm saying, we want to know whether this man is going to manifest Christian character and godliness over the long haul. We can't take chances with that. I would be interested, I won't ask for a show of hands, but I would be interested to know how many of you have gone through in your Christian life, you have gone through situations where you have seen a leader, a Christian leader morally disqualify himself. When you go through that, you realize the devastating impact that that can have on a congregation. "We trusted this to be a man of God and we found out he was living a double life," and the long-term devastating impact of that is immense. Well, we can't guarantee that we're never going to experience that here in our church but the least that we can do is on the front end try to honor the principles that would say, "Observe a man over time and don't be too hasty in installing a man into leadership so that you can do your best to guard yourself against that and then trust the Lord for whatever follows afterwards." I don't mind telling you, I went through this personally. One of the men who sat on my ordination Council morally disqualified himself later. In fact, he was involved in the sin while he was judging my credentials for ministry. That's pathetic. That should never happen and, you know, the Lord has his way of exposing those things in time. I mean, it didn't shake me in one sense. I was disappointed but it didn't shake me because you understand, "Well, this stuff happens." But just to let you know as I say these things that I have tasted that myself and if you have tasted that, then I have a little bit of a sense of what you've been through.

So what do we do? How do we account for that ever present reality and, you know, it's just so common in the church these days that we would hardly raise our eyebrows anymore after it? Well, one of the things that you do is that you have a man prove himself over time before he is installed into leadership so that you are not doing things too quickly before you really have a knowledge of what is going to be. John MacArthur, my former pastor, has a wonderful saying, he says: time and truth go hand in hand. Sooner or later the truth comes out and if you give men time, then you are going to have a better sense of what the truth is that is coming out about their lives. So you give this time and you don't rush the process. And you ladies who bake, you understand that. You know not to take a cake out before the time has elapsed. You know that you don't put a 10-year-old behind a car because there hasn't been enough time for them to develop the characteristics

to do that. Well, it's no different in leadership. The process cannot be rushed. You don't hurry through to put a popular guy into leadership before there has been time to prove him.

Jesus taught this. Jesus said that God proves his men with small things that grow into wider responsibilities over time. Look at Luke 16:10, "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. Therefore if you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous wealth, who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" Jesus says, "A man establishes faithfulness with little bits of responsibility and once he shows faithfulness in that, then you expand it a little bit more and a little bit more and you just establish that principle because the idea, what you're looking for, is an element and a principle of faithfulness in a man, not necessarily the big things. Even more so, we measure a man by whether he is faithful in the small things or not because if his conscience is trained and he has the character and integrity to be faithful in small things, then you have reason to believe that when he is given bigger things he will be faithful in those and you only know that over time. You can only evaluate that by whether a man perseveres in faithfulness in small things before you move him on into broader responsibilities. So we're not looking for the youngest guy. We're not looking for the flashiest guy. We're not looking for the most eloquent speaker. We're looking for faithfulness. We're looking for someone who in some way is a veteran of spiritual life; who has shown that he can be faithful in the trenches. And when we see that, we say, "Okay, do you know what? He will be faithful elsewhere with more responsibly as well."

Look at 1 Timothy 3 as this ties in directly to elder qualifications. 1 Timothy 3:6. Joshua, faithful for 40 years. When he stepped into leadership at the beginning of the book of Joshua, the people of Israel should have known exactly the kind of man they were getting because it had been proven over time. Well, in a similar way, in an analogous way, this is what the New Testament tells us to do with church leadership as well. Look at 1 Timothy 3, verse 4 is where we'll start at. 1 Timothy 3:4, speaking of an elder qualification says, "He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?)." You see, a small thing leading into the bigger thing. The man manages his family well before he is put into leadership over an entire church and so the family becomes a proving ground for a man's leadership, more broadly speaking, in the spiritual realm. So Scripture just points to this and in verse 6 makes it very explicit and says, "not a new convert, so that he will not become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil." How much plainer could Scripture be? Let him prove himself in his home life. Let him not be a new convert. The whole point being we need to see perseverance. We need to see something established over time and it just can't be rushed. You know, we're not saying that it's 40 years and that's the minimum. It's not about a number, it's about what's enough. What's enough to say, "Okay, this is established in a man's life."



Here's one other thing as we're talking about this, as you are looking for this quality trait to be manifested: a man who is truly fit for leadership of God's people is somebody who is going to be willing to be patient as that plays out because he'll acknowledge that the principle is more important than his own immediate advancement. So a leader, a true future leader is going to be patient under that process. Look at 1 Timothy 5:22. The commands of Scripture are so explicit on this. 1 Timothy 5:21, Paul says, "I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus and of His chosen angels," look at the way this is framed. This is just so sobering. "I charge you to maintain these principles without bias, doing nothing in a spirit of partiality." And following this sober charge that he gives, "Don't be partial. Be impartial in the way that you administer this, these qualifications going forward." Verse 22, "Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin." So Paul says in chapter 3: he's got to prove himself in his home; he can't be a new convert and he kind of describes the man. Then he looks to existing leadership and he addresses leadership and says, "Don't you lay hands on anyone too hastily. Don't share in their sins. Take care with how leadership is delegated so that godliness will be honored and the people will not be taught to sin by the failures of their leadership."

You see, this is all the easier to do when we realize that we are under the authority of Christ as we taught in the book of Titus and in Ephesians that the church belongs to Christ. This is his church. It's not ours. The church is not a place for men of ambition to try to seek to fulfill that inner itch that they have. If you have ambition and you want to promote yourself, go into business, go do something else but don't try to fulfill your spirit of ambition inside the church because that's the wrong place because it's not about you. It's not about me. This is about Christ and Christ says, "This is the way that I want it done," and we say, "Yes Lord, we will implement it accordingly. We will honor these principles by not being in a hurry as we look to future leadership."

So corporately as we contemplate future leadership, one of the things that we ask about a man is: do you see perseverance being manifested in his life? Is he someone who stays with it over time? If so, then we have reason to believe that he is not going to jump ship when things get difficult. I remember, this is a very extreme illustration. There was a man that Nancy and I knew early in our seminary years, this was a man who was a pastor. He woke up one morning and decided that the Lord was calling him to seminary so he gave one weeks notice to his congregation who without any expectation or any warning, suddenly their pastor says, "I am gone as of next week." So he moved out and he loaded up the truck and he moved to Beverly, almost literally moved to Beverly Hills from where he had been. So he gets into seminary and do you know what? Seminary didn't work out too well for him and so after a semester, maybe 2 of seminary, he had moved on to another job. After that job wasn't working out financially and so he moved on to something else and then moved back to where he was from originally and there was just this total mess of a life littered with unfaithfulness and unfulfilled promises that marked him. There was no perseverance in his life. There was nothing suggesting and in my judgment that man would never be qualified for spiritual leadership after something like that because he had manifested an unwillingness to persevere in the situation in which he found himself. And stated differently: spiritual leaders cannot be impulsive men. It is just

too important. It is too vital. A congregation, the Lord's flock, needs to know that the men that are in leadership today are the men that are going to be there next week and next month and the year after that. Instability promotes fear and uncertainty in the people of God, in the sheep. They need a shepherd. They need shepherds, elders, plural. They need men who they can count on to be there time after time, year after year. "We know where our leaders are going to be. They are going to be with us." Just as a small reflection of the fact that Christ himself said, "Lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." So we as the flock of Christ have a prerogative to expect to see perseverance, faithfulness manifested in men who would aspire after leadership before they receive the official office. Scripture calls us to that standard because when we see that, then we can say, "Do you know what? He's not going to leave when things get tough." That is an important element of spiritual leadership.

Now, one more as we wrap this up from the life of Joshua. We have asked: do you see ability? Do you see loyalty? Do you see courage? Do you see godliness? Do you see perseverance? Final point, number 6: do you see affirmation? Do you see affirmation. A future leader, a man who is on the cusp of spiritual leadership maybe would be a better way to put it at this point of the principles that we are talking about, you should see someone who in one manner or another has been affirmed by others for his known character and godliness. Let me state this negatively: you don't simply take the man's word for it that he is a leader. You don't take the man's word for it that he is anointed to lead the people of God. The people of God have a say in that. If a man is truly a spiritual leader, there are going to be people of God, men of God, who affirm that so that we are protected against self-promoting men. The Scriptures are so clear on this.

Turn over to Deuteronomy 31 and you can see this manifested in the life of Moses and of Joshua. Deuteronomy 31, beginning in verse 1. There is always a certain bittersweet spirit that I feel as I read Moses's words in Deuteronomy, when you see a lion of God stepping off the stage. Deuteronomy 31:1, remember, we are tying this into the life of Joshua and the principle of affirmation. Deuteronomy 31:1, "Moses went and spoke these words to all Israel. And he said to them, 'I am a hundred and twenty years old today; I am no longer able to come and go, and the LORD has said to me, "You shall not cross this Jordan.'" Verse 3, "It is the LORD your God who will cross ahead of you; He will destroy these nations before you, and you shall dispossess them. Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you, just as the LORD has spoken." Stop there for just a moment. Here is Moses, after 40 years of leadership through the wilderness. Moses, the one who they saw go up into the mountain and meet face to face with God. Moses, who brought down the 10 Commandments from the hill. Moses, who reigned over them. Moses, who confronted Pharaoh. Moses, who led them through the Red Sea. Moses, who had led them all this way. Moses, who was a known quantity of a man of God established over decades. Moses, with all of that built up credibility says, "Joshua is the one who will cross ahead of you just as the Lord has spoken." He, like Elijah did with Elisha, he passes the mantle. He puts the mantle on the next generation.

Verse 4, "The LORD will do to them just as He did to Sihon and Og, the kings of the Amorites, and to their land, when He destroyed them. The LORD will deliver them up

before you," he's still talking to the people of Israel, "and you shall do to them according to all the commandments which I have commanded you. Be strong and courageous, do not be afraid or tremble at them, for the LORD your God is the one who goes with you. He will not fail you or forsake you." Now watch this in verse 7, "Then Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel," this is a magnificent moment. This is a very significant hinge moment in the history of Israel. The mantle of leadership is being passed publicly. "Moses called to Joshua and said to him in the sight of all Israel," from one grizzled veteran to another younger grizzled veteran. Moses says, "Be strong and courageous, for you shall go with this people into the land which the LORD has sworn to their fathers to give them, and you shall give it to them as an inheritance. The LORD is the one who goes ahead of you; He will be with you. He will not fail you or forsake you. Do not fear or be dismayed." So publicly in front of all Israel, Moses says, "Joshua, now you are the man." And all of Israel saw a known, established leader pass the mantle on to the next leader and they knew to continue following because the affirmation had been given to him in a very public way.

Look over at Deuteronomy 34:9. You get just a little bit of a final commentary on it. Deuteronomy 34:9, "Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him." Moses had identified his leadership with Joshua's leadership. There was an identity. There was a continuity going forth. "And the sons of Israel listened to him," meaning Joshua, "and did as the LORD had commanded Moses." Somewhere, beloved, somewhere there should be other proven men of God who will endorse this potential leader and commend him to you for further leadership. Somewhere there should be that element. A stranger, so to speak, a stranger should not enter into leadership of the people of God. You need to have an idea of who you are getting and we can't always know that with certainty and so we rely on the judgment of others to help us have a sense of confidence that this is a man who has the capacity to lead the people of God. It's how the baton is passed in spiritual generations. I don't mean from fathers to sons necessarily but how leaders pass it. They acknowledge a man in a public way that shows that, "We identify with this one. We have confidence in him," and their credibility becomes the opportunity for the congregation to say, "Okay, we can trust this one too. Men that I know, men that I trust, have identified with him," and therefore, as it were, they extend their credibility so that that man has it as well.

This is so critical: God's man will have a good reputation somehow amongst the people of God. Look over at the book of Acts 6:1, "Now at this time while the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint arose on the part of the Hellenistic Jews against the native Hebrews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily serving of food. So the twelve summoned the congregation of the disciples and said, 'It is not desirable for us to neglect the word of God in order to serve tables.'" Now watch this principle of affirmation at play in verse 3, "Therefore, brethren, select from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we may put in charge of this task." These men had a reputation before they were put into this position of responsibility. What is the commonly held estimation of this person? There shouldn't be surprises. We minimize surprises in the realm of leadership. That's the point. We minimize surprises by seeing what they have manifested in their private actions and in

their private desires. We minimize surprises by examining their life over time and seeing a principle of affirmation. We minimize surprises by looking for other godly men to identify with the future leadership of this one who is under consideration. There are all of these different principles that go in that should be in harmony and agreement with one another. 1 Timothy 3:7 also points us in this realm of being mindful of a man's reputation. What is the collective assessment? And in 1 Timothy it even goes to people who are outside the church. 1 Timothy 3:7, "He must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he will not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil."

So as we're considering future leadership in days to come, not tonight but in days to come, we're just laying a foundation when we have opportunity to consider these principles peaceably and when there are no personalities involved. We just say, "What do the Scriptures say?" You establish these principles now in a time of peace before you have to apply them to people in the future. You ask, "What is the commonly held estimation of this person? What do the men of God say about this person? What is the common reputation?" For someone who is involved in the life of a church and an active participant in it, there should be no surprise when a man is put forward for leadership. You should say, "Oh well, yeah, I saw that one coming a mile away. This was the guy. This was expected." If you're involved on an ongoing basis over a period of months and years in a church and somebody is put forward for leadership, it should be impossible for you to say, "Where did he come from? I've never heard of him." All of these principles are designed to protect us from that.

So, beloved, and kind of bringing this into things that have the potential for a little more individual application as you're looking out and you consider other teachers that you listen to, beware of self-proclaimed teachers. Beware of those who talk about their own anointing. Be willing to ask this question whether you speak it directly to the man's face or whether you're just thinking it through on your own: who endorses this man besides his own mirror? Who lays hands on this man and affirms his character and his doctrine to me besides his wife? Be willing to ask those kinds of hard questions. That will protect you from internet whatever. It will protect you from people on the internet that have tried to sidestep this qualifying process that Scripture speaks so clearly of. It will protect you if the Lord brings us to a situation where I am removed from the scene. If the Lord calls me home early and the church is still young, it protects you from somebody just waltzing in and saying the right things without having these principles of leadership firmly inculcated into your collective consciousness. I'm concerned about what happens after I'm here, not just while I'm here and the key for those of you especially that are younger and are going to be a long-term part of the future of this church, the key is for you to embrace these things now when there is no personality at stake and to be convinced of these things and then when that opportunity or when that need or that crisis comes, then you step up and say, "No, these are the principles that we must follow. These are the questions that we must ask. We must protect the people of God and not simply be blown away by the charisma of someone that we hardly know."

Scripture teaches us in order to protect us from those who would come in and take a position and then turn a church into an element and an instrument of his own ambition.

May God protect Truth Community Church until Christ returns from that horrible fate. May God protect us from men like that. One of the ways that God will providentially implement that is by us collectively, me and you individually, collectively, coming together and saying, "We see how God marks out a leader and we're not going to short-circuit those principles. We're going to honor them and trust that over time God will honor us as we seek to honor his word as mere under shepherds of the great Shepherd who laid down his life for his sheep."

Let's kind of draw all of this to a close, would we? Would you be a leader of God's people whether you're 15 or 50? Would you be a leader of God's people? Scripture says that it is a good thing for a man to aspire after the office of an elder. It's a good thing for a man to aspire after leadership. If you would be one of those men, consider the character traits that Joshua exhibited: ability, courage, loyalty, perseverance, godliness, and be willing to wait for the affirmation of God's people. Sometimes you may find that that seems to be very slow in coming. Sometimes that may seem to be like a distant dream but understand that you prepare for leadership in large part by daily faithfulness to the responsibilities and the leadership that are in front of you right now. You young people, you don't have to wait until someone says, "Come and preach at the pulpit of Such-and-such a church." No, no, it starts way before that and you're not going to rise up to that occasion if you haven't been preparing for it all along. So you prepare for leadership now by saying, "What are my responsibilities today? Oh, I have to do a math lesson?" There you go, that's where I start. Where are your relationships today? "I need to submit to my mom and dad." There you go, that's where I will start. Day by day, start with what is right in front of you rather than saying, "If it comes to me, then I will rise to the occasion." It doesn't work that way.

And for those of you who are a little further along, if the process seems a little slow and a little long, take heart in these words from C. H. Spurgeon which in the Bible I used to use I had written right in the front and carried these words with me for a very long time until that Bible fell apart. C. H. Spurgeon said, quote, "If your call from the Lord be a real one, you will not long remain silent. As surely as the man wants his hour, so surely the hour wants its man." God appoints an hour for his men and he appoints men for his hour. Our job is not to try to manipulate circumstances and people to bring it about through our own self effort, our job is to prepare ourselves and to develop the character qualities and honor the character qualities of which Scripture speaks and then we just present ourselves day by day and as a day by day sacrifice and as a life sacrifice. "Lord, if your people need leadership, here I am, send me but I will wait for you for the call." There is honor in that and that's what we want to cultivate as the spirit of which we think about leadership here at Truth Community Church. Men, don't search for a mystical call. Don't search for God's voice coming to you and calling you out of the blue. We're not going to be a church where people say, "God called me on March 14, 2015 to pastor." It doesn't work that way. It's proven over time. Rather, you seek the Lord privately and wait for him to open opportunity publicly and you trust that in time God will honor your faithfulness in small areas and lead you to broader avenues of service for Christ your King. If your call from the Lord be a real one, you will not long remain silent. As much as you want that hour,

God has prepared the hour for you to meet. We'll trust him for what that has for us ahead, okay?

Let's bow in prayer.

*Father, we just thank you for the pattern of leadership that is laid out for us in your word and I know that there are men in this congregation, men that are here tonight, that burn with a desire, Father, for faithfulness to you, that long to be someone who leads the people of God, not for their own self-acclamation, not that they would be seen as a leader but because they love Christ and they love his people and they want to be a servant to the ends of their spiritual growth. I know that we have men like that now. I know, Father, that we have younger men who would raise up and become like that in the future. So Father, I pray for these men. I pray that you would preserve them and protect them in purity and in holiness and in biblical Christian honor, that you would sanctify their lives and set them apart in such a profound way that as they are carrying out daily acts of faithfulness, that you are simply shaping them for the future that you have for them yet to walk into. Father, as a church, as a congregation, help us to come alongside these young men and to love them and to affirm them and to support them and, Father, let us be the kind of people that would model godliness that they themselves could say, "That's what it needs to be like. That's what I too want to pursue." Father, it's about so much more than our individual lives and our individual struggles and sorrows and joys. Lord, we need to be a church that has a corporate testimony and is a place where leaders come to develop and to flourish and to have opportunity. We're not yet there, Lord. There is so much growth that we need to do as a church to become that kind of place but even as we've talked about it individually, we ask for it corporately, Father. Help us as a church, help us as a corporate body to manifest the ability to be faithful to you. Help us to be loyal to Christ. Help us to be courageous when opposition comes. Help us to be godly in our individual lives. Help us to persevere month by month, year by year in quiet faithfulness. And Father, as we manifest those things, would you give your own mark of affirmation on Truth Community Church? Would you establish this church as a place where it is known that when you want to know the truth of the Gospel, when you need to be saved, when you need to know the truth for your own soul, you go to Truth Community Church and you find a people there that can lead you in that direction. Father, we don't care what the world thinks. We don't care about their affirmation. We don't care whether people who have no interest in the things of God think anything about our church or not. But we do care deeply, Father, that we would be found pleasing in your sight and so help us to that end. Help us to be people like this individually. Help us corporately to be like this. Father, have your way with Truth Community Church. We simply ask that you would protect us and use us as you do. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ we pray. Amen.*

You have been listening to Pastor Don Green from Truth Community Church. For more information about our ministry including Pastor Don's blog and our location and service times, please visit us at [truthcommunitychurch.com](http://truthcommunitychurch.com). You will also find Don's sermon library where you can download free messages on many biblical passages and topics. This message is copyrighted by Don Green. All rights reserved.