

Character is Everything

Detailed Outline

Part 4 of 6

IV. The Character and Behavior of a Loving Leader

Love is patient and kind . . . (1 Cor. 13:4a ESV)

Introduction

1. In Christianity, character is everything.
 - a) That should be true in all of our life, but especially in our public image as a Christian. Never has this been more needed for our leaders than in this day and age.
 - b) We need role models, men who love their wives, love their children, love their God, and are servants in their local church.
2. Too often leaders across America and around the world have a tendency to live far below our high calling.
 - a) Our integrity needs to precede our communication.
 - b) If people observe us in our local congregation, they know if we are the real deal. Then can tell if we are winging it. They can usually tell if our private world doesn't correspond to our public world. So when we get up here to speak on a given topic, they are thinking, "Why don't you put that into practice in your own life?"
 - c) Credibility is very important for a Christian leader.
 - d) It is not uncommon for leaders to have a gap between their public and private life.
 - e) Sometimes we begin to feel discouraged. Sometimes we begin to feel empty inside.
3. We need to feed our souls. Elders need to be self-feeders. You can't be dependent upon sermonettes here and there on the radio.
 - a) Sometimes, all of us going through desert times. Some days we are empty, dry.
 - b) Add to that our own insecurities. Many of us are aware of our brokenness.
 - c) Add also our struggle with our own personal sins.
 - d) You can see then that with all these things coming at us, it can be difficult for us to "lead with love."
 - e) That is why it is so important that we work on our character and our private life.
 - f) God is not scandalized by our depravity. A mature Christian deals with his sins. We want to close that gap between our private life and our public life.
 - g) The great enemy of an elder is the sinful desire to love yourself.
 - h) Yet, God still wants to use us.
4. The study of 1 & 2 Corinthians is a study of tact and diplomacy on how a leader (i.e. Paul) handled difficult situations.
 - a) Paul is going to now (in 1 Corinthians 13) describe 15 positive and negative aspects of love.

- b) These describe the Lord Jesus, so he is a model for us as loving leaders.
*"... whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked."
 (1 John 2:6)*
- c) Jesus didn't go around beating the sheep. He was kind, gentle, patient. These qualities should define every area of our lives.

A. Love is patient (v. 4).

1. Jesus was patient.
2. Patience forms bookends for this section: verses 4 and 7. The idea is longsuffering, especially when under attack. We shouldn't have a knee-jerk reaction of anger.
3. Isn't the Lord patient with us? He loves, forgives, comes alongside of us.
4. Church work is slow work. We as elders want to get things done quickly. But we need to be patient—even when people assail us, criticize us, don't like our plans for the church.
5. In every church, there are different kinds of people. As elders we tend to be self-motivated, and we think that everybody's got to be like us. We need to be patient with people who are:
 - a) slow to learn
 - b) resist change
 - c) weak in the faith
 - d) quick to complain
 - e) forgetful of their responsibilities

"And we urge you, brothers, admonish the idle, encourage the fainthearted, help the weak, be patient with them all." (1 Thess 5:14 emphasis added)

"preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, and exhort, with complete patience and teaching." (2 Tim 4:2 emphasis added)

6. Paul didn't cut people off, become vindictive. An elder doesn't do that. An elder has diplomacy.

B. Love is kind (v. 4).

"You can no more have love without kindness, than you can have springtime without flowers." - William Graham Scroggie

1. Kindness is a readiness to do good, help, relieve burdens. You are looking for people who are suffering, have needs—young people, parents struggling—people who need your sympathy.
2. It has been said, "Kindness is love in work-clothes."
3. Leaders are kind even to people who criticize them.
4. Leadership without kindness is a disaster.

C. Practical ideas:

1. Send a card, not just an email.
2. Pick up the phone, have them over, open your home.

3. Have a readiness to help with a burden.
4. Use a caring voice, a touch on the arm, a loving gesture, a simple expression of interest.
5. Visit them.
6. Remember that the way of kindness is the more excellent way.