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COVER PHOTO

Dr. Clyde Narramore with NCF Representative Mr. Kenneth Markley, outside the Capitol Building in Washington, D.C.
(See story on page 6.)



Leadership Involves Restrictions

by Charles C. Ryrie

One of the great principles clearly enunciated in the Scriptures is that leadership brings with it certain limitations. These are tied into the expectations of those whom the leader's influence reaches. The preacher who wants his parishioners to stand tall must himself stand taller. Paul could say "be imitators of me" because he was living an exemplary life in imitation of Christ.

Leadership can even curtail the Christian leader's liberty. This can be frustrating. It certainly must have been for the Levites whose restrictions extended to their not being allowed to go near a dead body. Think what that must have meant—not permitted to attend a relative's funeral!

We hear, "There aren't two standards" (usually with reference to a pastor and his congregation). But the Bible sets forth distinct standards for the elders and deacons (I Tim. 3). The man who seeks such a position of leadership, and who takes the Bible as his authority as to the qualifications for the office, places biblical restrictions on himself.

It is a good thing to desire a place of leadership. It's also good to keep in mind that God expects more of leaders. Leaders affect those who follow them, for "obey them that have the rule over you" is God's exhortation to the followers.

On the subject of our Christian liberty, we do not have to use liberty to prove we have it. The Bible is clear that what might not affect us can, and often does, affect adversely someone who is looking to us for leadership.

Take the instance of the "meat" in I Corinthians 8. This was a matter of offering meat to idols. Obviously when we offer something to nothing (an idol), nothing happens to affect the Christian who might eat such meat when later it comes on the market. But what of the new convert in a culture where meat is offered to idols in a redemptive context, a person who, because he has been freed from such practices, is confused or caused to stumble by the action or behavior of the Christian to whom he looks for leadership?

The concerned leader restricts himself. But he's aware that he can "stumble" only moving people, (not those on the sidelines criticizing the runner).

Is leadership, then, a burden? No. It's no great burden. True, there may be the light yoke of irritations, frustrations, at times. But—a burden? Not when you can change people's lives by being a leader. □

The guest writer, Charles C. Ryrie, Ph.D., is Dean of Doctoral Studies and Professor of Systematic Theology, Dallas Theological Seminary. He was a recent speaker to a group of ministers and missionaries taking NCF Training in Counseling.