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THE MISSING LINK

An AJET Editorial

As we engage in the challenging task of building the Church of Jesus Christ in Africa, we all pray for many kinds of gifted people: *powerful expositors* of the Word of God who can expound the Scriptures and apply it to the lives of people, *charismatic evangelists* who can skilfully proclaim the gospel and win people to Christ, *capable teachers* who can instruct believers in the deep truths of Scripture, *compassionate pastors* who care for the flock, *capable managers* who can direct the affairs of the church, *accurate bookkeepers* who can care for the financial records of the church, *gifted musicians* who can lead the church in worship – and many more.

We long for the most gifted, exceptionally intelligent, highly trained and outstanding individuals who can provide leadership in the church. Strange as it may seem, there remains a *missing link*. The one qualification which is essential and which is so often missing in our church leadership is *faithfulness*. As Paul stated, “Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove *faithful*” (1 Cor. 4:2). As highly desirable as those other traits may be, the one essential character trait is *faithfulness*.

Faithfulness is not some arbitrary requirement imposed upon church leadership by the dictate of God. The shepherds of God’s flock must be *faithful* because the Chief Shepherd himself is *faithful*.

“I will proclaim the name of the LORD. Oh, praise the greatness of our God!...A *faithful God* who does no wrong, upright and just is he” (Deut. 32:4). Moreover, he is “the *faithful God*, keeping his covenant of love...” (Deut. 7:9). *Faithfulness* speaks of God’s loyalty to his covenant people. Because God is faithful in his own nature we can place our full confidence in him. What he says, he will do. Nor is he careless in carrying out his promises.

In turn, *faithfulness* is a covenant obligation of God’s people, to show the same loyalty to God and in fulfilling his will. A *faithful* leader is one who can be trusted to carry out his responsibilities. Because God has graciously saved his people and is *faithful* in keeping his covenant with them, God’s people are expected to be *faithful*. God promises that “a *faithful man* will be blessed” (Prov. 28:20). The one word of commendation awaiting God’s servants is this: “Well done, good and *faithful servant!* You have been *faithful* with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things” (Matt. 25:23).

The church of Jesus Christ has not lacked *faithful* servants who have helped to build the church. The first article in this issue was written by a *faithful* servant of the Lord. Though the late Dr. Christina Breman's missionary service in Africa was interrupted nine years ago with cancer, she never once turned away from her calling, even while she fought the battle of cancer. She plunged into intensive research of the Association of Evangelicals of Africa and has provided the African evangelical church with the most comprehensive documentation of the AEA under the title, *The Association of Evangelicals of Africa*. The article in this issue, originally intended to be much longer, was written literally on her death bed as she prepared her last legacy for the church in Africa. She served the Lord to the point of death.

This issue contains the names of many *faithful* servants of God whose lives are examples of devotion, dedication and *faithfulness* to the Lord over many years. During a lecture on the life and legacy of the late Dr. Byang Kato, presented to the students at Scott Theological College by Dr. Breman, the author felt a twinge of guilt. During the last months of Byang Kato's life he was extremely busy with many commitments. It was at that time that we at Scott urgently requested him to be our graduation speaker the end of November 1975 because the original speaker could not come. He graciously accepted. Two weeks later he drowned mysteriously in Mombasa, some suggesting that this was due to fatigue and exhaustion due to overwork. How *faithful* he was!

But alas, many church leaders are *not* faithful. The *missing link* of faithfulness is found even among the gifted and well trained. Instead of pastors caring for their flock they are pre-eminently concerned about themselves. Instead of preachers diligently preparing messages for their congregations, they follow lazy instincts and preach without preparation. Instead of church leaders protecting the tithes and offerings given by God's people, they use it for themselves. This is not a new problem but it is a serious one. Solomon inquired three thousand years ago, "a *faithful man who can find?*" (Prov. 20:6). But God's promise remains true, "Be *faithful*, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life" (Rev. 2:10). May God help us to live today as though we would die tomorrow. May we follow in the train of Christina Breman and Byang Kato.

An Oversight: In Volume 16.2 1997 we published an article by Dr. Victor Cole entitled, *Who is a Theological Educator?* This article was taken from *Training God's Servants*, edited by B. & N. Famonure and A.M. Chiliver, and jointly published by the Theological and Christian Education Commission and the Evangelism and Missions Commission of the AEA, 1997. You may order a copy of this book from T.C.E.C. or C.L.M.C. Please see the advertisement elsewhere in this issue for ordering instructions