

Biblical Guidelines for Passing on Ministry Leadership

(by Pastor Bob Hoekstra - - written in February 2003, when the IPM Board asked me to shift from IPM Executive Director to Director, as dear Leola retired from IPM at age 83)

In the late-1960's, I was blessed to serve on ministry Staff with my father, Chaplain Ray, while I was attending Dallas Theological Seminary. The Lord then led me into 25 years of pastoral service in two churches, one in Dallas and the other in California. My father was a treasured friend and vital ministry counselor to me through all those years. Then, for ten years, the Lord called me out to traveling ministry, teaching Bible Study seminars among the body of Christ at large and on the radio. During most of those traveling years, it was my joy to again serve with Chaplain Ray as a member of his IPM Board of Directors. Since 2001, it has been a delight to serve with Leola, my dear stepmother, as the IPM Executive Director. Now, five years after my father's homegoing, it is my humbling privilege to serve the Lord as the Director of IPM.

In accepting from Leola and the Board the overall leadership of IPM, I am asking the Lord to work through my life the spiritual guidelines laid forth in His word for effective leadership transitions. These can be observed when ministry leadership was passed along from Moses to Joshua, from Paul to Timothy, and from Jesus to the twelve Apostles.

When the time came for Moses to pass along his leadership responsibilities, the Lord said to Joshua: *"as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you nor forsake you . . . This Book of the Law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate in it day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success"* (Joshua 1:5 and 8). Joshua's effectiveness as a spiritual leader would depend upon protection and power from the **presence of the Lord** and wisdom and guidance from the **word of the Lord**.

When Paul was passing along ministry leadership responsibility to Timothy, he wrote: *"I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith"* (2 Timothy 4:7). Serving God is a wonderful blessing, but it is also a spiritual battle. Paul before Timothy (like Chaplain Ray and Leola before us) fought the battle successfully. Thus, the call to Timothy would be: *"Fight the good fight of faith . . . Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus . . . You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus.* (1 Timothy 6:12; 2 Timothy 1:13; and 2:1). Experiencing victory in the battles of ministry leadership requires **holding fast to God's holy word** and **trusting in His strengthening grace**.

When Jesus was with the twelve Apostles in the upper room, He was giving them very personal and high priority insight for ministry. Soon, He would be gone to glory, and they would become the leaders of the early church. He promised to them the Holy Spirit to be their Helper, their guide and their teacher. *"And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever - - the Spirit of truth . . . But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you"* (John 14:16-17 and 26). Jesus promised them much fruitfulness, if they would **abide in Him and in His word**. *"I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing . . . If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will*

ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you” (John 15: 5 and 7).

These changeless biblical guidelines for times of change in human leadership are the hope and confidence in my heart. We are fully expecting the God of Joshua and Paul and the twelve Apostles to work faithfully in our lives at IPM - - by His Spirit, through His word, bringing to IPM great victory and much fruit as we reach out to prisoners across America and overseas.