

BaptistWay Lesson for 11/9: Leadership that inspires followers_102003

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1 Thessalonians 2: 1-12; 5: 12-13

Leadership that inspires followers

By Dan Curry

The effectiveness and growth of a church is directly related to the quality of leadership. John Maxwell, in his book "The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership," calls this the "Law of the Lid." He says leadership ability is the lid that determines a person's level of effectiveness. The higher a person's quality of leadership, the greater the person's effectiveness. The church needs quality leadership that inspires followers in order to be effective.

In examining leadership in the church, most immediately evaluate the pastor. What about the scores of other leaders—staff members, Sunday School teachers, deacons, outreach leaders and committee members? A great church needs an effective pastor, but he would be helpless if it were not for the scores of other people in the church that provide dynamic leadership to the ministry. A pastor cannot build a great church by himself. There is a growing need for churches to equip more leaders.

Where does a person turn to find a model of leadership for the church? Some have turned away from the traditional models of church leadership to look elsewhere. Many have turned toward a corporate model of leadership hoping to find quick success and effectiveness. In the second chapter of 1 Thessalonians, Paul gives the church a great biblical model for leadership.

Paul describes effective leadership that inspired followers and had a lasting impact. Paul says, “You know brothers that our visit to you was not a failure” (2:1). Another version translates that as, “our coming to you was not in vain.” The work Paul did in Thessalonica was effective and lasting. As he evaluated his ministry with them, he said it was not a failure or in vain.

Then in the next few verses of this chapter Paul defends his leadership. He does so in response to some criticism he got after he left this city. As he defends his leadership style and his ministry with them, he gives to the church a wonderful biblical model of leadership to follow.

The motive of effective leadership

Paul begins by defending his motives. He says, “For the appeal we make does not spring from error or impure motives, nor are we trying to trick you” (v. 3). In these words, Paul assured them his message was true and his motives were pure.

Paul emphasized he did not use manipulation to win converts. The word “trick” carried the idea of “baiting a hook.” In other words, Paul did not use trickery or a trap in sharing the gospel with them. Manipulation never lasts and always leaves people making superficial decisions. There are few people in life who have not felt at one time or another they were manipulated, forced or pressured to do something they later regretted. Effective leadership does not use manipulation.

Paul also defended himself against those who had accused him of sharing

the gospel for personal gain. He said, "You know that we never used flattery, nor did we put on a mask to cover up greed—God is our witness" (v. 5). Paul was sensitive about money matters. He did not want to give anyone a reason to accuse him of being greedy, so he explains he did not resort to flattering people for personal gain. Paul's motivation was not what he could receive from them. Selfishness and personal gain must never drive effective leaders.

Paul makes it clear his motivation was pure, his message true and his methods not deceptive or manipulative. Paul's motivation was to please God. He says: "We speak as men approved by God to be entrusted with the gospel. We are not trying to please men but God, who tests our hearts" (v. 4).

Paul viewed himself as being entrusted with the gospel. It was not a message he made up or that he received from men. He was the steward of the message God had given to him. The word "entrusted" is translated from the Greek word "dokimazo." The word actually carried with it the idea of being approved. Paul humbly believed he was accountable to God and no one else. His motivation was to please God.

The motive for effective leadership in the church must always be to please God. There will always be those who will use manipulation in order to gain quick results. Some will resort to flattery to please men. Many potential leaders will fall into the trap of being motivated by selfish desires and personal gain. However, the leadership the church needs today comes from leaders who are faithful, who are motivated by their love for God and who desire to please him.

The manner of effective leadership

First, Paul's manner was bold. Paul and Silas had been stripped, beaten

naked in public and thrown in prison while at Philippi. It had to have been an extremely painful and humiliating experience. It would have been easy for them to make excuses for not continuing to proclaim the good news.

However, when they came to Thessalonica they came with courage and boldness. Paul says, "We had previously suffered and been insulted in Philippi, as you know, but with the help of our God we dared to tell you this gospel in spite of strong opposition" (v. 2). It was not in their strength, but with the help of God that they were able to be free in sharing the good news.

Every church desires leaders who are bold and courageous. But more than that, they desire leaders who have been empowered by the Holy Spirit to be bold and free in sharing the word of God.

Second, Paul's manner was gentle. He says, "We were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children (v. 7). It might seem strange for Paul to compare his manner of leadership to that of a mother. Yet when a person begins to think about the role of a mother in parenting, it becomes a great example. A mother makes sacrifices for her children, gives them nourishment and provides protection.

There is a lot being said about authoritative pastoral leadership these days. Pastoral authority is to be used carefully and rarely. Effective leadership has the gentleness of a mother nursing a child.

Third, Paul's manner was sacrificial. He says, "We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us" (v. 8). Paul gladly shared the gospel, telling them of God's love for them. Paul sincerely wanted them to be blessed and would gladly have given himself to see them come to know Jesus Christ. The manner of Paul's leadership came from the overflow of his love for people and his desire to see everyone come to know

Jesus. Isn't that the kind of leadership needed in the church?

Fourth, Paul's manner was labor intensive. He says, "Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you." Paul was not afraid of work. It was not easy to work and minister the word at the same time. Ministry is hard work. Effective leaders always are willing to work hard.

How leadership demonstrates itself is important. Leadership that is effective in churches today will follow the manner of Paul's leadership. It will be bold, gentle, sacrificial and demanding.

The method of effective leadership

Paul's principal method was to lead by example. One slip in a person's life can damage the person's ability to be a leader for months, years or even forever. Paul understood the importance of his walk with God. Paul said, "You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believe" (v. 10). Paul's life was one of integrity. People desire that in the people they follow. To be effective in leadership, a person needs to live above reproach.

Paul also used encouragement. His style was that of a father. He says, "You know that I dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God" (v. 12).

Paul uses three words to describe how a father inspires. First, he used words of encouragement. The Greek word for "encouragement" means "to bring alongside to exhort." It means he did not scold them but encouraged them. The second descriptive word Paul uses is "comfort." This word carries basically the same meaning as encouragement but emphasizes action. Paul did not just say encouraging words, but he demonstrated his

concern with comforting action. Maybe he put his arm around them or patted them on the back. The third word Paul uses is “urging.” This word has the idea of confrontation. The method of Paul's effective leadership was to encourage, comfort and confront as a father would do.

Paul has given to the church a great biblical model for effective leadership. Even today, church leaders can learn much from his motives, his manner and his methods.

How much better to obey willingly than by compulsion!

Questions for discussion

- ◆ How would you define the word “leader”?
- ◆ Can a person learn to be a leader?
- ◆ What are some unacceptable motives for being a leader in church?
- ◆ How would you define the leadership model of your church?
- ◆ Is there a place for authoritative leadership in the church? If so, when should it be used?
- ◆ Besides authoritative leadership, list some other types of leadership styles.

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