

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP SERIES (5)

To aspire to leadership is an honorable ambition

1 Timothy 3:1 (NEB)

THE LEADERSHIP OF THE APOSTLE PAUL (2)

PAUL'S MANAGEMENT OF INTERPERSONAL RELATIONSHIPS

1. *“The basis of life is people and how they relate to each other. Our success, fulfillment, and happiness depend upon our ability to relate effectively.”* - John Maxwell
2. The ability to relate effectively determines not only the effectiveness of our lives but also that of our leadership. The effective leader is one who loves people and relates well with them.
3. Jesus was definitely a relational leader. He was truly a “people person.” The reason He came to earth was because of people. He lived and cared for, and died for people.
4. Jesus became the greatest leader because His love for people was the greatest. Like Jesus, every Christian leader ought to live and give his life for people.
5. Without people, there would be no need for leaders. In that sense, effective interpersonal relationship is the essence of leadership. Therefore it is crucial that every Christian leader develops his people skill.

6. We will look at four components of apostle Paul's successful management of his interpersonal relationships:
 - A. God's grace
 - B. Servant attitude
 - C. Shepherd's heart
 - D. Teambuilding

A. GOD'S GRACE

1. God's grace is commonly defined as God's unmerited favor to the undeserving.
It is "His divine influence in the person of His Spirit, conforming us into the image of His Son and living His life through us." - Stella Paterson
2. The apostle Paul can rightly be called the champion of the doctrine of grace. Nearly 100 of the 154 New Testament occurrences of the term "grace" are found in his epistles.
3. Paul emphasized God's wonderful grace because he experienced it firsthand. He was the least of all the saints and the chief of all sinners because he formerly hated, persecuted and put Christians to death. Yet Jesus showed Paul great mercy and revealed Himself to him.
4. To his amazement, Paul was called to carry the name of Jesus before the Gentiles and their kings, and before the people of Israel (Acts 9:15). Paul was chosen as God's special instrument for the furtherance of the gospel.

5. God's grace was so wonderful that it laid hold of Paul totally. Paul said: "But by the grace of God I am what I am: and His grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I labored more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me." - 1 Cor 15:10

6. Charles Swindoll said: *"Paul never got over his gratitude as a recipient of God's grace. God's unmerited favor, His super-abounding grace, reached down to him in all his self-righteous zeal, crushed his pride, drove him to his knees, softened his heart, and transformed this once-violent aggressor into a powerful spokesman for Christ. Not surprisingly, grace dominated Paul's message and ministry to the final moment of his life."*

7. In his personal life, grace was not only received but lived out to the fullest. The grace of God taught Paul to "deny ungodliness and worldly passions, and instead live a self-controlled, upright and godly life in this present age." - Titus 2:11-12

8. Paul led his followers with grace. He wanted his people to enjoy the freedom that came with the grace of Jesus Christ: "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." - Gal 5:1

9. In non-essential matters of faith, Paul was tolerant and not legalistic. On matters such as keeping certain days and eating certain foods, Paul allowed each of his followers to decide for himself. - Rom 14:5-6

10. Another expression of grace in Paul's life was forgiveness. Philip Yancey states that forgiveness, like grace, has about it "the maddening quality of being undeserved, unmerited, unfair."
11. The apostle Paul was a forgiver. He did not hold grudges against those who had wronged him. "At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me. May it not be held against them." - 2 Tim 4:16
12. Again and again, Paul exhorted his followers to forgive one another (2 Cor 2:6-7, Eph 4:32, Col 3:13). The motivation for mutual forgiveness was their receiving of divine forgiveness in Jesus. It is extremely important for a Christian leader to emphasize mutual forgiveness in order to build the kind of loving community that can change the world.
13. Another thing about Paul's forgiving leadership is his desire for restoration. We find this in the lives of John Mark (Acts 13:13, 2 Tim 4:11), Philemon and Onesimus (Philemon 8-22). He instructed the Galatians that they should gently restore someone who was caught in a sin (Gal 6:1).
14. As John Ortburg describes, our God is "the Lord of the second chance." Since He has granted sinners like us second chance to live as God's children, we must do the same to all who have failed.
15. Gordon MacDonald remarked: *"The world can do almost anything as well or better than the church... You need not be a Christian to build houses, feed the hungry, or heal the*

sick. There is only one thing the world cannot do. It cannot offer grace.” This also applies to Christian leadership.

B. SERVANT ATTITUDE

1. Jesus said: *“You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many”* - Mk 10:42-45
2. Secular leadership is characterized by power, but Christian leadership is characterized by service. According to Jesus, you are not a true Christian leader if you do not serve.
3. Secondly, the size of the service determines the size of influence. Jesus said that *“whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all.”* The greatness of a leader is to be measured not by the number of people who serves him, but by the number of people whom he serves.
4. The apostle Paul followed his Master’s servant leadership. Firstly, Paul willingly gave up his right as an apostle when necessary. He did not demand red-carpet treatment. He laboured with his own hands and did not get paid for his ministerial service. - 1 Cor 9:4-7, Acts 20:33-35

5. Secondly, Paul had scars of suffering. In Gal 6:17, Paul said: *“let no one cause me trouble, for I bear on my body the marks of Jesus.”* Oswald Sanders pointed out: *“scars are the authenticating marks of faithful discipleship and true spiritual leadership.”*
6. Thirdly, Paul had humility of mind. *“I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling. My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit’s power.”* - 1 Cor 2:3-4
7. Paul was able to lead his people with what Oswald Sanders called “a philosophy of weakness” because he had a servant’s heart and humility of mind.

C. SHEPHERD’S HEART

1. Jesus said: *“I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep...I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me...and I lay down my life for the sheep.”* - Jn 10:11, 14-15
2. This passage depicts the loving and intimate relationship between the shepherd and his sheep. Jesus, our Good Shepherd, knows us personally. Furthermore, He loves us so much that He laid down His life for us. This is God’s pastoral heart – the heart of leadership.

3. Paul's letters were a product of his pastoral heart, for through them Paul exercised loving pastoral care over the churches which he or his converts had founded. It was his concern to remain in relationship with the churches he had planted.
4. Paul used imageries of a parent-child relationship for his pastoral task. *"Even though you have ten thousand guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers, for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel."* 1 Cor 4:15
5. He also described himself as a spiritual father to individuals like Timothy (1 Tim 1:2, Titus 1:4), and Onesimus (Philemon 10).
6. 1 Thess 2:11-12: *"For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting, and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into His kingdom and glory."*
7. In 1 Thess 2:7-8, Paul used a second parental metaphor: *"but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. 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."*
8. The shepherd's heart of Paul is clearly noticeable in some of Paul's pastoral activities. Firstly, Paul's intercessory prayers in his letters reveal his caring and loving heart of a good shepherd.

- a) It was very committed and intense. In Col 2:1, Paul said: *“I want you to know how much I am struggling for you and for those at Laodicea.”* The word for “struggling” is that from which the English word “agonize” is derived.
- b) It was constant. In Rom 1:9, Paul testified: *“God...is my witness how constantly I remember you in my prayers at all times.”*
- c) It was mixed with thanksgiving to God for people whom Paul loved. In Col 1:3: *“We always thank God, the Father of our Lord Jesus, when we pray for you.”*
- d) It was joyful. Although Paul labored earnestly in intercession, he never lost joy. In Phil 1:3-4, Paul declared: *“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy.”*
9. The second activity which reveals Paul’s pastoral heart is teaching. He reminded the Ephesian elders of his passionate teaching ministry: *“You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house.”*
Acts 20:20
10. The third activity was Paul’s care for each and every individual. In Romans 16, Paul takes the trouble to greet over 27 people by name. Like a shepherd who pays close attention to each sheep, Paul concerned himself with his followers on an individual basis.

11. Col 1:28 shows the individual personal relationship Paul had with his followers: “ *Whom we preach, warning every man, and teaching every man in all wisdom; that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus*”

D.TEAMBUILDING

1. John Maxwell categorizes people into three levels:

Level 1: The person who works better with people is a follower.

Level 2: The person who helps people work better is a manager.

Level 3: The person who develops better people is a leader.

2. Our Lord Jesus Christ was certainly a people builder. He took a group of ill-trained men and developed them into strong leaders. He developed a team consisting of twelve men of very different personalities and let them do things together. In fact, Jesus had no Plan B.
3. Jesus believed in teams. He sent His disciples out two by two. Leadership developers need to know the power of teams. Although it is important to work with individuals, we must also bring them into a group, where strengths and weaknesses can be balanced and visions shared.

4. In Acts and the Pauline epistles, about 95 individuals were associated with Paul as his coworkers in his ministry. Bill Hybels declares: *“I think leaders are at their very best when they are raising up leaders around them.”*
5. One example was Timothy. Oswald Sanders wrote: *“A great deal of Timothy’s training was received on the job as he traveled with Paul – a unique privilege for so young a man. Such travels brought him into contact with all kinds of people – men of stature whose personalities and achievements would kindle in him a wholesome ambition. From his tutor he not doubt learned how to meet triumphantly the reverses and crises that seemed routine in Paul’s life and ministry.”*
6. Later, Paul reminded Timothy of such experiences in order to encourage him to be faithful: *“You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the Lord rescued me from all of them.”* 2 Tim 3:10-11.
7. Another aspect of Paul’s leadership training was his willingness to delegate. He entrusted Timothy and Titus with important ministry responsibilities in Ephesus and Crete (1 Tim 1:3, Titus 1:5). They must have learned a lot in the process of carrying out such responsibilities, and as a result, became mature leaders.
8. Since Paul believed in team ministry, his letters contain teachings on this important subject in several places. The most notable one is in Eph 4:11-12 *“It was He who gave*

some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up."

9. John Stott comments on it in this way: *"The New Testament concept of the pastor is not of a person who jealously guards all ministry in his own hands, and successfully squashes all lay initiatives, but of one who helps and encourages God's people to discover, develop and exercise their gifts... Thus, instead of monopolizing all ministry to himself, he actually multiplies ministries."*
10. In 1 Cor 12, Paul encourages each believer to utilize his spiritual gifts for the edification of the church. Just as the various parts of the body function for the overall health of the body, the members of the church contribute to the edification of the church by using their spiritual gifts.
11. George Barna, in his book, *The Power of Team Leadership*, elaborates: *"Paul's entries regarding spiritual gifts (1 Cor 12 and Rom 12) not only identify leadership as a core gift, but further suggest that rather than focus on one individual who can do it all, God's intent was to prepare each of us to be a role player, not a superhero."*

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

1. We have looked at the areas of God's grace, servant attitude, shepherd's heart and teambuilding as aspects of Paul's effective management of his interpersonal relationships.
2. Paul loved and cared for people. John Maxwell said:
"People do not care how much you know until they know how much you care."
3. Paul understood the eternal and priceless value of people, and invested his life in them. There is a Chinese proverb that says: *"If you are planning for one year, grow rice. If you are planning for twenty years, grow trees. If you are planning for centuries, grow men."*
4. To be a successful Christian leader, one must learn and develop effective interpersonal relationships skills when managing and leading people. This can only be taught and imparted by the Holy Spirit using the Bible, the ultimate spiritual leadership manual.