

The Family Model of a Leader

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May 17-18, 2014

Strength in Weakness: Leadership Lessons from the Life of Paul

1 Thessalonians 2:1-12

INTERACTING WITH THE SERMON

SYNOPSIS OF THE SERMON

Rich began by outlining the multitude of titles we give to leaders in our country's military and corporate world. But Paul, when speaking of leadership, chose not to use roles from the military or the corporate world as his model, but rather he uses the example of the family.

The leader and their opponents:

Christian leadership at any level has its critics. Billy Graham was picketed by some who called him a "gospel compromiser" because he invited Roman Catholic Bishops and mainline Protestant pastors on together on the platforms at his crusades. Rick Warren was taunted and attacked when his son, Matt committed suicide. If you find yourself criticized because you are leading by following Jesus in some capacity, know that you are in good company; many heroes of our faith have suffered critique and scandal before you. Additionally, Romans 8:31 tells us "If God is for us, who can be against us?" Any slander against or malice towards us is overwhelmed by God's infinite love for you.

The leader as a spiritual parent:

Paul uses the simile of a mother and father to describe his relationship to the churches

There are some aspects of parenthood that a leader should not intimate; among those are a parent's authority and a child's dependency. In Matthew 23:8 we are told "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers." Our most basic relationship with one another is not hierarchical, it is a sibling relationship. Additionally, Matthew 23:9: "And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven." A church is most dysfunctional if its members are dependent on their pastor or small group leader. What Paul does intend is that the Christian leader take care of those they lead like a mother nurses her baby.

A mother's simplicity:

Paul is reminding the Thessalonians that he and his fellow leaders were willing to have a mother's affection and simplicity with their church. They were willing to get on the floor with them and play together. A good Christian leader does not teach over the heads of others. They communicate in a way that their followers can follow and gain from.

A mother's affection:

In contrast to Machiavelli's *The Prince*, which claims "...to be feared is much safer than to be loved", Ignatius of Loyola charges "Leaders must act with great affection towards others, and affection that is coupled with a passion to see the other person run at full speed towards perfection." He says that leaders should be characterized by 2 things: *affection* towards those they are leading and *passion* to see the other person run at full speed towards perfection.

The leader as a father:

A father's hard work: Paul reminds the Thessalonians of their work in order not to be a burden to them. Leaders should do well at what they do, modeling diligence and quality.

A father's example:

Others will pay attention to the way you behave as a leader. Christian leaders practice reading the bible, praying, forgiving, and serving others.

A father's encouragement:

A Christian leader comes along side those they are leading. They put their arm around them, and call them into relationship with them. Many spiritual children stand on the outside of ministries in our church, such as small groups, because they lack the confidence to participate. As leaders, it is incumbent on us that we

encourage others into participation; that we see potential in them and encourage them towards that potential. We must also recognize that those around us are often hurting. We can serve as a comfort to the hurting, and not only put one arm around them, but both arms, in full embrace.

In 5 minutes or less, briefly give a synopsis of this week's sermon. Spend a few short minutes discussing any insights, principles, or observations from this weekend's message you find to be most helpful, eye-opening, or troubling.

GETTING THE CONVERSATION STARTED

These questions can be used as ice-breakers in the beginning OR interwoven between the questions below to draw the group into the discussion.

- What is/was your favorite family activity?
- Who in your life do you consider your family?

SCRIPTURE STUDY

Remember that **Observation** questions can be found right in the text, **Interpretation** questions have several potential answers and it's our chance to learn from each other and try to understand the text together. We'll make some suggestions for these answers but you or your group members may have other thoughts to add. Finally, **Application** questions are where we begin to apply the text to our own lives and we have time to share more personally.

Read: Romans 12: 3-17

³ For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. ⁴ For as in one body we have many members,^[e] and the members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. ⁶ Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; ⁷ if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; ⁸ the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads,^[f] with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness.

⁹ Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. ¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit,^[g] serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality.

¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly.^[h] Never be wise in your own sight. ¹⁷ Repay no one evil for evil, but give thought to do what is honorable in the sight of all.

Overview:

Paul, in his letter to the Roman church, speaks of the community of the Church as part of the body, interdependent on each other. He outlines some of the functions and means of how others contribute to the group and how we can live in a family-type community with others.

VV. 3-8

1. What functions of the roles and activities does Paul list among the body of Christ? (observation)

2. In comparing the Church to a body what does that suggest about our dependence on each other? What does that imply about leadership? (interpretation- Paul, by claiming the Church is a body dependent on others, suggests that everyone has a role to play and that we are intended to work together in community. In terms of leadership, this tells us that no matter how skilled or gifted you may be at a particular function of the body, you are still meant to rely on and work beside others.
3. Given that we are meant to rely on the gifts and skills of others, what are some responsibilities incumbent on us towards others in our community? (application- We should be identifying the skills and gifts of others and encouraging each other about those things. We should be aware of the needs of others so that where we are strong, we can assist. We should share the role of leadership with others as often as we can and work towards mutual goals.)

Given that a major piece of leadership is setting a good example, let us look at some of the characteristics of a Christian that Paul outlines

VV. 9-17

4. What are some of the “marks of a Christian” that Paul outlines here? (observation)
5. What would living out some of these actions in the world today look like? (interpretation – what would it look like to love others with a brotherly affection? What would it look like to not be slothful? What would it look like to rejoice and weep with others? What would it look like to live in harmony and not be wise in your own sight?)
6. Which of these attributes or behaviors do you find to be the most challenging to achieve? What are some small, actionable steps you can take over the next week to move in the direction to be more affection, honoring, fervent, patient, prayerful, hospitable, empathetic, harmonious, lowly, or forgiving? (application)

MINISTRY APPLICATION

Below you'll see some options for ministry time with your group. We always encourage you to reserve time in your group to pray for one another and wait on the Holy Spirit.

- Break into groups of 2-3. Share one thing listed in verses 9-17 that you are having trouble living out. Pray for each other that the Holy Spirit will use break in through your week and show you moments where you can participate in things like forgiveness, patience, and prayer.
- Pray for those who you lead or are leading you. Ask that God will use your/their leadership to inspire others/you sprint towards “perfection”.