

Leadership Skills



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Table of Contents

Chap. # 1, Christian Ministry is a Spiritual Ministry3

Chap. # 2, Leadership Roles & Goals5

Chap. # 3, Priority of Prayer6

Chap. # 4, Humility, Obscurity, & Ministry9

Chap. # 5, Evangelism14

Chap. # 6, Discernment, Wisdom, & Decision Making21

Chap. # 7, Improving Your Ministry Skills28

Chap. # 8, Identifying & Training Teammates/Future Leaders32

Chap. # 9, Importance of Unity, Forbearance, & Forgiveness38

Chap. # 10, Attitude, Optimism, & Humor40

Chap. # 11, Creativity & Change in Ministry44

Chap. # 12, Acknowledging our Limitations46

Homework Assignments50

CHRISTIAN MINISTRY IS A SPIRITUAL MINISTRY

We must never forget that Christian ministry is supernatural in nature.

Ultimately, Christian ministry is not about methodology, techniques, strategies, plans, and organizational structures. It is supernatural in nature, dependent on the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit and the written revelation of God. Christian ministry involves a very real supernatural world (Eph. 6:12). That's why the foundation for your ministry MUST BE prayer and Bible teaching!

We should cultivate a majestic view of God. In a day when churches are increasingly emphasizing only the horizontal dimension of the Christian life (relationships with others, growth and fulfillment of self), we should also call others to the vertical dimension of the Christian life (a lofty understanding of the majestic and awesome God). We must challenge people around us to recognize our culture's idols and reorient themselves to the Majesty on high who says, "I am the LORD, and there is no other; beside Me there is no God" (Isaiah 45:5). Whenever you minister, always seek to exalt God in your words and manner.

We should strive to be Scripture-driven. The Corinthians followed leaders who relied upon the means of superiority of speech, persuasive rhetoric, and the force of an impressive personality. Paul relied upon the Word of God, the crucified Christ, and the Spirit's power (1 Cor. 2). He demonstrated that it is better to be Scripture-driven and Spirit-empowered than propelled by cheap copies of secular ways. Our standard must be the Word of God and we must never use it casually, nor substitute for it the methods or opinions of men.

We should faithfully develop intimacy with Christ. Ministry leaders must develop in our people the sense of their need to develop intimacy with Christ (John 15). We need to continually be reminded that Christians need to be in vital union with Christ the True Vine. We need to maintain genuine intimacy with Christ through regular feeding on the Word of God and vibrant praying. When we consistently read His Word and commune with Him in prayer, our spiritual lives grow, and we deepen in our walk with Christ.

We should strive to be outwardly-focused. In an inwardly turned society, our ministry must have an outward focus (Phil. 2:4). Acts 1:8 dictates that our churches should have a dual burden: local outreach and global outreach. We must not yield to the temptation to retreat into a "remnant

mentality” (fewness, littleness, sameness). Because our God is infinite, we should strive for goals and objectives worthy of a lofty view of God who wants to be glorified in all the earth.

We should remember that people will fail, God never will. We are all fallen, feeble, frail and broken instruments... but God is great! This truth has helped temper our perfectionistic, unreal, idealistic expectations. People are great; people are frustrating. People help us up; people push us down. Yet, God never changes and He’s always dependable. He will never fail and so we should keep our eyes on Him.

We should understand that maturing and growth happen at the same time while serving. And I understand that my own personal development and maturing and growth have happened all at the same time while I’ve been serving (cf. flow of Eph. 4:1-16). So, my frequent counsel to young men and women is to jump in and serve in whatever way God allows and don’t wait to become mature. That will happen as you faithfully serve wherever you are, in whatever ministry assignment you are given.

We should seek to be a team-builders. The accomplishment of ministry should never be done alone. New Testament leaders ministered in plurality in the local churches. Paul wrote to Timothy that the ministry always involves training others, who in turn would train others (2 Timothy 2:2). By its very definition fellowship (*koinonia*) involves community and togetherness, which is quickly undone by the self-interests of others, most especially the leaders. As a ministry leader, always seek to be a good team-mate and at the same time, always seek to build a ministry team.

We should always keep eternity’s values in view. Spiritual leaders cultivate an eternal perspective in light of the ever-fleeting nature of this life. As Christians we live in exile from our True Home in heaven (Philippians 3:20). The greatest challenge for Christians is to live as citizens of heaven while walking here on earth. “For here we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come” (Hebrews 13:14). Ministry leaders must help their people develop a theocentric worldview, the perspective of living life with eternity’s values in view at all times, in every decision they make and in every attitude they assume (Romans 11:36). This world is not our home... only what we do for Christ will last for eternity.

Leadership Roles & Goals

God has graciously granted to each of us opportunities in life to lead and serve those whom God has entrusted under our care.

1. Begin by listing out the roles God has given you.

- Christian
- Husband
- Father
- Work
- Ministry
- Extended Family

2. Write a description for that role of what God has called you to in that relationship/leadership role (make sure you include Scripture passages for each role description).

For example -

Christian: I must give all diligence in order to add upon my faith by means of the spiritual disciplines in relationship to God. This means I will not merely “go through the motions” spiritually; instead, I will strive to “meet with Jesus” in every opportunity His Spirit affords me (2 Pet 1:3-11).

3. Write a clear, year-long direction of focus/goal for each role.

For example -

Christian: In 2023, I will strive to read through the Bible and learn to adore God from every passage.

4. On a weekly basis, review your leadership roles and set “S.M.A.R.T.” goals/action steps for each role.

- 1) **Specific** – It’s much more likely to complete a specific goal.
Answer...
 - a) Who?
 - b) When?
 - c) Where?
 - d) What?
 - e) Why?
 - f) How?

- 2) **Measurable** – Give yourself concrete criteria to measure progress. “3x/week, etc.”
- 3) **Attainable** – Goals that align with God’s desires are attainable because of His power through us. Set the NEXT goal, not THE goal.
 - a) Big Goal
 - i) Action Step
 - ii) Action Step
 - iii) Action Step
- 4) **Realistic** – Do you really believe you can accomplish it? Have you accomplished similar in the past? Has God commanded it?
- 5) **Tangible** – Can you experience it (taste, touch, smell, sight, hearing)? If not, may be intangible.
 - a) Intangible: Speak kindly to others.
 - b) Tangible: Aim to speak kindly to my family and have my wife rate my kindness on a scale from 1-10.
 - c) Tie intangible goals to tangible action steps.

The Priority of Prayer

The Christian life is made up of so many important activities, how does a church determine its top priorities? Evangelism, global missions, worship, Bible study, stewardship, fellowship, serving others, nurturing children in the faith, encouraging strong marriages and family... all of these, and many more, vital activities cry out for attention in our churches.

Paul’s Top Priority for Churches

Paul wrote his first letter to Timothy to explain how the leaders in church should function. That theme is demonstrated in 1 Timothy 3:14-15 “These things I write to you, though I hope to come to you shortly; but if I am delayed, I write so that you may know how you ought to conduct yourself in the house of God.”

In this letter of instruction, Paul very specifically said that the top priority of the church should be prayer. That is found in 1 Timothy 2:1

“Therefore I exhort **first of all** that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men.” The Greek words translated “first of all” are *prōton pantōn*. And that word *prōton* most often is used

in the New Testament to indicate first in rank, first in importance, first in priority (as opposed to first in line, first in sequence, or numbering without thought of importance). That word *prōton* indicates priority and by using that word, Paul gave to Timothy the first priority of a church. The number one priority of a church is to pray!

Obviously this does not mean that a church should only pray. That is clear when we see all the important ministries a church is instructed to do in the New Testament. But 1 Timothy 2:1 means that all of our church ministries should begin with prayer and be sustained by prayer, with a total dependence upon the Lord. 1 Timothy 2:1 also means that our churches should be known as the place where God's people gather to pray and worship Him. In the former Soviet Union, church buildings are called houses of prayer. That is a great reminder for American Christians of what the church's top priority should be.

But Is This the Case?

Would you say that prayer really is the top priority for many of our churches? Do you think all of our churches are truly placing their top efforts at praying together in church and praying together at home as families and praying alone at home? In my nearly five decades of experience as a Christian, I can't say that is true. Where Paul says the number one priority of a church is to pray, in so many churches it does not even make the top ten priorities. And that is a staggering indictment of so many churches here in America.

I believe we need a renewed emphasis on fervent prayer throughout our churches. If we are not praying fervently in our churches, then we are relying on our own strength. And if that is really the case, then what good is our ministry?

Without fervent prayer, churches cease to be vibrant expressions of the living God. They become social clubs devoid of supernatural power. They become the machines of pastors and church leaders, grinding away Sunday after Sunday without the oil of the Holy Spirit. Churches like this are not worth preserving.

Biblical Calls for Prayer

We see in 1 Timothy 2: 1 that prayer is to be the church's first priority. But there are also other commands in the Bible regarding prayer. We are to "pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17), which means we should live a lifestyle of dependence on God's power appropriated through prayer. We are to pray persistently (Luke 11:1-13; 18:1-8). We are to pray regularly (Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 4:2, 12). We are to pray fervently and energetically and passionately (James 4:16).

If we don't pray, we don't have power from on high. He promises to answer (Jeremiah 33:3), but only if we call out to Him. Are you calling on Him for power, or are you relying on yourself and your own efforts?

Historic Calls for Prayer

Oswald Sanders wrote about the need for prayer in the life of every pastor by comparing this need to the ministry of John the Baptist: "Immersed in the oil of the Spirit and touched by the fire of God, his life became incandescent. The secret of his effectiveness lay in the fact that his whole personality was dominated and inter-penetrated by the Holy Spirit." [1] Every pastor should have a tongue ignited with holy fire! And this will come only as the Holy Spirit empowers us through fervent prayer.

There is more to preaching than speaking. There is all the difference in the world between ministering to people from human understanding in human energy and ministering after fervent praying. The most humbling and wonderful experience is to minister knowing God is with you. The most frightening is to feel that you are on your own. As D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote: "There is nothing more terrible for a preacher than to be in the pulpit alone, without the conscious smile of God." [2]

Charles Spurgeon constantly called his students to live holy lives filled with genuinely fervent prayer. He wrote: "The sacred anointing upon the preacher, and the divine power applying the truth to the hearer...these are infinitely more important than any details of manner." [3]

Conclusion

God is jealous for your exclusive love, as demonstrated in your fervent prayers. Pastors and churches giving only lip service to this highest of priority are not worth preserving, even if they have a glorious history, because those types of churches are really nothing more than social clubs.

Peter Deyneka, Sr. was the founder of Slavic Gospel Association. In his heavy Russian accent he so often reminded us, “*Much prayer, much power. Little prayer, little power. No prayer, no power.*” [4] Those are such simple words, but they express a profound truth that is relevant to all believers in any age.

END NOTES

- 1 Oswald Sanders, *Men from God's School* (Marshall, Morgan and Scott), p. 180.
- 2 D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones, *Christian Unity: Ephesians 4:1-16* (Zondervan), p.71.
- 3 Charles Spurgeon, *Lectures to My Students* (Zondervan, 1980), p.96.
- 4 Peter Deyneka, Sr. *Much Prayer Much Power* (Loves Park, IL: Slavic Gospel Association, 1999). This is a great little book and is available for purchase by calling SGA at 800-BIBLE50.

HUMILITY, OBSCURITY, AND MINISTRY

One of the most important values in today's American culture is to become famous. Guys want to play in an NCAA football championship or Final Four basketball championship game, or in the NFL and become the next Tom Brady, or in the NBA as Michael Jordan or LeBron. Girls dream of being on “The Voice” or having a You Tube video go viral. Everyone seems to want to do something that blows up social media. They admire the person with an incredible number of followers on Twitter or Instagram. One girl put it this way: “*Becoming famous is the chief goal of my life.*”

We've become fixated on fame, worshipping at the altar of celebrity as fame junkies. And tragically, people in ministry can become just as obsessed. We must address the need for God's servants to humbly:

- be willing to serve Christ,
- wherever He sends them,
- doing whatever He directs them to do,
- without personal regard.

The call from Count Zinzendorf is to “*preach the gospel, die, and be forgotten.*”¹ It’s a great quote – but a hard road to travel.

D. A. Carson writes this about his dad in a biography honoring his father, who was a pastor in Canada:

“Most of us, however, serve in modest patches. Most pastors will not regularly preach to thousands, let alone tens of thousands. They will not write influential books, they will not supervise large staffs, and they will never see more than modest growth. They will plug away at their care for the aged, at their visitation, at their counseling, at their Bible studies and preaching. Some will work with so little support that they will prepare their own bulletins. They cannot possibly discern whether the constraints of their own sphere of service owe more to the specific challenges of the local situation or to their own shortcomings. Once in a while they will cast a wistful eye on “successful” ministries. Many of them will attend the conferences sponsored by the revered masters and come away with a slightly discordant combination of, on the one hand, gratitude and encouragement and, on the other, jealousy, feelings of inadequacy, and guilt. Most of us—let us be frank— are ordinary pastors . . . let the voice and ministry of the ordinary pastor be heard, for such servants have much to teach us.”²

God’s Glory Crushes Pride, Brings Humility

In Deuteronomy 8, Moses warned the people to remain humble, using the Hebrew word ‘*anah*, which means “to bow down” in Deuteronomy 8: 2, 3, 16. In Deuteronomy 8:14, Moses warned the people against having a

¹ Janet Benge and Geoff Benge, *Count Zinzendorf: Firstfruit, Christian Heroes: Then and Now* (Esperance, WA: YWAM Pub., 2006).

² D. A. Carson, *Memoirs of an Ordinary Pastor: The Life and Reflections of Tom Carson* (Wheaton, IL: Crossway, 2008), 9.

proud heart, using the Hebrew word *rûm* which is elsewhere used about an upraised formation of rocks. The imagery is vivid: a proud heart is uplifted and hard. Moses repeated the same warning in Deuteronomy 17:20 with the same Hebrew word *rûm*, only that warning was directed to the future kings of Israel. They were not to have prideful, uplifted hearts of stone.

There is another powerful Hebrew word that describes the opposite of proud, uplifted hearts of stone. And that is the Hebrew word *dakah* which is also used regarding crushed, pulverized rocks. This word is used in Psalm 34:18 (“the LORD...saves the crushed in spirit”) and describes the opposite of the hardened proud hearts of stone. God is near the one who has been crushed and is humble. That word is often translated as “contrite” and is used once in Psalm 51:17b (“...a contrite heart, O God, you will not despise”) and twice in Isaiah 57:15 (“For thus says the One who is high and lifted up... ‘I dwell in the high and holy place and also with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit, to revive the spirit of the lowly and to revive the heart of the contrite’”).

In the Old Testament the Hebrew word for “glory” is *kabod* and it means “to be heavy, weighty.” This is a description of God’s glory: His person is substantive while we as humans are all lightness and nothingness in comparison. Under God’s *kabod*, under His glory, we are crushed and broken.

Men in the Bible Who Were Crushed

- **Job** after debating with his friends over the reasons and meaning of his trials, heard from God in His majesty. Here’s his response to God’s revelation of His glory: “I despise myself and repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:6).
- **Moses** after forty years of quietness as a shepherd, encountered God’s glory at the burning bush and it says: “he trembled and dare not look” (Acts 7:32).
- **Isaiah** the godly court prophet who had been faithfully serving the Lord saw the LORD high and lifted up in His glory and responded this way: “woe is me! I am undone [lit. destroyed]” (Isaiah 6:5).
- **Ezekiel** after seeing the vision of God in His throne room “fell on his face” (Ezekiel 1:28).

- ***Nebuchadnezzar*** after his incredible pride was crushed with a seven-year bout of insanity, spoke these incredible words: “At the end of that time [seven years], I Nebuchadnezzar, raised my eyes toward heaven, and my sanity was restored. Then I praised the Most High; I honored and glorified him who lives forever. His dominion is an eternal dominion; his kingdom endures from generation to generation. All the peoples of the earth are regarded as nothing. He does as he pleases with the powers of heaven and the peoples of the earth. No one can hold back his hand or say to him: ‘What have you done?’” (Daniel 4:17, 25, 32).
- ***Peter*** after fishing all night, with reluctance obeyed the Lord and caught a huge load of fish. Then Peter realized how proud and arrogant he was and responded: “depart from Me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” (Luke 5:8).
- ***John*** the closest of Jesus’ earthly companions, saw the Risen Lord Jesus in His glory on the Isle of Patmos and it records that “when I saw Him, I fell at His feet as though dead” (Revelation 1:17).

God’s glory is crushing! Our pathetic, weak, & worthless pride gets crushed under the weightiness of God’s awesome glory and holiness.

Some Demonstrations of Pride

Here are the subtle (and not so subtle) demonstrations of pride in the lives of many Christian leaders...

- Prayerlessness: relying on your own abilities, strength, and self-sufficiency.
- Unwillingness to listen to advice, instruction, correction, information, and / or suggestions.
- Reluctance to submit to authority, even anyone else’s set of rules.
- Arguing and quarreling to prove you’re always right, even to the point of anger and rage.
- Dominating conversations, saying something about every subject on every occasion (“with my vast store of wisdom, it seems a pity not to help others with all their questions and difficulties”).
- Maintaining an unteachable spirit (because you already know everything you need to know).

- Responding to everyone around you with mockery, ridicule, and sarcastic put-downs YET you are unable to laugh at yourself along with everyone else.
- Eagerly promoting yourself, who you know, what you've done, magnifying your achievements, illustrating your conversations with all the times you were right, or you came to the rescue.
- Enjoying the admiration of others, even secretly reveling in it.
- Unwillingness to submit to the small indignities of daily life (like standing in a line, waiting your turn, driving an older used car, performing menial tasks, or doing some manual labor).
- An over-concern with externals, appearances, numbers (all designed to make you look good).
- A reluctance to associate with people who cannot advance your status or enhance your image (like the poor, the shut-ins / infirmed, the severely handicapped, the elderly, or children).
- You must always be in the role of teacher; you never listen to others as a student.
- Being unwilling to admit you are wrong, apologize, seek forgiveness.
- Controlling meetings by commenting on every subject and demanding your solution(s) be the final outcome for every agenda item.
- Ungrateful for your present circumstances ("I deserve better... larger... more significant").
- Always having your family in charge, or up front, or in the spotlight.
- Correcting others, even if they don't ask for it ("they so desperately need my advice").
- Sinful pride in you and / or your family's intellectual development, acquisition of knowledge, academic achievement, class rankings, prestigious scholarships, awards / honors / trophies.
- Knowing the truth, and defending the truth, because you are right (and you are!)... but doing so from a position of spiritual superiority and pride because it feels so good to be right.
- Deep discontentment that you're not more famous, better known, in a bigger ministry, with tens of thousands of people downloading your sermons each week.
- Any comments on the above demonstrations of pride? Other demonstrations you are aware of?

Conclusion

If we fail to renounce our pride and submit to the glory of the awesome King of the Universe, then we will experience the tragedy of 1 Peter 5:5. “All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because ‘God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.’”

If we fail to clothe ourselves with humility, God will oppose us. It doesn’t say He will passively remove His blessing from us... it says He will *actively oppose* us.

May God help us to see His glory and respond with humility, by renouncing all our pride! Let’s leave our legacy to God.

EVANGELISM

One day a man stopped D. L. Moody on the street to announce, “Mr. Moody. I don’t like your method of evangelism!” Moody asked the man, “What is your method of evangelism?”

“Well, I, uh...I don’t do very much evangelism,” he sheepishly replied. Moody responded, “Sir, I like my method better than yours!”

We should be greatly concerned about all the bad theology and methodology in much that is called evangelism. Many today water down the truth for the purpose of identifying with “the unchurched,” mingle in the perverting influence of pop-psychology, manipulate emotions and call for unbiblical responses, then justify it all with a pragmatism based on the large number of “converts” (most of whom do not seem to last longer than a few weeks).

We need to reflect what the New Testament says about the Gospel:

- Preach it (1 Cor. 9:16)
- Demonstrate it (Phil. 1:27)
- Guard it (Gal. 1:6-8)
- Defend it (Jude 3)
- Suffer for it (2 Tim. 1:8)
- Don't be ashamed of it (Rom. 1:16)

TWO KEY WORDS FOR EVANGELISM

There are two key concepts to embrace and understand about personal evangelism. While there are exceptions, the majority of people who have turned to Christ have both of these elements involved in their conversion. The words are *process* and *relationship*.

PROCESS: Turning to Christ often takes weeks, months or years. A person first thinks about God, then hears more of the message and at some time they then accept the gift of salvation. It is not too often that people accept the gospel the first time they hear it. Paul was witnessing to King Agrippa who pushed back by saying: “do you think that in such a short time you can persuade me to be a Christian” (Acts 26:28-29)? He voiced what many think. This is the most important decision of a life-time. It is expecting a lot to think that someone will make this decision immediately and without thought.

RELATIONSHIP: Most people come to salvation because they crossed paths with another Christian. Again, there are exceptions but for the vast majority of new believers they first got to know a follower of Christ before they followed Christ. Some people turn to God by reading their Bible without any outside input... but they are the rare exception. Others become Christians because of media... but those numbers are still very small compared to those reached through personal evangelism. *The most effective approach to evangelism is still one person talking with another.*

Understanding these two principles helps a lot when it comes to evangelism. You shouldn't be discouraged if someone doesn't accept the message the first time you give it to them. Keep the process moving by building a relationship.

Fortunately, you do not need to be clever or eloquent in order to do evangelism (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:17).

This should be a relief to many of us who see ourselves as neither clever nor eloquent. Some people always have something to say... but many of us struggle with awkward silence. Even fewer people have something to say that is clever... but they talk anyway.

The beauty of evangelism is that we don't have to think up what to say. The gospel was given by God, and we are merely the messenger. It is not our job to think of something clever to say. Evangelism is simply parroting God.

We don't even have to be a good communicator. God has already promised that he has chosen the "weak to confound the mighty." Some of the best evangelists are quiet elderly ladies who stumble through a conversation about God. Fortunately, you do not need to be slick or articulate in order to give the gospel.

Keep the process moving by building relationships all around you that God can use in what we commonly call evangelism. Note this:

PERSON NOT INTERESTED:

- 90% of your effort = relationship building
- 10% of your effort = giving truth

PERSON WHO'S INTERESTED:

- 90% of your effort = giving truth
- 10% of your effort = relationship

HOW TO GET THEM INTERESTED

1. Crisis in their life (wait, be ready...it will happen)
2. Question in their mind (be sensitive to what they're saying / asking)

FURTHER THOUGHTS ON EVANGELISM

Evangelism is not an option for the local church, it is a command. It is not even something that we should try to include as one of our many ministries. Evangelism must be a primary purpose of the local church and one of the major reasons for which it exists.

Evangelism must not be confused with church growth since the entire focus and motivation is different. It may result in church growth, but that is not its focus.

Evangelism does not consist of long or repeated impassioned calls for and pressure to make decisions. Evangelism is a work of God in which He uses us as instruments to take His word to people in whom the Holy Spirit works to bring them to the place of trusting in God for eternal life in Jesus Christ.

Evangelism is not a system or program but is a personal involvement in the lives of people to help them know the things they need to know in order to believe. “Faith comes by hearing and hearing by the word of God.” Evangelism must include the message and the presence and lifestyle of the messenger.

ANALOGIES AND DEFINITION

Michael Green in his book on local church evangelism refers to three definitions that help us visualize evangelism.

The first one he mentions is the word *overflow* and it pictures evangelism as a believer being so full of the joy of Christ that it overflows naturally to those around him. A vessel that has water continually flowing in will be continually overflowing.

The second definition is the one made famous by Charles Spurgeon. “Evangelism is one beggar telling another beggar where to get bread.” The difference between the two beggars is that one knows where to go for bread and the other doesn't.

The third definition is from Archbishop William Temple. He stated, “to evangelize is so to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, that men shall come to put their trust in God through Him, accept Him as Savior, and serve Him as King in the fellowship of the Church.”

COMMON MISCONCEPTIONS

Being a teacher today comes with a halo; evangelism doesn't. We admire our Bible teachers. But they are people sometimes obsessed with getting the message right but not equally obsessed with getting it out. Our role models are sometimes perfectionist teachers who often argue about distinctions without differences. We must teach the Bible accurately, but we cannot ignore the work of evangelism in our churches while we

solely focus on Bible teaching. We mustn't neglect the one while we appreciate the other.

Some people seem to think evangelism is getting others to agree with their views regarding soteriology. This mistaken notion often is in our kind of churches where accurate Bible teaching is prized. I've even heard some attest that if certain words they are looking for are left out of the evangelistic presentation, it's called a false Gospel. Some seem to insist that if the exact word "repent" is not used, there can be no salvation. Others seem to insist if the exact word "believe" isn't used, there can be no salvation. That's what I mean...some people seem to think evangelism is a theological debate you engage in to get someone else to agree with your soteriology. And then those who respond to the Gospel better get it right when explaining what happened to them or it isn't seen as genuine.

We assume that evangelism is difficult, so we attempt to get people to do it by making it easy. The problem with evangelism isn't that it is difficult, but that our "easy" methods are so impersonal - and dare I say rude - that most Christians don't want to be like that. These "easy" methods assume we only have to "tell people" so we can get their blood off our hands (Ezekiel 3:18, 20). Just telling people seems more important than understanding what they need. My point here isn't complicated; everything I have to say about methods is as simple as caring enough to be courteous and care about people enough to actually listen to them.

We often call this subject "Personal Evangelism." But many methods I have studied claiming to be this could be titled "How to do mass evangelism on one person." There's nothing personal about it at all. It's a one-size-fits-all practice. Everyone gets bombarded with what you want to say, and the one thing that doesn't concern you is the person being bombarded. He or she is simply viewed a target, not a person.

WHY WE DON'T EVANGELIZE

What are some of the reasons why people are not involved in evangelism? What are some of the biblical motivations for evangelism.

Without much elaboration the following is a list of some of the reasons people do not evangelize:

1. Many in the church may not really have saving faith themselves.
2. Many do not believe it is their responsibility.
3. Many may not have any confidence in their own relationship with God.
4. Many are not walking in close fellowship with God and so not experiencing joy in their life.
5. Fear.
6. Many don't know how to do it.
7. Many are isolated from any relationships that give them opportunity.

WHY WE SHOULD EVANGELIZE

The major motivations to evangelism should be enough to give us all a passion for evangelism. First, the love of God is the primary motivation. "God so loved the world" John 3:16. It is the very nature of the God we love, worship, and serve to love the world. If we really love Him then we will also have a concern for the world.

Second, we are commanded by our Lord Jesus Christ to go to the world. If we love Him and seek to obey Him we will evangelize. "If you love me, you will keep my commandments." Is not our desire to please Him and obey Him enough motivation to cause us to do what He has commanded us to do?

Third, we have the Holy Spirit indwelling each of us as believers. This means that our life is to be directed by the Spirit and we are to "walk in the Spirit." One of the major aspects of the ministry of the Holy Spirit is to glorify Christ. If we are filled with the Spirit we will be filled with a desire to exalt the Lord Jesus Christ and to tell others about Him.

Many times, we think if we just had a greater compassion for the lost we would be committed to evangelism. Actually, what we need is a greater passion for our Lord. It is not that compassion for the lost is not a good thing, but our primary motivation should come from focusing on God.

BOLDNESS IN EVANGELISM

Have you ever been afraid to speak up and share your faith? Possibly every Christian has found themselves in this situation at some point in their life... perhaps it is ongoing and is a regular occurrence for you.

Boldness was one of the characteristics of believers in the book of Acts. For instance, here are some of the references that refer to their “boldness” (cf. Acts 4:13, 29, 31; 9:27-28; 13:46; 14:3; 18:26; 19:8; 26:25-26; 28:30-31).

The obvious question after reading the above passages is “why?” What was it that made those people so bold? Boldness was the result of the Spirit of God working in their lives. Throughout the book of Acts, when the text speaks of the Holy Spirit influencing a believer, it also speaks of their boldness. If His Spirit is in control, the natural result will be boldness in evangelism.

BAD NEWS / GOOD NEWS GOSPEL MESSAGE

BAD NEWS

1. You are a sinner. “All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom. 3:23). When the Bible says, “All have sinned and fall short,” it means that we have all come short of God’s standard of perfection. In thoughts, words, and deeds, we have not been perfect.
2. The penalty for sin is death. “The wages of sin is death” (Rom. 6:23). The Bible says that by sinning we have earned death, we deserve to die and be separated from God forever.

GOOD NEWS

1. Christ died for you. “God demonstrates his own love for us in this: while we were still sinners, Christ died for us” (Rom. 5:8). Suppose you are in a hospital dying of cancer. I come to you and say, “Let’s take the cancer cells from your body and put them into my body.” If that were possible, what would happen to me? To you? I would die in your place. I would die instead of you. The Bible says Christ took the penalty we deserved for sin, placed it on Himself, died in our place.

2. You can be saved through faith in Christ. “For it is by grace [undeserved favor] you have been saved [delivered from sin’s penalty] through faith and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God, not of works, so that no one can boast” (Eph. 2:8–9). Faith means trust. Just as you trust a chair to hold you through no effort of your own, so you must trust Jesus Christ to get you to heaven through no effort of your own.

You must repent of your sins, trust in Jesus Christ alone as your Savior from sin, and God will give you eternal life as a gift!

Try starting with, “I’M PRAYING FOR YOU!”

DISCERNMENT, WISDOM, AND DECISION MAKING

Each day, ministry leaders are faced with situations in life and ministry that require us to make choices. Some of these choices are easy, and at times, some of them are excruciatingly difficult. The most difficult decisions are those that require a deeper level of consideration because their implications are so profound. These types of decisions are difficult because they are life-changing, ministry-altering decisions; they shape who we are, and they shape our future.

Your goal should be to **select the decision that seems to be most wise (not necessarily perfect)**. The leader who insists on making perfect decisions will never decide or will suffer constant frustration. They become paralyzed with fear over their projected outcomes of decisions.

Because of this fear and insecurity, some people wait to make perfect decisions. As Jeff Bezos wrote in his 2016 shareholder letter: “Most decisions should probably be made with somewhere around 70 percent of the information you wish you had. If you wait for 90 percent, in most cases, you’re probably being slow. Plus, either way, you need to be good at quickly recognizing and correcting bad decisions. If you’re good at course-correcting, being wrong may be less costly than you think, whereas being slow is going to be expensive for sure.”

GOD IS THE SOURCE OF WISDOM

Ultimately, God is the source of wisdom. As it says in Proverbs, “*the fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom*” (Proverbs 1:7).

Job learned about wisdom, which we see in Job 28:12-15, 20 with verses 23-27. So, where does God say wisdom can be found? The Bible tells us that there are various sources for wisdom. Here is a list...

- From His Word (Ps. 119:97-104)
- From asking Him during trials (James 1:5)
- From humility before Him (Prov. 1:20-24)
- From diligent seeking (Prov. 2:1-11)
- From your parents (Prov. 4:1-13)
- From accepting commands (Prov. 10:8)
- From advice: asking questions, listening to answers (Prov. 11:14; 12:15; 13:20; Luke 2:46)

From my own experience in life and ministry, when it comes to wise decision making... the best decisions are made with a group of godly leaders, working together for the glory of God, who are concerned for the good of the church, and are praying for God’s direction and guidance.

One of the most essential dynamics of leadership is the need for foresight, anticipation, the ability to “see around the corners” and make good decisions. Good leaders are those who make wise, discerning decisions. This is seen in the list of character qualities required of the elder in 1 Timothy 3:2 *sōphrona*, which is translated prudent, good judgment, self-controlled (in regard to decision making). One seminary professor defined it as “good old-fashioned common sense.”

Discernment and wisdom are absolutely essential for local church leaders who must regularly make decisions.

DISCERNMENT AND THE WORD OF GOD

The English word discernment is from the Latin word *discernere*, “to sift, to distinguish, to separate.” It is the ability to distinguish between truth and error, right and wrong, this way or that way. Discernment is the separating process of making careful distinctions in our thinking regarding truth. It is imperative for every believer to develop the ability to discern the truth by rightly understanding and wisely applying the Scripture. We are to interpret the Bible correctly. Then we are to apply it consistently to every circumstance we face in life.

The psalmist prayed, “Teach me good judgment and knowledge” in Psalm 119:66. The word translated “good judgment” means “taste” (טָעַם *ta’am*), the ability to make discriminating judgments, to distinguish between and recognize the implications of different situations and courses of action. Where does this ability come from? How can we be discerning? Psalm 119:66 answers that in the second half of the verse: “Teach me good judgment and knowledge, for I believe in your commandments.”

The foundation for true and wise discernment is from the Spirit, through the Bible. Discernment is learning to think God’s thoughts after Him, practically and spiritually; it means having a sense of how things look from God’s perspective and seeing them in some measure “uncovered and laid bare” (Hebrews 4:13). Discernment is the ability to think biblically about all areas of life. Without it, Christians are at risk of being “tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine” (Ephesians 4:14).

If the Bible addresses a particular situation or circumstance we are facing, there is no decision to be made. We must obey. We cannot compromise this very first principle of decision making! However, not every decision we face in church or ministry is addressed in Scripture. We need wise discernment to make good decisions.

THE ELEMENT OF INDIFFERENCE

Discernment involves the acknowledgement of indifference to self-advancement, meaning that “I am indifferent to everything but God’s will.” In decision making, this is the state of submission to God in which we are free from undue attachment to any particular outcome. We come to a place where we want God and God’s will more than anything - more than advancement of our own agenda, more than personal gratification, more than wanting to look good in the eyes of others, more than personal ownership, comfort or advantage. We come to a place in our decision where we simply want God’s will...nothing more, nothing less, nothing else. It is then we can sincerely pray the prayer of personal indifference: “Not my will but thine be done.”

Godly leaders must be able to recognize places where we are inordinately attached to a particular outcome rather than being indifferent to anything but the will of God. This is mature spirituality, and we will not be able to

lead from this place of self-awareness and submission to God in a leadership setting if we have not practiced in our personal lives.

Coming to a place of indifference is no small thing, especially if we are facing a decision in which the outcome really matters to us, or we have a vested interest in it. It is even harder in a leadership setting where egos are on the line, where posturing and maneuvering is the norm and territorialism lies right under the surface of our polite prayers & words.

STEPS TO MAKING GOOD DECISIONS

Making good decisions involves a method that can be learned. It is not a skill some people are innately born with, and others aren't, but rather a step-by-step process gained from life experience.

After consulting the Bible and prayerfully submitting your plans and agenda to His will, there are six steps that need to be considered.

Step 1: Identify the decision

Realizing you need to make a decision, you need to clearly define the nature of the decision you must make. Ask yourself what exactly is the problem that needs to be solved? And why does this problem need to be solved? This first step is very important.

Step 2: Gather the relevant information

Collect all the pertinent information before you make your decision. First, determine what information is needed, then identify the best sources of information and how to get it. This step involves both internal and external "work." Some information is internal: you'll seek it through a process of self-assessment. Other information is external: you'll find it online, in books, from other people, and from other sources. Always seek the opinions of people you trust and speak to experts and professionals, because it will help you to come up with a variety of solutions when weighing all your options for a final decision. You will want to gather as many resources as possible in order to make the best decision.

Step 3: Identify the alternatives

As you collect information, you will probably begin to identify several preferred paths of action, or alternatives. But you should still make a list of every possible alternative, even ones that may initially sound silly or

seem unrealistic. You can also use your imagination and additional information to construct new alternatives. In this step, you will list all possible and desirable alternatives.

Step 4: Weigh the evidence

It's always best for a group of godly leaders to work this step together because group decisions by godly, praying leaders are usually better decisions. Together, you should examine the information and rely on the collective experience to imagine what it would be like if you carried out each of the alternatives to the logical conclusion. Evaluate whether the question identified in Step 1 would be resolved if each alternative was implemented. As you go through this difficult process, you'll begin to favor certain alternatives that seem to have a higher potential for reaching your goal. In this step, you need to ask what are the likely results of your decision. How will it affect you now? And how will it affect your future? At the end of this step, you should place the alternatives in a priority order.

Step 5: Make your decision

Review the pros and cons of the different options that you listed in the previous step. Once you have weighed all the evidence, you are ready to select the wisest alternative. Often, the decision jumps out at you once all the facts are clarified. But in those circumstances when decisions do not "decide themselves," it's good to move fast with reversible decisions and less fast with irreversible decisions. Sometimes you must choose from the least of the bad options available. When you lack clarity, there can be a great deal of anxiety. Your goal is to select the decision that seems to be most wise (not perfect). The leader who insists on making perfect decisions either never decides or suffers constant frustration.

When you're stalled, ask: "what will happen if we don't do what we're planning to do?" Bad decisions can be caused by a false sense of urgency; and on the other hand, bad results can come to leaders with a lack of urgency and sense of fear. To break the impasse, ask: "can this big decision be broken into sub-parts and are there sub-decisions we can make at a few go / no-go points along the way?" If you continue to be stalled, ask: "what's the emotional fuel that's hindering this decision?" The presence of fear and/or the lack of faith in God's ability to lead can be stifling. Step away, give yourselves 24 hours or one week or one month to pray and let this decision simmer. But in very rare instances is it

wise to keep procrastinating about making a decision. It can cause a great loss of confidence in your leadership, which is ominous for you.

Step 6: Take action

You're now ready to take some positive action by implementing the alternative you chose in Step 5. Remember, this step requires some patience and perseverance, because it may take some time to see the final outcome. If the decision has *not* answered the identified need, you may want to repeat certain steps of the process to make a new decision. For example, you might want to gather more detailed or somewhat different information or explore additional alternatives. If the first decision is not working, you may have to go back to step two and choose another option.

COMMON MISTAKES IN DECISION MAKING

Although the above six steps can help you in simplifying the decision-making process, there are some common drawbacks that you must also take into account. Consider the following:³

Misidentifying The Problem

Many times, the problem will be obvious; but there may come a time when identifying the main problem is not that easy. When this issue arises, figuring out exactly what it is, and where you need to focus your efforts will save you a lot of time and energy in the long run.

Having a Single Source of Information

When considering the consequences, you must be open to a broad choice of alternatives in order to find the best solution. This can become a problem if you rely solely on a single source of information because that one source may not be reliable or may not be completely in-line with the problem, thus altering your chances of making the best decision.

Having Too Many Sources

Having a variety of sources is usually not a bad thing, but not in every situation. Collecting as much information as possible can be very helpful at arriving to a decision, but an overload of information can leave you confused and misguided and prevents you from following your intuition.

³ Excerpt from "5 Steps to Good Decisions" Kescia D. Gray
<https://www.corporatewellnessmagazine.com/article/5-steps-to-good-decision-making>

Remember, trusting your instincts is a major key to making good decisions.

Overestimating the Outcome

When making a decision and putting your plan into action you should have taken care to weigh all your valid options. Making a decision based upon an outcome that may not be plausible will not help you solve the problem.

Poor Timing

Time can be a futile friend. Sometimes it is good, and sometimes it is not. When making major decisions, it is beneficial to take your time in order to make the best choice from your options. But understanding the timing process is crucial because sometimes it is best to delay a decision, and other times delaying a response can cause more problems. There are also times when making a quick decision is advantageous because it allows you more time to make necessary changes should problems arise. Situational awareness is always essential in every decision.

DISCERNMENT IN GRAY AREAS

Sincere Christians seek God's guidance. They depend upon the Word of God for direction, but often situations arise that are not specifically covered in the Bible. These situations test the ability of the Christian to discern how to make the best choice. The following questions and verses should help you walk wisely as you make decisions.

GUIDELINES FOR DECISION MAKING

- 1) Am I always willing to submit to the instruction found in the Bible? (2 Timothy 3:16)
- 2) Will the Lord be glorified if I do this? (1 Corinthians 10:31)
- 3) Will I be built up as a Christian if I do this? (1 Corinthians 10:23) Is this truly beneficial and profitable, or just something I desire for a fleeting moment? (1 Corinthians 6:12a)
- 4) Is this activity consuming my life? (1 Corinthians 6:12b)
- 5) Will it cause others to sin if I do it? (1 Corinthians 8:9) Will I build up others if I do it? (Romans 14:19)
- 6) Is it the best, most excellent choice? (Philippians 1:9-11)
- 7) Am I doing it to please other people, or to please God? (Colossians 3:23-24)

- 8) Is my testimony going to be helped or hindered by this? (Colossians 4:5)
- 9) Is the activity something I can thank Him for? (1 Thessalonians 5:18; Romans 14:6)
- 10) Am I setting the right example? Is it an example worth following? (1 Timothy 4:12)
- 11) Will it hinder my work for God? (Hebrews 12:1)
- 12) Am I submitting to God-ordained authority if at all possible? (1 Peter 2:13)
- 13) Does this follow in Christ's example and demonstrate Christ-likeness? (1 John 2:6)
- 14) Would I want Jesus to come back while I am doing this activity? (1 John 2:28)

IMPROVING YOUR MINISTRY SKILLS

We all readily admit none of us are perfect. Yet often times our thoughts and attitudes reflect the exact opposite; and how we see ourselves does not represent reality...we think and act like we, in fact, are flawless. Of course, we aren't! So, how do we get real about our weaknesses and improve our ministry skills?

THE TRAGEDY OF SELF-DECEPTION

- James 1:22-25 & Jeremiah 17:5-9. What is the root of self-deception? PRIDE □ destruction

THE NECESSITY / REALITY OF GOD'S INSPECTION

- Jeremiah 17:10 *ḥaqar*: scrutinize; a careful, thorough, even intense, examination. *ḥaqar* also used in Psalm 139:1, where God does it & Psalm 139:23 David seeks it, desires it, & welcomes it.
- Cf. also Hebrews 4:13; 1 Corinthians 4:3-5; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 2 Corinthians 10:12, 17-18

THE BIBLICAL CALL TO LEARNING AND IMPROVING

- NT meaning of "disciple." *mathētēs* is used 223 x in the Gospels and 28 x in Acts. It means to be a disciplined follower. Root is *manthanō* (to learn). Since *manthanō* means to learn, then a disciple must be a

learner. Implicit in the definition of “disciple” = the learning / improving never stops.

- 1 Timothy 4:7 “...discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness.” The verb for “discipline” is *gumnazō* (present imperative) = training oneself continuously. More than knowing certain things, it’s applying the knowledge to doing and improving / getting better with the ultimate goal of becoming more godly.
- Romans 12:3-4 “For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think more highly (*hyperphroneō*) of himself than he ought to think; but to think so as to have sound judgment (*sophroneō*).” The two words underlined describe a balance re: thinking about oneself. The verb *hyperphroneō* is used only here in the NT and means “to be arrogant, to think too highly of oneself.” The other is the word *sophroneō* is used here and in 1 Peter 4:7 and means “to be of sound mind.” What Paul says is that we should have a balanced view of ourselves, neither thinking arrogantly about our capabilities nor denigrating them. By God’s grace, we must identify the “gap” between *what is* and *what needs to be*. It is from this gap that the foundation for lifelong learning springs.

THE DOWNSIDE OF STRENGTH

Strengths are not omnipotent... they come with inherent downsides. Here are a few.

- 1) Overconfidence: you’re so good at this that you don’t need to work any more at it; apathetic about improving.
- 2) Self-reliance: you’re so good at this that you can do it all yourself.
- 3) Uncoachable: you’re so good at this that you don’t need to listen to input from others.
- 4) Hesitance, even resistance, to improve elsewhere: you’re so good here, why worry about improving over there?
- 5) Impatience with people: you’re so good at this that you compare everyone to your strength and are quick to judge them when they inevitably fall short of you in your strength.

THE BENEFITS OF WEAKNESS

All pastors must give leadership in more areas than they can possibly have strengths. To be an effective pastor you have to be:

- 1) a serious student of the Word who diligently studies the Scriptures in private (2 Tim. 2:15)

- 2) an effective communicator who accurately preaches and teaches the Bible in public
- 3) a compassionate shepherd who loves the sheep
- 4) a visionary shepherd who leads the flock to new places they've never been
- 5) a wise decision maker who makes many hard, but helpful, choices in church life
- 6) an efficient administrator who manages well the life and business of the church
- 7) a unifying peacemaker who keeps the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace

Our weaknesses will be painfully obvious as we undoubtedly fail to successfully achieve all the above! So, what are the benefits of our weaknesses?!

- 1) Prevents pride and acts like a check and balance, an internal regulator, in your life
- 2) Creates dependence upon God (2 Cor. 12:9) and brings Him all the glory not you
- 3) Causes greater interdependence with people, because you really do need them
- 4) Expands our ability to minister...you impress with success but you minister with weakness

SELF-ASSESSMENT / SELF-CONFRONTATION: THE BIBLE'S STANDARDS

- Matthew 7:1-5 Don't judge before you take the beam out of your eye / honestly assess yourself. Cf. also 1 Corinthians 10:31; Colossians 3:23-24; 1 Peter 5:1-3; Philippians 3:3-14

HINDRANCES TO IMPROVEMENT

- 1) Lazy / unambitious
- 2) Bad habits (let things slide... "no one's watching")
- 3) Insecure, defensive, hyper-sensitive to suggestions by others for improvement
- 4) Everybody tells you you're already great
- 5) Apathetic (in contrast to Peyton Manning who says "everything is important")

- 6) Unaware
- 7) Proud / uncoachable

KEYS TO IMPROVING:

- 1) Courage: the first task of leadership is to define reality (in yourself, your wife, your children, your church and ministry) and that takes courage.
- 2) Be brutally honest about your own weaknesses, shortcomings, inefficiencies; you regularly involve yourself in self-confrontation and self-evaluation **AND** you go about a lifetime of seeking to get better as a lifelong learner.
- 3) Pursue the Biblical benchmarks for ministry (not leadership gurus alone).
- 4) Set goals / seek to improve and not coast (Romans 15:14-29).
- 5) Use strong resources. Read books and say to yourself “THAT’S where I’m deficient and need to change...and HERE...and HERE” (authors become your mentors).
- 6) Solicit honest feedback.
- 7) Eagerly learn from friends and leaders in congregation: businessmen, executives, professors, military officers, coaches, HR people (“how did you do this? what did you learn?”)
- 8) Check out standard HR evaluation forms: “This is how your people are evaluated... what about you? How are you doing on these most basic things?”
- 9) Deal promptly with the things you hate doing.
- 10) Practice makes much better. If a man of moderate athletic ability shot five hundred free throws every lunch hour, he'd get better at free throws. If he hired a coach to critique his technique, he'd get even better. Because this hypothetical man is not particularly gifted, he will never be as proficient as Stephan Curry, but he'll become very good.
- 11) Address needs first, strengths second. I’ve found it much more helpful first to determine not my strengths but rather the areas of greatest need in the church and community. When I do that, I’ve noticed that much more of Christ's work gets done.
 - a) Ministry is like war and ministers like platoon leaders. Sometimes platoon leaders give orders; sometimes they fire on the enemy; sometimes they clear minefields; sometimes they

carry the wounded; sometimes they bolster the frightened with humor.

- b) Platoon leaders don't spend a lot of time deciding if they're talented at shooting or good at carrying the wounded or gifted at finding mines. Likewise, when you're fighting principalities and powers in high places, it's usually more productive for the kingdom to do things that need doing when they need doing, regardless of one's strengths.

IDENTIFYING AND TRAINING TEAM-MATES / FUTURE LEADERS

Introduction

Accomplishing ministry is never achieved alone. Ministry is about partnerships, collaboration, cooperation, networking, interdependence, sharing, and teamwork and working together.

Paul wrote to Timothy that ministry involves training other people, who will in turn train others to train even more people (2 Timothy 2:2). In Ephesians 4:11-16 we read that the gifted leaders in the local church are to equip the believers in the local church, and the equipped believers are to do the work of ministry (v. 12); accomplishing this work leads to the building up the body of Christ (v. 16). The work of ministry belongs to the church and every member is called to be an active part of the ministry of the church. Of course, this process by necessity must happen in a series of relationships.

One proof that ministry is never achieved in isolation is the New Testament word for fellowship: *koinōnia*. By its very definition, *koinōnia* involves commonality, community, togetherness. This points to the biblical precedent and need of cooperative effort.

Paul's Key Team Members

All of us admire solo achievement, but the truth is that no one alone can achieve anything of eternal value as a solitary individual. A study of the Apostle Paul and the people who worked with him in the New Testament gives ample proof that Paul emphasized collaborative efforts.

Barnabas was the one who introduced Saul (Paul) to the apostles (Acts 9:26-27) and later brought him from Tarsus to Antioch (Acts 11:25-26). Paul was first a team-mate to Barnabas. Barnabas was sent by the Jerusalem church to teach and preach to the new Greek-speaking Christians in Antioch (Acts 11:19-26). And then the Christians of Antioch sent Barnabas and Paul back to Jerusalem to deliver some donations for famine relief (Acts 11:27-30). When Barnabas and Paul were sent out on another mission (Acts 13:1-14:28), Barnabas was the leader and Paul was the assistant (Acts 14:12). Barnabas and Paul both attended the Council of Jerusalem to discuss the issue of circumcision with other Christian leaders (Acts 15:1-35). But this team would divide and separate over how to handle John Mark. After Barnabas and Paul separated, Barnabas continued preaching with Mark in Cyprus (Acts 15:39).

Paul's next team-mate after Barnabas became Silas. The same man named "Silas" in Acts is always called "Silvanus" in Paul's letters and in 1 Peter 5:12. Silvanus accompanied Paul and Timothy at the beginning of their missionary activity in Macedonia and Achaia (1 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Thessalonians 1:1; 2 Corinthians 1:19; Acts 15:40-18:5).

Paul's most important team-mate was Timothy. Paul variously called Timothy "my beloved and faithful child in the Lord" or "son" (1 Corinthians 4:17; 1 Timothy 1:2; 2 Timothy 1:2), "our brother" (1 Thessalonians 3:2; 2 Corinthians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; Philemon 1), "a servant of Christ Jesus" (Phil 1:1), and "our/my co-worker" (1 Thessalonians 3:2; Romans 16:21). He became John Mark's replacement in Acts 16:1-5.

It seems that perhaps Paul's second-most important team-mate was Titus. Paul called Titus a "son" in Titus 1:4. He told the Corinthians that Titus was "my brother" (2 Corinthians 2:13) and "my partner and co-worker for you" (2 Corinthians 8:23). The word Paul used regarding Titus that is translated "partner" is *koinōnos*, also used by Paul regarding Philemon (Philemon 17).

Other Co-Workers

Paul used the term *sunergoi* (literally "co-workers") mostly for his own missionary co-workers. Fifteen individuals were called *sunergoi* by Paul:

Prisca and Aquila (Romans 16:3), Urbanus (Romans 16:9), Timothy (Romans 16:21; 1 Thessalonians 3:2), Titus (2 Corinthians 8:23), Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25), Clement (Philippians 4:3), Aristarchus, Mark, and Justus (Colossians 4:10-11), Philemon (Philemon 1), Mark, Aristarchus, Demas, and Luke (Philemon 24). Interestingly, Paul also referred to himself and Apollos as “co-workers” (*sunergoi*) of God in 1 Corinthians 3:9 and 2 Corinthians 1:24.

Paul used several other Greek terms containing the prefix meaning “with” to designate his co-laborers, including “fellow soldier” or literally “soldier with” for Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25) and Archippus (Philemon 2); “fellow prisoner” or literally “prisoner with” for Aristarchus (Colossians 4:10), Epaphras (Philemon 23), Andronicus and Junia (Romans 16:7); and “fellow slave” or literally “slave with” for Epaphras (Colossians 1:7) and Tychicus (Colossians 4:7).

We also note that Paul called some people “brothers,” even though they were not his blood-relatives, in order to stress their close mutual connection. This included Quartus (Romans 16:23), Sosthenes (1 Corinthians 1:1), Apollos (1 Corinthians 16:12), Timothy (2 Corinthians 1:1; Colossians 1:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:2; Philemon 1), Titus (2 Corinthians 2:13), two anonymous companions of Titus (2 Corinthians 8:18, 22; 12:18); Tychicus (Ephesians 6:21; Colossians 4:7), Epaphroditus (Philippians 2:25), Onesimus (Colossians 4:9; Philemon 16), and Philemon (Philemon 7, 20). Paul also called Phoebe “our sister” (Romans 16:1) and greeted “Apphia, the sister” (Philemon 2).

It’s most interesting to observe Paul’s ministry team when they conferred in Troas (Acts 20:4-6). There were seven other men listed, from five other provincial regions, who met with Paul for seven days. If the reference to “we” in Acts 20:5 includes Luke, then this ministry retreat involved eight other men plus Paul. Interesting that it occurred in Troas where Paul earlier received the Macedonian call (Acts 16:6-10). Paul met for seven days with at least seven or eight other men and we can be sure they carefully considered their future ministry direction as a ministry team. This points to collaboration, teamwork, and working together.

In fact, the NT lists 90 workers that labored alongside of the Apostle Paul!

How Did Jesus Train Leaders?

- Mark 3:13, Jesus did the choosing
- Mark 3:14, His method of training: “that they might be with Him”
- Acts 4:13, “...they recognized that they had been with Jesus”

How Did Barnabas Train Paul?

- Acts 11:19-26, Barnabas did the choosing
 - a) Antioch (Gentile) church needed leadership
 - b) Jerusalem (Jewish) leaders sent Barnabas 350 miles
 - c) Barnabas remembered Saul from Acts 9:26-27
 - d) Barnabas identified Saul’s gifts, attitudes, skills
 - e) Went 150 miles to find Saul and get him (vv.25-26)

How Did Paul Train Leaders?

- Acts 16:1-5, Paul did the choosing
 - a) Paul heard about Timothy and wanted him for a team-mate
 - b) And so he took Timothy along (v. 3)

The Key Principles

- 1) Followers cannot train leaders. Leaders must train leaders.
Leadership identification and training is the one task a leader cannot delegate to someone else.
- 2) The leader chooses the people he/she will disciple / mentor into leadership (note that the disciples / Saul / Timothy did not volunteer but they were chosen).
- 3) Mentoring to leadership involves being together, one life shared with another in the context of doing ministry, teaching the truth in context of a relationship.

Finding a Faithful Person to Train Into Leadership

Paul told Timothy to find “faithful men” (2 Timothy 2:2) and commit the truth to them. Paul found faithful men such as Timothy, Silas, Epaphras, Onesimus, and Tychicus. How did he do that?

Step # 1 (2 Timothy 2:2) Intentionally look for them as a top priority

Step # 2 (Luke 16:10) Look at them with little assignments = faithful?

Step # 3 (Luke 16:11) Look at they way they handle money = faithful?

Step # 4 (Luke 16:12) Look at the way they care for other people's property = faithful?

Step # 5 (Acts 16:1-2) Ask around about them = good reputation?

- a) 1 Cor. 16:10 "Timothy works the work of the Lord"
- b) Phil. 2:19-20 "Timothy naturally cares for you"
- c) Phil. 2:21 others "seek their own interests"

What to Look for in Up-and-Coming Leaders / Teammates

When identifying potential leaders ...look for these qualities and ask these questions:

- 1) **Character:** is he / she honest, teachable, dependable?
- 2) **Influence:** does he / she have influence among others, especially peers?
- 3) **Positive Attitude:** does he / she keep positive in bad situations, seeing potential opportunity and God's hand in what's happening?
- 4) **Good Interaction with People:** does he / she relate well with people?
- 5) **Self-Discipline:** does he / she keep emotions, responses, and rest of life under control?
- 6) **Proven Faithfulness:** does he / she have a record of being faithful in little things?
- 7) **Evident Gifts:** does he / she demonstrate interest along with ability?
- 8) **Confidence in God:** is he / she confident in God and who God made him / her to be?
- 9) **Communication Skills:** does he / she speak with clarity to all types of people?

THE SIX STEPS OF EQUIPPING

- 1. I teach you.
- 2. You watch me.
- 3. You help me.
- 4. We do it together.
- 5. I watch you.
- 6. I consult with you.

THE SEVEN LAWS OF TEACHING

Dr. John Milton Gregory (1822-1898), was a Baptist pastor and college educator. He was first the Superintendent of Public Instruction in Michigan, then president of Kalamazoo College, then president of the University of Illinois. In 1886, he published *The Seven Laws of Teaching*, which is still in print and used by educators today over 135 years later.

#1: The Law of the Teacher

A teacher must know that which he would teach.

Know thoroughly and familiarly the lesson you wish to teach – teach from a full mind and a clear understanding.

#2: The Law of the Learner

A learner must attend with interest to the material to be learned.

Gain and keep the attention and interest of the students from the very beginning of the lesson. Do not try to teach without attention.

#3: The Law of the Common Language

The language used as medium between teacher and learner must be common to both.

Use words understood in the same way by the students and you – language clear and vivid to both.

#4: The Law of the Lesson

The lesson to be mastered must be explicable in terms of truth already known by the learner -- the unknown must be explained by means of the known.

Begin with what is already well known to the student of the subject and with what he has himself experienced -- and proceed to the new material by single, easy, and natural steps, letting what is known explain the unknown.

#5: The Law of the Teaching Process

Teaching is arousing and using the student's mind to grasp the desired thought or to master the desired art. Excite and direct the self-activities of the student, and as a rule tell him nothing that he can learn himself.

Stimulate the student's own mind to action. Keep his thought as much as possible ahead of your expression, placing him in the attitude of a discoverer, an anticipator.

#6: The Law of the Learning Process

The student must reproduce in his own mind the truth to be learned.

Require the student to reproduce in thought the lesson he is learning – thinking it out in its various phases and applications until he can express it in his own language.

#7: The Law of Review and Application

The test and proof of teaching must be a reviewing, rethinking, re-knowing, reproducing, and applying of the material that has been taught.

Review, review, review, reproducing the old, deepening its impression with new thought, linking it with added meanings, finding new applications, correcting any false views, and completing more fully that which is true.

THE IMPORTANCE OF UNITY, FORBEARANCE, AND FORGIVENESS

Introduction

Because teamwork is vital to ministry, disharmony is one of the greatest dangers to ministry. The “clearest vision, greatest innovations, and most stellar programs won’t make much of an eternal (or even short-term) difference if our ministry and leadership teams are mired in the deep weeds of disunity and conflicting agendas.” (Larry Osborne, *Sticky Teams*, p. 21). We can never reach the world out there if our ministry team is filled with conflict within (cf. Eph. 4:1-3, where Paul insists that maintaining the unity of your ministry team must be one of your top priorities).

One third of the “one-another” commands in the NT deal with the issue of unity of the church. Note the following:

- 1) Be of the same mind with one another ([Rom 12:16](#), [15:5](#))
- 2) Accept one another ([Rom 15:7](#))
- 3) Don’t bite, devour, and consume one another ([Gal 5:15](#))
- 4) Don’t boastfully challenge or envy one another ([Gal 5:26](#)).
- 5) Gently, patiently tolerate one another ([Eph 4:2](#))
- 6) Be kind, tender-hearted, and forgiving to one another ([Eph 4:32](#))
- 7) Bear with and forgive one another ([Col 3:13](#))

- 8) Seek good for one another, and don't repay evil for evil ([1 Th 5:15](#))
- 9) Don't complain against one another ([Jas 4:11](#), [5:9](#))
- 10) Confess sins to one another ([Jas 5:16](#))

Because of the reality of sin in all humans, disunity is the default status for teams everywhere. Don't be surprised by this. Also note that unity is hard to define. It's a vague term that resists objective measurement. It's not the same as uniformity. Unity is closer to unanimity.

- UNIFORMITY: the condition of having the exact same form, style, or structure (*external*)
- UNANIMITY: the attitude of being in mutual agreement with a consensus of opinion (*internal*)
- UNITY: the condition of being one while working together (*activity*)

Unity of doctrinal convictions, philosophy of ministry, and interpersonal relations are the three key areas that define unified ministry teams. But fractured interpersonal relations are the most painful examples of disunity. Can these be prevented? What do we do about this?

WHAT IS FORBEARANCE?

- 1) *anechomai* : Colossians 3:12-13 & Ephesians 4:1-3
- 2) *epieikēs* : James 3:17 & 1 Timothy 3:3
- 3) Forbearance is about irritations, annoyances, complaints over human idiosyncrasies, the weirdness all of us have as humans.

HOW TO BE FORBEARING

- Compare 2 Timothy 2:24-25 & Proverbs 17:14

WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

- Forbearance is about *non-moral issues*.
- Forgiveness is about *sin*.

HOW TO BE FORGIVING

Ephesians 4:30-32; Romans 12:17, 19, 21; 1 Peter 2:23; Heb. 12:15

ATTITUDE, OPTIMISM, AND HUMOR

“The longer I live, the more I realize the importance of choosing the right attitude in life. Attitude is more important than facts. It is more important than your past; more important than your education or your financial situation; more important than your circumstances, your successes, or your failures; more important than what other people think or say or do. It is more important than your appearance, your giftedness, or your skills. It will make or break a company. It will cause a church to soar or sink. It will make the difference between a happy home or a miserable home. You have a choice each day regarding the attitude you will embrace.

Life is like a violin. You can focus on the broken strings that dangle, or you can play your life’s melody on the one string that remains. You cannot change the years that have passed, nor can you change the daily tick of the clock. You cannot change the pace of your march toward your death. You cannot change the decisions or reactions of other people. And you certainly cannot change the inevitable. Those are strings that dangle! What you can do is play on the one string that remains—your attitude. I am convinced that life is 10 percent what happens to me and 90 percent how I react to it.”

This famous quote from Charles Swindoll highlights the power of your attitude in determining the outcomes of your life and ministry. This corresponds with Proverbs, when it teaches us that joy and encouragement promote good health, Proverbs 16:24; 17:22; 18:14.

Optimism

A positive attitude, which reflects an optimistic faith in God, is the practical expression of hope in our sovereign God. This hopeful spirit is absolutely essential to a spiritual leader. An optimist looks for opportunity, from God’s hand, in adversity. Optimism is the ability to persistently pursue goals, despite setbacks; it is the practical application of faith in God’s plan that leads to achievement.

In Genesis, Jacob’s sons returned from Egypt with the report they had to leave Simeon behind and in order to get him back, they had to return to Egypt with Benjamin. Without knowing his long-lost son Joseph was the Egyptian Prime Minister, Jacob responded with bitterness: “All these things are against me!” (Gen. 42:36). His terrible attitude caused him to

shut out the sovereign hand of God in his life's circumstances. This is the opposite of an optimistic leader.

Often, we find ourselves bogged down by the harsh realities of current events that may not be in our favor. Under such circumstances, immature leaders retreat into dark discouragement and fail to acknowledge God's hand. They fail to look for the opportunities from God that their current hardships may present.

An optimist is aware that the current situation will not persist. Change will come, and given the right leadership attitude, it may even end up being for the better. Optimistic ministry leaders see the big picture, viewing trials and tribulations as a small part of something bigger and favorable.

Optimists want to solve problems and improve the situation they are in. They will always focus on finding a solution rather than analyzing the issues surrounding the problem. The key questions an optimistic leader will ask when seeking a solution are:

1. What is wrong? (this is where immature spiritual leaders stall out in discouragement)
2. What is needed? (after determining what is wrong, optimistic spiritual leaders seek a solution that honors God)

Humor

It is often helpful for a ministry leader to use humor in a crisis to provide perspective and help everyone deal with the turmoil and stress. Humor is a great tool to use in a crisis because for a moment, it breaks the tension and helps people look at the tense situation in a positive way. Humor lightens everyone's burdens, inspires hopes, and keeps everyone from losing their heads and instead stay focused and alert.

Perhaps the best indication that God does have a sense of humor is that He created man in His image (Genesis 1:27), and certainly people are able to perceive and express humor. The dictionary defines a "sense of humor" as "the ability to perceive, enjoy, or express what is comical or funny." According to this definition, God demonstrates the ability to perceive, enjoy, or express what is comical. That is true only if you consider that we humans are created in God's image.

The difficulty is that people perceive what is comical differently, and what sinful man often perceives as funny would not be funny to the holy and perfect God. Much of what the world calls humor is not funny but is crass and crude and should have no part in a Christian's life (Colossians 3:8). Other humor, such as sarcasm, is expressed at the expense of others (tearing down rather than building up), again something contrary to God's Word (Colossians 4:6; Ephesians 4:29).

- Do you agree that attitude, optimism, and humor are important for ministry leaders?
- What elements of humor cross the line?
- Are there ever times when humor is inappropriate?

CREATIVITY AND CHANGE IN MINISTRY

Creativity in ministry is absolutely essential, because times and circumstances change. Certainty in methods can paralyze implementing helpful and necessary innovations: "older men are not always wise nor do the aged always understand justice" (Job 32:9). And there is one unalterable truth about life: "all flesh is grass, and its beauty is like the flower of the field" (Isaiah 40:6). As much as people may resist change... it most definitely will come in this life.

What are some of the reasons why creativity and change are resisted?

1. It's an inborn universal human trait to resist change (*"I like things as they are"*).
2. The unknown can be perceived as fearful (*"I don't know what it's going to be like"*).
3. Nostalgic traditionalism fondly recalls the past (*"things were great back then, let's keep everything that way"*).
4. Past successes can blind your vision for the future.
5. The groups in control don't want to relinquish the status quo = them retaining control.

Creativity in ministry can lead to excitement and success, but it also will lead to a lot of bad ideas that you'll scrap (okay). It can also lead to an emphasis on techniques and gimmicks, orienting your ministry toward

indiscriminate changes and a de-emphasis on the Word and spiritual goals (bad).

Not every change is good. In the Old Testament, the changes that King Rehoboam proposed after his father Solomon died led to a civil war. The change in kings from Ahaz (who was wicked) to Hezekiah (who was good) was a very beneficial change. But the change in kings from Josiah (who was the best king) to Jehoahaz (a terrible king who lasted 3 months) and to Jehoiakim (another terrible king who lasted 11 years) represented very bad changes.

Proverbs 22:28 is a good reminder about certain kinds of changes: “Do not move the ancient boundary which your fathers have set.” In ancient Israel boundary lines were sacred because all property was a gift from the Lord. The moving of boundary stones for the original writer of Proverbs 22 meant theft: theft from the owner of that land, and disrespect for God, the giver of the land. By application, it’s not too different for us today in many ways. Ancient boundary stones have always been meddled with and many boundary stones today are being tampered with, moved, and even removed in ways that our forefathers would never have imagined.

It is tragic to observe we laugh now at things that used to embarrass us thirty years ago. Man has always been tampering with boundary stones, moving them one way or another to suit his whims, sometimes removing them altogether. The cultural and intellectual elite purport to know best and many of the undiscerning masses follow. *“Get rid of that ancient boundary stone,”* all too many shout, *“We don’t need it anymore.”*

Not all change is good, but there comes a time for every ministry leader when they will want, even need, to initiate creative, new ideas. Good ministry leaders **don’t wait for** things to happen but **creatively work to** make things happen, as self-starters looking for ways to minister more effectively. Good leaders will innovate ideas + influence people to implement those ideas.

But this can be a tricky balance. On one extreme is the reality that failure can come from an excess of caution. But on the other extreme, it’s just as true that failure can come from bold experiments with new ideas that are spectacularly unsuccessful. How do you maintain the balance?

Don't be afraid of new ideas and innovations – but don't get carried away with them too quickly. There's an old saying among pastors: churches are a lot like horses. They don't like to be startled or surprised, it causes deviant behavior. That is good advice for pastors in churches, as well as for ministry leaders of various kinds of ministries.

Here are ways to help reduce defiant responses from people when considering creative change:

- 1) **Accept the fact that change is chaotic.** The process of change is difficult to predict and often ends up being messy. Therefore, deal with change pro-actively rather than reactively, and be patient. Don't act surprised if things go haywire during the process of change.
- 2) **Check your motives.** Ask yourself “*why do I want change?*” This is as important as “*what changes do I want?*” Do you want to do something new, so you'll become well-known and different from others? Or do you want to minister more biblically and more effectively?
- 3) **Strategically choose the changes you make.** Carefully determine the change you want to propose and then take the initiative. Begin to define the issues by starting with the sense of dissatisfaction with the way things are and pointing those things out. This becomes the window for change. Don't propose the change yet – you're just letting the folks on your ministry team see that something needs to change.
- 4) **Go slow.** When you are early in your ministry, don't make the mistake of proposing huge changes. They don't even know you yet, let alone trust you. Give them time to settle into your leadership before you begin proposing innovations and changes.
- 5) **Start small.** Begin with an easily attained change (i.e., “a winner”). Hopefully, this will go well and prepare the people for further creative innovations down the road.
- 6) **Test the waters.** When you think you're ready to consider a new idea or potential change, don't begin with a formal presentation of the change you want to make and how you will accomplish it. Just privately ask a couple key people and note their reaction. It tells what parts of the idea will receive the strongest resistance and who will be the strongest resisters.
- 7) **Listen and respond to resisters.** See the resisters' push-back as an opportunity to turn a good idea into a great idea. These people will

unintentionally shine and polish your idea by pointing out all the weaknesses way before any formal presentation. Don't start a debate, or even worse, a fight with the resisters. Listen to them and adjust your ideas.

- 8) **Persuade the opinion makers.** Line up strong supporters ahead of time. Neglecting this is a big mistake. Don't put people in the awkward position of going public at a meeting with their initial negative reactions. Once they go public with their less than positive opinion, it's hard for them to turn back and publicly accept your ideas about change.
- 9) **Decide before the decision.** Continue to quietly build a consensus for the change and persuade others to own the decision before the decision / vote is made. It's best if the vote to approve the change, if a vote is taken, becomes just a formality.

The ***controlling principle*** for all the changes you propose must be the vision you have for your ministry. This vision will inspire people with a clear understanding of how things will be better with change. Think carefully what you want to do and where you want to go, being absolutely certain that your vision is biblically based and God honoring.

Many spiritually minded, godly Christians find themselves uncomfortable with change because of the legitimate fear of encroaching pragmatism. The solution is to ensure that all change will fall within certain biblical parameters. And then you need to communicate this often. These five parameters include:

- holiness (Phil 3:10; 1 Pet 1:13-21)
- excellence (Phil 1:9-11)
- anticipation (Acts 1:4, 8, 14)
- relevance (1 Cor 9:19-23)
- teamwork (Phil 1:27; 4:2-3).

The ***controlling attitude*** for your ministry must be an attitude that shows you are eager to learn and improve. You need to constantly demonstrate from the very start in your ministry that you haven't arrived, you don't have all the answers, you value input from anyone with good ideas how to be more effective in ministry. Invite feedback. Facilitate communication. This will show people how to adapt to change by modeling it yourself.

Learn to communicate the vision you have for your ministry in less than two minutes. Short and simple communicates better than long and complicated. Stating your vision to others in a concise way will allow you to get a reaction that signifies both understanding and interest. When you state it, your vision should motivate others to want to join your ministry team and get to work. And the ultimate result of people joining your ministry team will be that some things will change.

Great ministry leaders are those who *do* something. They're willing to risk failure because they truly believe something creative must be done. Navigating change is an important skill.

- *He who rejects all change is the architect of decay.*
- *The only organization that rejects innovation is the cemetery.*

ACKNOWLEDGING OUR LIMITATIONS

The following is an excerpt from Paul David Tripp's article "Good Leaders Embrace Their Limits" posted by the Gospel Coalition on September 15, 2020 shortly after Tripp's book was released *Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2020).

"I hate limits. I want more time so I can do more than time allows. I want more strength so I can accomplish more. I want more wisdom, so I don't have to invest so much time researching and learning. I want to be infinite and almighty. There are still moments in my life when I want to be God. I wish I could say I'm free of the frustration of the limits God has set for me, but I can't.

In ministry, it's tempting to try to do more than you can realistically and healthily do. It's tempting to write job descriptions for others that ask more of them than they can responsibly handle. And it's tempting to let a leader work way beyond his limits because his work seems essential to the success of the ministry enterprise."

Leaders with Limits

The only limitless being in the cosmos is its Creator. Everyone and everything has been designed by God with limits, and it never

works—never results in anything good—to attempt to live, minister, and lead outside the boundaries of the limits God has set. Identifying those limits—and what it means for the way a leadership community makes decisions and does its work—is a vital aspect of what that community must do to ensure its members remain spiritually, physically, emotionally, and physically healthy. Every leader is a package of God-given gifts and God-assigned limits. It's dangerous to focus on the one without humbly remembering the other.

If you're a leader, you aren't just a package of strengths, gifts, and experiences; you're also a collection of weaknesses and susceptibilities. Here, the gospel offers such sweet encouragement. We don't have to fear our limits, because God doesn't send us out on our own; where he sends us, he goes too. We don't have to curse our weaknesses because our weaknesses are a workroom for his grace. Our limits and weaknesses are not in the way of what God can do through us, but our denial of limits and delusions of independent strength are.

Living and Ministering with Limits

Until we're on the other side, we'll live, minister, relate, and live with limits. Our limits aren't in the way of what God intends to do through us, because they're all the product of his wise and loving choice. What he calls us to is possible to do inside the limits he has made. So it's part of our gospel calling to have those limits before our eyes and in our leadership-community conversations.

We must resist the temptation to live outside those limits or to make the assumption we're all dealing with our limits in ways that are humble and wise. God isn't afraid to call limited people into gospel leadership, so we shouldn't be afraid, with gospel humility and hope, to put those limits on the table—not just once, but again and again, knowing we'll need to retain this commitment until his work in us is complete.” (Paul David Tripp, “Good Leaders Embrace Their Limits,”

<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/article/leader-limits/>)

God-Ordained Limits

Human beings were created with limits. God didn't design you to be a superhero. You and I were created to live dependent lives, never

surviving on the basis of our own strength, wisdom, and control. From the moment of our first breath, we were limited, weak, and fragile beings. It is absolutely essential for ministry leaders to recognize their God-ordained limits.

Here are seven of the God-ordained limits that we all have.

- 1) **You have limited time:** Time has been set for us by our Creator. We didn't have a vote and we have zero ability to change it. You will never get thirty hours in a day, and you will never have nine days in a week. You will never have 29/7 or 24/10.
- 2) **You have limited spacial presence:** You are not omnipresent. You cannot be in more than one place at a time, and you cannot be everywhere at once. This fact cannot be changed.
- 3) **You have limited strength:** You are not omnipotent. You have limited physical strength and energy and you are not self-sustaining nor self-rejuvenating. Your life consists of both physical (your body) and spiritual (your soul) and your physical body has genuine limits to its strength.
- 4) **You have limited knowledge:** You are not omniscient, knowing and understanding everything. Think of everything that you do not know. Consider all that you have not figured out and do not yet understand. Look back on all those moments when you thought you understood, only to be corrected. Your wisdom and understanding are frustratingly finite. Above all, you cannot fathom why God does what He does and why He chooses the means and circumstances He does to conform us more into the image of Christ.
- 5) **You have limited ability:** No ministry leader has been given all the gifts and abilities to do everything he or she does in ministry. Every one of us needs to rely on the contributions of others who are gifted and have abilities in ways we that we lack. Therefore, we need to honestly assess our own gifts and abilities, where we are gifted and where we are not gifted.
- 6) **You have limited maturity:** Every leader is a person in the middle of his own sanctification. No matter how long we've been in ministry leadership, no matter how well trained, no matter how theologically mature, we're all still in need of future spiritual development. We all have blind spots. We're all susceptible to temptation. Each of us has character weaknesses. We're all still in need of the rescuing,

convicting, transforming power of the gospel and at times need confronting.

- 7) **You have limited team-mates:** It is especially difficult to accept the fact that every person on your ministry team, and every person to whom you minister, shares all the same limitations as you do. Everything written above is true about you and everyone else: your spouse, your family, your co-workers, your friends, your ministry partners. We are all limited as human beings.

Growth and Development Despite Our Limitations and Struggles

Intentional strategies for ministry are good, but you must always keep in mind the above limitations. Also remember that ministry growth and development happen as the result of God's supernatural blessing AND His use of disruptions, interruptions, disappointments, troubles, trials, and surprises. Note the following examples from the book of Acts, as cited by Craig Van Gelder in *The Ministry of the Missional Church* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books, 2007, 158-159).

- Growth and development from conflict (Acts 6:1-6)
- Growth and development from adverse circumstances, even persecution (Acts 8:1-25)
- Growth and development from people you don't expect (Acts 10-11)
- Growth and development from intentional strategy (Acts 13-19)
- Growth and development from doctrinal controversy (Acts 15)
- Growth and development from divine intervention (Acts 16:6-10)

In the above examples, the church encountered significant growth and development. But only in one instance was an intentional strategy in place that directly led to the growth of the church.

“First, it is important to have a planned strategy that can lead to growth and development, as illustrated in the work of Paul's mission team. But second, there is also the Spirit's leading of the church through conflict, disruption, interruption, and surprise into new and unanticipated directions that result in growth and development. It is essential to have a strategy, but it is also essential to be alert to the disruptions and interruptions of the Spirit.” (Van Gelder, 159).

Homework Assignments:

- 1) Think through a Biblical definition of “leadership.” Use scripture to flesh out your answer. Be prepared for discussion.
- 2) List your personal Roles & Goals. Include steps toward accomplishing each goal.
- 3) Prayer Commitment: List 3 unsaved people and 3 saved people whom you pray for regularly. Commit to pray for them every day (save once a week) for the remainder of our study.
- 4) Pick a time in the next 3 months before our study concludes to participate in a 60-minute prayer session. (More on this below).
- 5) Examine the list of evidences of pride, and identify the various areas where you struggle with pride. Determine to get alone with God and ask for His forgiveness and strength to seek change.
- 6) Gospel Presentation: How would you explain the Gospel in a short conversation with a lost person? Write a one-page response.
- 7) **Your 15-Second Testimony:**
 - a) **There was a time in my life when I was ____ and ____** (2 adjectives that summarize what your life was like *before* salvation). **Then someone introduced me to Jesus who ____** (brief description of Christ/gospel). **Now that I’ve believed in Him, my life has/is marked by ____ and ____** (2 or 3 adjectives that summarize what your life has been like *since* salvation). **Do you have a story like that?**
 - b) **One Example:** *There was a time in my life when I was confused and afraid. Then someone introduced me to Jesus who lived the life I couldn’t live and died the death I deserved. Now that I’ve accepted him, my life has hope and purpose. Do you have a story like that?*
- 8) Evangelism Commitment: Commit to share the gospel with a friend, neighbor, or co-worker sometime in the next 3 months of our study. Suggestion: reach out to someone with whom you already have a relationship. Invite them for dinner or take them out to lunch and pray for an opportunity to share the Gospel.
- 9) Wise Decision Making: review the steps to making wise decisions and use them to walk through a decision. What is the next major life

decision, ministry decision, or relationship decision that you have to make?

- 10) Improving Your Skills: review the chapter on improving your skills. Identify three of your strengths & three of your weaknesses. Plot a path forward on how to sharpen your strengths & address your weaknesses (recall session on Roles & Goals).
- 11) Making Leaders: review the indicators of potential leaders. Whom within your sphere of influence to you see as having ministry potential? Seek to establish a relationship with that person for the purpose of encouraging them on toward service.
- 12) Forbearance & Forgiveness: Prayerfully determine whom you most struggle to get along with in the church. Identify whether you need to seek forbearance or forgiveness toward that person. Make amends with that person if necessary.
- 13) Attitude, Optimism, & Humor: examine your attitude. Would you categorize yourself as an optimist or pessimist? Give one illustration of how your attitude helped a work/church/family situation and one illustration of who your attitude hindered a situation. How can you seek to improve your personal attitude development?
- 14) Creativity & Change: Look at an area of ministry/work/family you are currently in. Identify an area in need of change. Where are the areas of inefficiency, conflict, or other issues? Innovate with new, creative ideas on how the situation might be better addressed.
- 15) Limitations: review the chapter. List three limitations you are experiencing that are curbing your effectiveness in life and ministry. Determine whether or not these limitations can be addressed. List two ways that you have grown and experienced change within the last 3 months during the duration of our study.

How to Spend an Hour in Prayer (By Dr. Ralph F. Wilson)

"An hour? How could I pray for an hour? I'd run out of things to say!"
Praying for an hour is like sitting down in a restaurant with a friend,

rather than ordering a cheeseburger and shake at the drive-up window. Somehow, as you sip coffee together, you find a lot of things to say, and it's a whole lot more satisfying than a wave and a "Hi, how are you?"

But if talking to God for that long seems intimidating, it's probably because you're still learning how to share yourself with Him (since He's invisible) in the same way as you would share with a friend (who is visible).

The following suggestions are designed to help you spend an hour with the Lord. After the hour, maybe even after the first 15 minutes, you won't need this outline. You'll find there's plenty to talk about without prompting.

Start by bringing along some things: your Bible, a hymnal, a blank journal notebook, a world map, a church directory, and your church's current prayer list. Then find a place where you won't be disturbed as you meet with God.

Preparation

1 min. Beginning Prayer. Ask God to help you spend this time profitably with Him. Ask for His guidance.

4 Min. Confession. Spend a couple of minutes going over with God recent sins which weigh on you. But don't dredge up really old ones. Begin by reading 1 John 1:9 (and note that He is "faithful" = based on His Word + "just" = based on Christ's blood and His imputed righteousness). Confess, ask God's cleansing, then accept it by faith and thank Him for it.

Praise And Thanksgiving

9 Min. Adoration. Sing to the Lord using a hymnal or some choruses you know. Joyfully lift up your voice in praise; there are just the two of you. Then thank Him for His goodness to you. There is a special sense in which God is "enthroned upon" the praises of His people (Psalm 22:3). As your heart begins to adore Him, you'll sense His presence more deeply.

Petition

9 Min. Pray About Life's Difficulties. Use this time to talk over with the Lord your own personal struggles. Discuss with Him your relationship with your special loved one or your spouse, your family, your own personal issues, your financial needs, your studies or job. But don't stop here. Be sure you go on to praying for the needs of others in the next segment.

Intercession

9 Min. Pray For Friends, Relatives, Neighbors, Fellow Workers. Don't just read a list of names to God but talk to Him about their lives. Pray for the spiritual needs of fellow Christians. Boldly ask Him for the salvation of the unsaved people on your list; ask God to bring Christians into their lives, to alter attitudes and circumstances, and to give you opportunities for witness and sharing gospel truth in depth.

12 Min. Pray For Your Church and its needs. Call on the Lord for a deep renewal of love for God. Pray for your pastor and church leaders. Intercede for the Sunday school children and the youth, the families, the singles and the widows, the sick and shut-ins. Call on God for an increase in giving so the church won't struggle to finance ministries. Pray for the Christian organizations working with students, children, the homeless in your community, with servicemen, and on college campuses. Intercede for those you know in special need.

8 Min. Pray For Our Nation, that God would send a revival! Pray that He will guide our president and legislators, our justices and judges, our governors and mayors, our police and firemen. Pray for righteousness in our federal, state, and local governments and a public policy sensitive to the needs of the oppressed here and abroad.

8 Min. Pray For Other Nations, for the work of Christ throughout the world. Intercede for unreached peoples, call on God to send laborers into His harvest. Pray for missionaries you know, for international pastors and churches, for the people of God who are suffering persecution. Pray for peace. Ask God to give food, shelter and hope to the hungry.

The above total = 60 minutes

Sixty minutes already? You just got started!

A Few Suggestions

Here are some ideas that'll help you pray more freely. First, be yourself. Why wouldst thou pray with an exalted vocabulary and a steeple in your throat like Brother So-and-So? Talk to God like you'd talk to your best friend.

Get comfortable. The stiffer you feel, the more formal your relationship will be. Sitting is fine. If kneeling helps, do it. You might want to take an hour's walk as you talk with your Lord God / Father in Heaven / Friend.

Next, try praying out loud, though not loud enough to disturb others. Being able to hear yourself pray really helps. You'll find that your mind doesn't wander as easily and that you can pray more fervently.

Keep a small notepad nearby for when thoughts come to mind about what you need to do when you're done praying. Write down the thought, and get back to prayer.

Finally, don't worry about keeping to the times suggested here. It's only to get you started, to help you believe you actually can spend sixty minutes in prayer. You'll find God will guide you in your prayer time. It's not a program, it's a growing relationship.

Now, go for it. Before you put this down, set a time when you will spend an hour with Him. You can't learn to pray from reading this paper, or even a full book, any more than you can learn to swim from a textbook. It's time to get into the water.

The above article is adapted from "How to Spend an Hour in Prayer" by Ralph Wilson.
<http://www.joyfulheart.com/maturity/prayer.htm>

