

# LESSONS IN LEADERSHIP

## From Colossians

### INTRODUCTION

#### A. Effective Leadership is Essential for Church Health.

1. *Leaders are integral to the life of the church.* The church is a led community, not a voluntary, self-governing society.
2. *Leaders have a profound impact on the church.* Where shepherds fail, the flock suffers; where they flourish, the flock thrives.

#### B. The Bible Provides Insight on Effective Leadership

1. *It provides clear instruction for leaders.* It does so in both positive and negative ways. It gives instructions for leaders and corrects delinquent leaders.
2. *It provides excellent examples of leaders.* Both Old and New Testaments abound in leaders - Abraham, Moses, Joshua, David, Hezekiah, Elijah, Nehemiah in the Old, and Jesus, Peter and Paul in the New.
3. *Paul's letters provide portraits of a leader in action.* They are written in real contexts for distinct purposes, and reflect pastoral leadership in action. This is illustrated in the letter to the Colossians.

### I. THE NATURE OF PAUL'S LEADERSHIP

#### A. It is Genuine Leadership

1. *It was prompted by a pastoral need.* The immediate occasion for the letter may well have been Paul's plan to return the runaway slave Onesimus to his master in Colosse (4:9). However, Epaphras, the founding pastor of the church (1:7,8), was with Paul in Rome when he wrote (4:12,13). The contents of this letter indicate that there were problems in, or at least dangers threatening, the life of the church in Colosse. Paul probably learned of these through Epaphras and used the return of Onesimus as an occasion to send a letter dealing with them.
2. *His letter provides help and direction.* It is not simply a friendship letter – though still friendly in tone. It contains instructions (3:1ff.), warnings (2:3,8,16-19) rebukes (2:20-23) and teaching (1:15-23). It was clearly intended to help the church by providing definite direction and motivation.

#### B. It is Authoritative Leadership

1. *Paul writes as an apostle,* a divinely appointed representative of Jesus Christ (1:1) who had received a definite commission from God for his work (1:25). His words have the backing of divine authority – they are not simply human suggestions.
2. *He expects to be heard and obeyed.* He commands, exhorts and rebukes without hesitation or uncertainty.

#### C. It is Servant Leadership

1. *He writes as a servant of the church.* He does not see himself above the church, but called and commissioned to serve the church (1:25).
2. *His authority is exercised for the sake of the church* (1:24). His office is not for his own power or honour but for the edification of the church. Authority and servanthood are not opposites but properly belong together.

## **II. THE QUALITIES OF PAUL'S LEADERSHIP**

### **A. It is Purposeful Leadership**

1. *Paul had a definite mission.* He was a servant of the gospel – the gospel that revealed the mystery of God concerning Christ (1:23, 26,27). His task was to preach that gospel (the word of God in its fullness) to the Gentiles.
2. *He had distinct goals.* He wanted everyone to be perfect or mature in Christ (1:28). He had a vision of knowledgeable, fruitful believers persevering in their faith in the midst of a hostile world (1:9-12, 23; 4:5).

### **B. It is Practical Leadership**

1. *Paul had a definite strategy for accomplishing his mission.* He concentrated on preaching Christ, teaching every man and admonishing every man so they made progress toward maturity (1:28).
2. *He took definite steps to achieving this.* He taught, warned, corrected and provided practical instruction in godly living.

### **C. It is Relational Leadership**

1. *Paul writes as a brother in Christ.* His apostolic function does not remove him from his readers. They are “holy and faithful brothers in Christ”(1:2). They share a heavenly calling and hope with him.
2. *He writes as one deeply concerned for them.* Though he does not know them personally (2:1), he thanks God for them (1:3), prays for them (1:9ff.), rejoices in them, and is with them in spirit (2:5).
3. *He writes as one who is transparently open to them.* He wants them to know about how he is and what he is doing (4:7-9). He also shares his needs and asks for their prayers (4:4).

### **D. It is Corporate Leadership**

1. *Paul worked with other leaders.* He connects Timothy with him as he writes (1:1), and acknowledges Epaphras (1:7; 4:12,13) and Tychicus (4:7) as co-workers and fellow servants of Christ.
2. *He affirmed and empowered other leaders.* He speaks very positively of these other men. Epaphras is a “dear fellow servant and faithful minister of Christ on our behalf” (1:7) and Tychicus a “dear brother, a faithful minister, and a fellow servant in the Lord” (4:7). The latter is not only entrusted with reporting Paul’s affairs, but also with encouraging the Colossians. He has definite tasks, but also scope and freedom to act as circumstances require.

### **E. It is Positive Leadership**

1. *Paul was positive in his attitude toward the Colossians.* He was thankful to God for their faith and love (1:4) and rejoiced in their firmness and order (2:5).
2. *He was confident of their future.* He was well aware of the dangers threatening them. At the same time, he writes confident of their status as God’s holy people (3:12) and with full anticipation them of entering into their hope (1:5,23,27).

### **F. It is Sacrificial Leadership**

1. *Paul works extremely hard for the church.* He labours (toils to the point of weariness) and struggles (agonizes) for them (1:29; 2:1).

2. *Paul suffers on account of the church.* He writes this letter from prison (4:18). Though he has not personally met the Colossians, he nevertheless sees himself suffering for them (1:24).

### **III. LESSONS FROM PAUL'S LEADERSHIP**

1. **Leadership leads.** It provides definitive help, correction, motivation and guidance for people.
2. **Leadership is authoritative.** It is based on Christ's call, uses Christ's word, and effects Christ's presence.
3. **Leadership serves.** It doesn't seek its own interests but the benefit of others.
4. **Leadership is purposeful.** It has definite aims and envisions distinct outcomes.
5. **Leadership is practical.** It conceives deliberate strategies and employs functional means.
6. **Leadership is corporate.** It identifies, affirms and uses other leaders to achieve goals.
7. **Leadership is positive.** It affirms, encourages and inspires, even in a context of correcting and warning.
8. **Leadership is relational.** It is human, transparent and personal rather than remote and professional.

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