

Here is an essential truth for leadership:

## **The heart and ministry of a leader are inseparable.**

If we intend to be effective and reflect the lordship of Christ in our leadership, then we need to constantly remind ourselves of the relationship between these two. To put it another way: what I do is a reflection of who I am. Or, the outer life of service is sustained by an inner life of devotion.

### **The setting**

To illustrate this relationship, we want to look at the life and ministry of the apostle Paul by isolating our attention on only one of the churches he founded and pastored, the church in Ephesus.

To get the setting, turn to Acts 19:1-22, which gives us the founding and building of the church. As we study this foundation and Paul's reflection on his ministry here, I think we can see why the Ephesian church matured so quickly and had such great impact.

The events of this chapter took place at about 55 A.D., six years before his letter in A.D. 61. The city was in the grip of superstition, fear, demonism, and witchcraft. You might say it was like the San Francisco of the Roman Empire. This chapter, however, offers a fascinating account of how the gospel can reach and affect an entire city and the surrounding provinces. The Lord will begin an amazing work through a very small band of people. We must never forget that God doesn't win battles by a majority vote. His plans are to work through dedicated and Spirit-filled disciples.

### **The preparation**

Let me quickly point out the elements that enabled this work to be so effective. We will expand on these as Paul looks back on these events in Chapter 20. Here are the elements.

### **The formation of a ministering core**

The first element in the preparation of this church was the establishment of a committed core of believers. He started with the training of Aquila and Priscilla in Corinth (Acts 18).

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They worked together, lived with and were taught by Paul. They saw his manner of ministry (vv. 7-11), took them to Ephesus (vv. 18-19a), and introduced Christ to the synagogues (verse 19b). He then left Aquila and Priscilla in Ephesus to live among the people. Later he returned and added to these first two disciples, 12 more men (Acts 19:1, 7). He would now prepare these new disciples.

### The foundation of biblical concepts (doctrine)

- He adjusted their view of baptism. (Verse 3)
  
- He taught the Lordship of Christ. (Verse 4)
  
- He baptized them. (Verse 5)
  
- He prayed that they would be filled with the Holy Spirit. (Verse 6)
  
- He instructed them about the Kingdom of God. (Verse 8) This was a message of God's rule over the hearts and lives of men, explaining the "now and the not yet" aspects of the Kingdom.

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The early church's initiation into the faith involved three specific events: commitment to Christ; baptism in water; and reception (baptism or filling) of the Holy Spirit.

## The founding of a city-wide ministry (Verse 8)

Note that Paul started in the synagogues. He went to where the people were potentially receptive. However, the result—not surprisingly—was opposition (verse 9a). When ministry begins in a new area, there is always a power confrontation with the forces of evil that causes persecution and difficulty.

Paul trained disciples by his example. Paul trained by specific teaching in the Hall of Tyranneus for two years. According to ancient writings, this was from 11 a.m. to 4 p.m., from the fifth to the eleventh hour. This was siesta time and the shops were closed. Work hours were from 7-11 a.m. and from 4-9:30 p.m., so Paul possibly made tents in the morning and the afternoon, leaving him five hours a day to teach. That's 3,121 hours of teaching in two years.

## The Four E's of Discipleship

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## Exposure

## Experience

## Evaluation

## Equipping

The outcome

### Evangelism

The result of anointed teaching and fellowshiping of the saints is evangelism (verse 10). The area Paul ministered in was larger than the State of California and it was filled with many cities. Of course, Paul didn't reach these cities himself, he taught and influenced those who carried the message. These cities may be the other churches mentioned in the book of Revelation. The Ephesian church may have been instrumental in establishing these works.

- Miracles occurred (v. 11).
- Counterfeit religious experiences sprang up (v. 13).
- Visibility of the power of Jesus (v. 17).
- Deliverance from Satan (vv. 18-20).
- The gospel spreads its influence and power (v. 20).
- Great opposition continues (vv. 23-41).
- Paul turns the ministry over to the disciples and departs (Acts 20:1)

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With that background in mind, turn to Ephesians 20:17-38. Here, Paul reflects on his ministry in Ephesus some time later. The view he gives to us is a very personal and moving picture. It enables us to not only review Paul's ministry, but to see into his heart.

### **The heart and ministry of a great leader (Acts 20:16-38)**

After leaving Ephesus, Paul traveled extensively. Now he is going to return to Jerusalem. He wants to be there by the day of Pentecost but he wants to see the Ephesian leaders one more time. So, to save time, he asks them to join him in Miletus. It is possible these may be the disciples he left in charge of the church. Possibly, even the original 12 he met when he came to the city.

If that is the case, then over the years of Paul's ministry they had developed into mature men. Whenever possible, Paul's pattern was to recognize the mature men as elders, so they could take over the church when he left (Acts 14:23). Who ultimately made them overseers (Acts 20:28)?

It is at this meeting of Paul and Ephesian elders that we hear Paul reflect on his ministry while in Ephesus. It is possible he is defending himself here because of some opposition that sprang up since he left, or this is just a reiteration to the spiritual leaders on how they are to minister as elders. Whatever the case, Paul is showing us a very complete picture of the attitudes, motivation, and actions of great spiritual leadership. This teaching is therefore not only for the Ephesian elders, it's for all who will lead a community of believers.

Paul will share here a number of the key elements of ministry that enabled him to effectively begin and finish the work God had given him. Here's the first:

## **Willingly model your spiritual life. (Acts 20:18)**

### **First, modeling flows out of the context of our lives.**

Even if words are not spoken, people will observe how we live (1 John 1:1). People may forget what we say, but they won't forget who we are.

### **Second, discipleship flows out of our relationships.**

The ministry application is simple: we all need models to show us the application of truth. I often need to relate what I hear to specific examples or a life situation in someone else's life, before I can fully understand it. This applies if we teach or lead. We need times when we live among our hearers, or times when they have a view of our personal struggles and successes through our teaching.

We can't be with everyone in this fashion, but with those we are discipling, it is very helpful. We see Jesus did this with the 12, and we see Paul exhibiting this philosophy in verses 34-35. He is saying in verse 35, *"In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"*

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We can also model our application of the Word in our lives if we exhibit extraordinary transparency in our teaching.

### Be a servant with great humility (verse 19).

There is an action and an attitude expressed in that statement. The action is service to God. Paul always saw himself as a servant. Acts 27:23 - *"Last night an angel of the God whose I am and whom I serve stood beside me ....."*

Paul's service, however, was not unto men. He viewed himself as primarily serving God.

Somewhere in ministry, a leader has to decide who he is serving. Is he going to serve God or man? These don't necessarily need to be opposed to each other, but there are times when you have to choose between them. Paul was not a man pleaser (e.g. Galatians 1:8-9). His priority service was toward God.

Here are some questions to help us see where we're at.

- What do I consider the most when making a decision: what God says, or how people will react?
- Do I do what God wants and then let Him take care of the consequences?
- What kind of work habits do I have?

Scripture indicates that all work is service to God. If our work habits are shoddy, then we

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know nothing of Christian service! (See Eph. 6:5; Col. 3:22-24.) How we work then, is a reflection of how we serve God, because all of our service is to be unto Him. For the believer there is no such thing as secular, or unimportant work.

In order to have this kind of service, Paul also had to have the attitude of humility (Phil. 2:3; 1 Peter 5:5). It is not natural to serve humbly. It is one thing to serve; it is another to have the *spirit* of a servant—humility. The source of humility is drawing upon God's grace.

1 Cor. 15:9-10—*"For I am the least of the apostles and do not even deserve to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect. No, I worked harder than all of them—yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me."*

Do you see what grace does? It gives us ministry that we don't deserve; and it enables us to work (serve) very hard.

2 Cor. 3:5-6a—*"Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."*

What does God's grace enable? It gives us competence to evaluate (judge) our actions and to serve. Therefore, humility is not only necessary, it's a priority. Here's the principle: "Humility precedes servanthood." What's a good definition of humility? It's elusive, because we don't have a biblical definition, only a biblical illustration. In fact, when we try to *verbalize* humility, we lose some of it, but we can see it.

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What does humility look like? It looks like a child standing before Jesus. (See Matt. 18:1-5) What enables us to be like a dependent child standing before Jesus? Here's the principle: "Dependency makes us humble." In other words, we are humbled once we know we can't do anything competent or lasting apart from God's grace. Paul understood this..

### Teach the whole counsel of God.

Notice the specifics of this teaching from this passage. Paul did not hesitate to preach anything. He preached what was helpful today (verse 20) and taught the whole will of God (verse 27). He was resolved to have no hesitation to speak *all* the truth..

One of the dangers we can all fall into is when we start to think how other people will be affected or react to what we say. Consequently, we begin to avoid certain subjects, so that no one will be offended. There is no license in the kingdom of God to be obnoxious and unloving in the presentation of truth, but on the other hand, we must present the truth as it is regardless of the reaction—**all the truth**. Remember, the motivation for this is the last element we looked at. We are His humble servants.

Look at this stance in Galatians 2:11-13. Paul spoke the truth in front of everyone, even speaking it to Peter and to Barnabas.

*When Peter came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he was clearly in the wrong. Before certain men came from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles. But when they arrived, he began to draw back and separate himself from the Gentiles because he was afraid of those who belonged to the circumcision group. The other Jews joined him in his hypocrisy, so that by their hypocrisy even Barnabas was led astray.*

The distinction needs to be made between prevention and cure. Don't just react to people's problems and let that be the basis of your teaching. Seek to teach those passages that will also be preventative. That's why I believe in a book-by-book exposition of the Scripture, because at some time you'll cover every subject that is needed. (See *Lo*

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*ve, Acceptance and Forgiveness*  
, by Jerry Cook, pp. 23-25)

Second Timothy 3:16 gives us an overview of the balance of Scripture:

- For **doctrine**—teaching principles.
- For **reproof**—this means rebuke (1 Timothy 5:20; Titus 1:13; 2:15; Hebrews 12:5; Revelation 3:19)
- For **correction**—once rebuked, you also need tools by which to correct behavior.
- For **instruction in righteousness**—once reprovved, continue to teach them how to live the righteous life.

How do you fulfill 2 Timothy 3:16, when you may not know all the problems or needs of the group? Teach whole books, both Old and New Testament and you'll cover all the needs.

We also see something else here about Paul's teaching of the whole counsel of God. He reduced His message to simple concepts when needed (verse 21). What was his message?

He declared they had to turn to God in repentance. He declared they had to have faith in Jesus Christ. He adapted his message to the needs of his audience. We must be careful to do that. On the other hand, don't be satisfied with just imparting milk. We must progress to the whole counsel of God in our teaching. With regard to Paul's teaching, notice he never stopped warning day or night (verse 31). He was consistent in his teaching.

When it comes to teaching, one of the big temptations is to slack off, take a rest and only hit your studying when you have time, or you are up for it. If you are going to follow in the steps of Paul, you must be consistent. You can take time off for breaks, of course, but no time off because of laziness or poor planning.

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It is also important to remember that consistent teaching of the whole counsel of God does not necessarily bring immediate results. There is a lag time between sowing and reaping. So, don't be discouraged. If we continue to teach, God will give the increase. (Remember Paul at Ephesus, Acts 19:10—*"This went on for two years, so that all the Jews and Greeks who lived in the province of Asia heard the word of the Lord"*.)

Finally, notice his teaching was personal. ("...each of you..."—verse 31). This is just further refinement of what had been said. He spoke to the young, the old, singles, married, those in crisis and those who were mature. There was a personal concern and input for everyone.

Next, Paul moves to another major element in his ministry to the Ephesians. You will notice he is using some specific methods to teach the whole counsel of God. Therefore, we'll call the next essential element:

### **Commit yourself to biblical methods**

The leader must learn that the Bible is not only a message book, but also a method book. This passage shows us some of the methods to which Paul was committed (verse 20). What are the two places where Paul taught? What can happen in each of these times?

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- In public large group gatherings, it can be a time of prayer, worship, teaching and body life. On the other hand, is it possible for all the encouragement of Hebrews 10:22-25 to be accomplished in such a meeting? There is a need for another arena. Where could that be?

- In homes and other small groups, there can be times for sharing and caring. In the words of Hebrews 10:24-25, spurring and encouraging. (See Acts 2:41-47)

Here are three questions God wants us all to answer:

- Will you trust me with your life?
- Will you entrust yourself to a part of my family?
- Will you get out and be involved someplace in the world? Will you lose your life?

Paul now reveals his source of direction, giving us an essential relationship in ministry.

### **Be led by the Spirit (vv. 22-23).**

Paul had apparently been given instructions by the Holy Spirit to go to Jerusalem. He had no specific idea of what would happen to him when he started to travel there. Apparently, as he went from city to city, he was receiving words of knowledge or prophecy that told him of the hardships and prison that were facing him. Paul felt, however, that his mission to give the money he had collected to the Jerusalem church was what the Spirit wanted him to do (Romans 15:30-31). An illustration of the kind of warnings he was receiving comes later in Acts 21:8-14.

What does that incident say to us? We need to pray that there will be a marriage between

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wisdom and revelation. It is one thing to know a fact by the Spirit, and it's another thing to apply it properly and wisely. Ephesians 1:17 reflects this mindset: *"I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better"*.

We can correctly hear the Spirit, but misapply what we hear.

Now, what would you and I do with such an understanding from God? We would probably take it as a warning and not go to Jerusalem. That would have been a mistake for Paul, because the information about imprisonment, though true, was not given to deter him from his course. It was designed to prepare him. He was compelled by the Spirit.

We must be careful in ministry that our perception of a problem is not only correct, but that the solution is likewise directed by the Spirit. The best way I know to do that is through prayer, the Word and godly counsel.

Sometimes the course the Lord chooses for us is difficult. Therefore, the next element is preparatory:

**Count the cost (v. 24).**

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Though prison and hardship awaited him, Paul had one reason to live—to finish the work God gave him. He just wanted to get it done and leave. Therefore the last thing on Paul's priority list was self-preservation. His attitude was, "Don't worry about me if I'm tied up, I'll die if that's what the Lord wants." (See Acts 21:12-14)

Where is self-preservation on most of our lists? Can we say, "I don't care what happens to me. I have only one reason to live, to finish what the Lord gave me to do."

John MacArthur writes: "Can you fit sacrifice into your vocabulary? When is the last time you made a sacrifice of comfort, money, or time? Our Christian lives are filled with leisure time. For most of us the high point of our Christianity is when we go on a retreat. We all flake out in the mountains under some super Bible teacher and that is our in-depth exposure to Christianity. If your Christianity is on vacation, you are in trouble.

Paul saw his life as a sacrifice. He only lived to finish the work the Lord gave him to do. All he wanted to do was finish the course and the ministry that the Lord gave him. If you really believe that God has given you a ministry and that He is in control of your life, you are not going to worry about dying. You are going to spend your life on Him because you know that He is in charge of it."

- Examples: Phil. 2:25-30; Luke 14:25-31
- Epitaph: 2 Timothy 4:6-8

Karl Marx's definition of a communist: "A communist is a dead man on furlough."

What's our definition of Christian service? We are not our own, we are bought with a price. We should see, therefore, that in relationship to the prize of the high calling of God, our lives are worth nothing! We should never forget that following Christ may cost us everything! (See v. 23.)

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If we look back at Chapter 20, we see an element that enabled Paul to live so sacrificially. It has already been alluded to, but let's state it more concisely.

## **Know your calling (vv. 24b-27).**

Paul knew what his primary task was. Paul's calling was to testify to the gospel of God's grace.

How do we know our calling? Sometimes it is revealed through some extraordinary means. More often than not, it is discovered through faithful service (Proverbs 16:3, 9). We reap direction through servanthood. (See Ruth.) As we are faithful over a few things, God will make us ruler over many things (Matthew 25:21). As we faithfully serve, Jesus will give us a specific calling, as He did Paul. *"Jesus has given me..."*

How can we be sure we won't miss our calling? Paul give us two important words that are a safeguard to our ministry.

## **Guard yourself (v. 28a).**

It is amazing to me how naïve people are to the attempts of Satan to destroy or discredit their ministry. Most of the time the plan of Satan is not to destroy a person's ministry from

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without; he will most often concentrate on the interior of the minister. To say it another way: people in significant ministry will have significant temptation. If we think about it, it is certainly logical, because we are involved in a war. It makes sense that our enemy will try to discern our weak areas and concentrate on them... or he will concentrate on where we once were weak and vulnerable.

Billy Graham has said the three main areas of temptation in ministry are

1. Pride
2. Immorality
3. Greed

People who "restore" others need to be cautious or they themselves will be tempted (Gal. 6:1-2). As a leader, your resolves should be:

- To not give a hint of immorality, or of greed. (Eph. 5:3) (We'll see Paul's discipline in verse 33)
- To be confessional and transparent with people in your ministry. (James 5:16; 2 Cor. 3:16-18; 1 Cor. 2:5)
- To watch your words. (Eph. 4:29; Proverbs 15:28)
- To administrate your time. (Eph. 5:14)
- To check your motives and pride. (1 Cor. 4:1-5; 2 Cor. 10:17-18; Proverbs 16:3)
- To be joyful. (Proverbs 15:30; Romans 12:8b)

With that foundation of a personal guardianship, we are then able to move to the next element seen in Verses 28-30.

### **Guard the flock by watching for perils (vv. 28-31b).**

With sensitivity and transparency to our own needs and weaknesses, we will then have an eye for perils and weaknesses in the group of people we are given responsibility to care for. We will be helpful and discerning of others, only after we have experienced that process in our own lives. So, our private life prepares us for our public ministry.

What is a flock? It's people, not a program. It is people we are given responsibility to care for (e.g. small group; home meetings; classes we teach; family; etc.). It is not a program... it's fellow saints.

How do you guard? Paul uses a picture that gives us a lot of instruction. Three specific commands are stated.

**Shepherd the flock.** That includes the kind of care a shepherd has for sheep! Think about that. What is the function of a leader in relationship to the work of the Chief Shepherd? (See also: 1 Timothy 1:20; 2 Timothy 1:13-14.)

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**Watch for wolves.** We must be on guard for predators. They will attack from outside as a savage enemy, but not often. Sometimes they will rise from within (vv. 29-30). Even our own people will reveal they are wolves. This is also alluded to in 1 Timothy 1:3-7. They will secretly slip in among the saints. (Jude 1:4) They will also distort the truth. (v. 30; Jude 1:4b; 8-10).

Why will they do that? They will draw away disciples so they will follow them. (v. 30b; 1 Tim. 1:7). They will divide in order to destroy. (Jude 17-19)

**Guard and don't run.** (John 10:11-13)

What's your response when opposition occurs? That will reveal your bent toward being a hireling or a shepherd. For a leader, one of the deterrents to running is to remember the next element.

### **Remember whose flock it is and the price He paid for it (v. 28b).**

(See again, John 10:11, 14-18.)

Whose flock is it? It's God's flock. What was the price? Christ's blood. We need to meditate on that! We must never forget the value of His flock. It will affect everything we do! These are the people for whom Christ died.

The heart of Paul comes through in the next element. It is really a summary of what has already been said, but it is married to a sincere and heartfelt expression of the heart.

### **Admonish with tears (v. 31).**

We must admonish—speak the truth. If we are not admonishing, putting the truth into the mind of our hearers, then we are saying by our negligence that we don't love them. Admonishment sets people free and guards people from the enemy...from wolves.

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We must balance our admonishment, however, with a heart that is broken, with compassion. It is important that we allow the seriousness of people's needs and sins to break our hearts; it may not always be with tears, in public, but certainly it will break our hearts in prayer and intercession. I don't believe we can truly serve the Lord with a great passion unless we truly feel some inside suffering—some honest compassion.

Examples:

- Romans 9:2-3—" *have great sorrow and unceasing anguish in my heart. 3) For I could wish that I myself were cursed and cut off from Christ for the sake of my brothers, those of my own race...*"
- 2 Cor. 2:4
- Here in Acts 20, Paul mentions his tears twice: 20:19; 20:30b

It is important, then, to guard against callousness, hardness toward people. The world is always fed with broken bread (Luke 22:19). We don't need tears as a form of manipulation, nor as a technique, nor even as the norm; but we must allow transparent responses when they honestly occur. Some men have difficulty showing emotion, as they've never had it modeled for them, or because they think it isn't macho. Other men (and women) cry easily because that's their nature. We're all different. Notice, however:

We are talking here about allowing our hearts to be broken with the concerns that God has, apart from our nature or the constraints of our pride and our culture.

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The result of honest and transparent compassion is that we will see fruit borne, with the accompaniment of rejoicing.

Psalm 126:6 – *"He who goes out weeping, carrying seed to sow, will return with songs of joy, carrying sheaves with him."*

John MacArthur has written, "Service to Jesus Christ has to involve some inside suffering, so we can serve Him passionately. Yet, with all the joy of service, there is the knowledge of fruitfulness. I believe when a person is passionate and shedding tears over (sin) ...God will bring about fruit".—*For the Love of the Church*, Word of Grace Pub., Panorama City, Calif. 1983, p. 61.

If we are not careful, this brokenness and concern for others can be overwhelming, so there is a need for relief and perspective. The best way I know to do this is in the next element:

**Commit your ministry to God (v. 32).**

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The tendency is to take the full weight of responsibility for our ministry on our own shoulders. Paul had numerous churches and fellow workers, as well as the Jews and Romans to be concerned about. It must have been an unbelievable responsibility.

The Corinthians were going crazy with spiritual gifts; the Jews were plotting against him; the Galatians were deserting the gospel for a different one; he was attempting to raise money for the Jerusalem church; he was trying to keep track of all his disciples and churches by correspondence and personal visits. How could he handle the load? We think we've got problems!

Here's the answer:

The answer is to commit our ministry to God and others. The safeguard that keeps us from being overwhelmed by our ministry and its responsibilities is to commit it to God. He is ultimately responsible: *"Now I commit you to God."* Remember whose church it is: *"I will build my church."*

There's a second side to this commitment. We need to commit our ministry to others. The goal of our ministry is to get those we are ministering to, to stand on their own and take ministry from us. Be careful about making dependent disciples. We need to be working toward mature saints, able to stand without continual encouragement, who will in turn disciple others. Therefore be careful about a Messiah complex. No kingdom building is allowed except God's Kingdom. The time comes when we have done all we can do, so we must move on or send those disciplined to a place where they can minister and be further matured.

Let me emphasize, however, that this kind of commitment is not without pain. Giving away ministry and sending people, will tear and hurt very deeply. But, there is no growth and maturity without the pain and grieving. It's much like giving birth, or sending

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your first child away to college. Prayer is the only answer I know to help you adjust your heart to the heart and will of God. [Acts 20:36-38]

Summary: Therefore, notice that Paul had two parts to this commitment. One side of the commitment was a commitment of his ministry to God; the other side is a means to keep the Ephesians growing and maturing by committing the ministry to others.

In addition to that, Paul has another direction in his commitment that is an essential element of the ministry.

## **Commit yourself to the words of His grace [verse 32b].**

Who is the target of this commitment of grace? The elders. Why **grace**? It's a summary word for the message of the Scripture. Everything there is to know about the grace of God is found in the Scriptures. It's the main message we have to proclaim as leaders. God's unmerited favor is available to all [verse 24b].

Why **words**? Words are the monitor—the content of grace. A word of His grace will build us up, *"which can build you up..."* (To "build" is to edify, strengthen.) These words of grace are necessary building tools in our maturity. They will also give us an inheritance among those who are sanctified. It is an amazing thought—God's grace is unmerited, but not cheap or ineffective; for it will build us up and in the process, give us an inheritance.

What a treasure grace is. Do we appreciate it?

What's the result of this grace to these leaders and to us?

- It will give us opportunity to suffer [2 Timothy 2:8-12].
- It will enable us to be grace extenders, without thought to the merits of the individual or a return to us.
- It will enable us to build up and invest our inheritance in others. Our inheritance is present and future. In its present form, it is ministering capital that God expects us to invest in His Kingdom. (Remember the parable of the talents.)

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Now of course as we extend and model grace, there will be those who pervert it into license. But the problem isn't with grace, it's with sin. Don't withhold God's grace, forgiveness or favor because of what someone might do. Give it as you have received it: freely!

That is an illustration of the next element of effective leaders.

## **Be selfless in your ministry [verses 33-35].**

We have alluded to several of the truths in this verse already, but let me highlight them again:

We must resist and avoid any coveting. Paul mentions several things that we have talked about already. We are not to covet financial success as leaders, or the clothes of appearance of success. If need be, we should be willing to work with our hands to supply our needs. Very few have the privilege of receiving financial support from others to enable them to minister full-time. The model of Paul is an object lesson to his church of the action and attitude all believers should have.

Do you see your work and ministry as a way to illustrate, "*...it is more blessed to give than receive?*" We must be willing to work hard to supply what is needed for our ministry. Don't wait for the ideal conditions; minister unselfishly.

A pastor might need to do this because a church body is weak, or new, or immature. What will it do for the congregation? It should be an object lesson: "As I am giving, notice how blessed I am in the process. If you will follow my example, you will be blessed too—by giving."

*"Yet it was good of you to share in my troubles. Moreover, as you Philippians know, in the early days of your acquaintance with the gospel, when I set out from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in the matter of giving and receiving, except*

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*you only. For even when I was in Thessalonica, you sent me aid again and again when I was in need. Not that I am looking for a gift, but I am looking for what may be credited to your account. I have received full payment and even more; I am amply supplied, now that I have received from Epaphroditus the gifts you sent. They are a fragrant offering, and acceptable sacrifice, pleasing to God. And my God will meet all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus." (Phil. 4:14-19).*

We will never have trouble with coveting if we have a spirit of giving: A giving spirit will cancel out a covetous heart. Often when we begin a ministry, it calls for obvious modeling of what it means to be a giver—a minister in that group or church. As the group matures, it appears the responsibility for modeling is spread among the leadership core, then the original model becomes the norm.

As leaders, therefore, we have to be willing to have a selfless attitude for the sake of the maturity and growth of the other members of the group. Your object lessons will be mimicked!

*"Brothers loved by God, we know that he has chosen you, because our gospel came to you not simply with words, but also with power, with the Holy Spirit and with deep conviction. You know how we lived among you for your sake. You became imitators of us and of the Lord; in spite of severe suffering, you welcomed the message with the joy given by the Holy Spirit. And so you became a model to all the believers in Macedonia and Achaia. The Lord's message rang out from you not only in Macedonia and Achaia*

*— your faith in God has become known everywhere. Therefore, we do not need to say anything about it, for they themselves report what kind of reception you gave us. They tell how you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for his Son from heaven, whom he raised from the dead*

*— Jesus, who rescues us from the coming wrath."*

(1 Thess. 1:4-10)

The final element is:

**Follow your instructions with prayers.**

# The Heart and Ministry of a Great Leader

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(Precede it with prayer, too—verse 3b.)

1. Paul followed this example in many of his letters.

- Ephesians 6:19-20
- Colossians 4:2-4
- 1 Thessalonians 5:23

1. Jesus followed a whole day of teaching with prayer (Mark 1:35).

2. Ezra the teacher was a man who prayed (Ezra 9:6-15).

Prayer, after instruction, is the final watering of the seeds planted. It will help retain what has been said!

## Conclusion

Notice the final touching scene. The whole company of leaders is on their knees praying and weeping. What does this say to us? If you lead and shepherd people the way Paul modeled for us, you will be missed and loved deeply when you leave, but your ministry will continue to stand when you are gone!