

Leadership God's Way – 1 Cor 3:5-9

1 Cor 3:5-9; Have you ever noticed how many books are written on leadership these days?

You can hardly walk through a bookstore without running into them

From leadership for dummies, to dummies in leadership . . .

It seems like everybody has a slant, everybody has a method, and everybody has a twist

Not all of which is bad, but if you want the *best* – if you want the *best* slant, the *best* method, the *best* principles . . . you have to *go* to the best; obviously referring to God
And that's where this passage comes in

It's filled with principles for leadership straight from the heart of God, laid out through the pen of Paul – a pretty good leader himself

Principles critical for success in *any* endeavor, any setting, but especially the church
So I've chosen to call it *Leadership God's Way*, starting in v5; Paul says . . . (v5-9)

- **(Intro)** Similar to ch1 and the previous paragraph in ch3, the issue here is a wrong view of leaders on the part of the people . . .
And a wrong view of the people on the part of the leaders; Both; Those are the issues

And in the midst of addressing them, and warning us of the implications/consequences, we find 4 leadership principles
4 principles that *every* leader, in *every* setting, should live by *every* day

It doesn't matter if you're the pastor, or one of the pastors . . .

The worship leader or one of the band members . . .

It doesn't matter if you're a businessman or a statesman . . .

Paid or volunteer, in the church or out, formal or informal

If you're a leader past, present, or future – this is leadership God's way, and these principles are for you ; The first of which is . . .

Know your place (v5,7) . . . Because there's no room for prima donnas

If there were, Paul would have been at the top of the list

But as it is, he calls himself a servant – “diakonoi” in Greek

Look at v5 – *What then is Apollos? What is Paul?* IOW what kind of leaders are they?

And then he answers his own question – *Servants*; Diakonoi; Servant leaders

Referring to people who give of themselves at great personal cost and sacrifice, for the sake of the *gospel*; and *Christ*; and the *church*

Which means there's absolutely no room for prima donnas

No room for conceited, demanding, difficult people who think they deserve to *be* served

- If you're a leader in our church, whether by title or not – know your place
And your place, regardless of your position, is that of a servant – akin to someone who waits on tables
That's how the word was originally used in Greek

Which means you're here to *serve*, not *be* served

You're here to advance others, not yourself

You're here to make *them* better, even if it makes you worse

- And you're not that important in doing so

No matter what your title, or responsibility, or position – you're not that important

Oh, you may be the one *through whom* others believe, like it says in v5 of Paul/Apollos . . .

But even then you're still just the conduit, like pipe is to water

It's *through* you that God works; You're not the message, you're the messenger

Therefore you're not that important; *Needed*, yes; But not important

Which v7 makes crystal clear – *neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything*

No matter what kind of conduit or servant you are, when it comes to the spiritual growth of those in your care, including their initial growth-spurt of belief . . .

You have nothing to offer – neither planter nor water-er is *anything*

Which means you're not that important

- Several years ago, I ran across a list of personal commitments from one of the great pastors of old – I think it was John Wesley, but I'm not sure
Whoever it was, they were ongoing commitments he made to God, in order to live a life pleasing to him

And among the several that caught my eye, one of them jumped off the page at me, which I re-worded and adopted for myself

It goes like this – “Lord, don't let me succumb to the temptation of loving importance, power, or indispensability”

It's a prayer that I've added to *my* list, b/c it reminds me of my place, and keeps me there
It reminds me that I'm a servant, a diakonoi

And that far from being a prima donna, I'm supposed to give of myself at great personal cost and sacrifice, to *you*; And you're to do the same, with one another

B/c there's no room for prima donnas, only servants; Know your place

Play your part (v5-6, 8-9) . . . Because there's no room for lone rangers

Instead of trying to do what *you* want to do – do what God *gives* you to do

Do what God *allows* you to do; Play your part as *assigned* by him

Just like Paul and Apollos played their respective parts as *assigned* by the Lord (5b)

- Make no mistake, you don't choose your role in the church – God does
Having assigned some to be pastors and elders – he assigns others to the work of ministry through them
Who assign still others, and others, and on down it goes; *God* chooses your role

And just b/c you aren't playing the part you think you *ought* to play, doesn't mean that God has made a mistake, or is late in noticing you . . .

Or that the leaders above you are somehow clueless

They could be, maybe due to ignorance, or a lack of information, or a false notion about you – but it's not likely; not in a healthy church with competent, Spirit-filled leaders

And far too many people get wrapped around the axle when they get that wrong

When they don't get to do the thing *they* want to do, and blame those in charge . . .

Or feel like God has slighted them

That would be like Paul saying that he's bitter b/c he didn't get to stay in Corinth and do what Apollos did; or vice versa

It's ridiculous; And still is when it happens now; Which unfortunately it does

- I remember a couple when we first started the church, who were the worst in this respect
She wanted to sing solos, and he wanted to be my preaching coach
And when we asked them to wash windows – they took their ball/bat and went home

And it still happens every now and then when someone walks in here, tells us all about themselves, and we fail to be impressed – they usually don't stay very long

Listen, play your part as assigned by God, even if it's not the one you *want* to play, or is different from the one your buddy plays
Just like Paul's part was different than Apollos'; Play it, and play it well

- And as you do – work together
V8 says that – *He who plants and he who waters are one*
Meaning we're on the same team; We're in this together
Which leaves no room whatsoever for lone rangers
People who want and try to do ministry by themselves – apart from any accountability, any authority, or any help

V9 says, *we are God's fellow workers*

That is, partners with *him*, and with one another – *fellow* workers it says
All of which means we *belong* together, and therefore should *work* together

- Play the part assigned to you, working together, for the purpose of doing God's work
That's the implication of 9b where Paul says – *you are God's field*, referring to the church, the people of God
IOW just like a farmer's field is the focal point of his work, and he enlists the help of others to accomplish it . . .
So too, the people of God are the focal point of *his* work, and he uses leaders like you and I, to do it

So instead of trying to do your *own* thing, your *own* way – play your part to do *God's* thing, *God's* way
That's the second principle of leadership we find here
Play your part . . . b/c there's no room for lone rangers

Take no credit (v6-7) . . . Because there's no room for glory hounds

That's the idea behind Paul's statement in v6 – *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth*

We did the right things, Paul says; We spread the word, we taught it, we disciplined . . .
But *God's* the one who did the heavy lifting
He's the one who gave the growth; He's the one who brought about maturity
Not us; We can't take credit for that; That's for God and God alone

7 – *Neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth*

Only God is something, b/c only God can do the miraculous

Only God can do the supernatural work of causing people like you and me to grow in the likeness of his Son

Only God can cause a church to grow in genuine spiritual maturity

Oh sure, we can make it grow in number – with all our smoke, glitz, glamour, and glee

But only *God* can bring about true *spiritual* growth; So the credit is his

- Which means there's no room for glory hounds – those who are looking for attention *themselves*
Looking for applause; Looking for acclaim; Looking for fame; Looking for credit

There's no room for that, b/c God will not share his glory with another (Is 48:11) . . .

And even if he did, there'd be none to share, b/c we don't deserve it

We're the servants; The conduits; The messengers

So fight your desire to be noticed, fight your desire for fame, and fight your desire for credit

You don't deserve it, I don't deserve it, and it's not ours to be had anyway – it's God's

And last . . .

Rely on God (v8-9) . . . Because there's no room for worry warts

When it comes to leadership God's way . . .

Know your place – b/c there's no room for prima donnas . . .

Play your part – b/c there's no room for lone rangers . . .

Take no credit – b/c there's no room for glory hounds . . .

And rely on God – b/c there's no room for worry warts

8 – *He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers.*

Whether it's the wages of money as a vocational leader in the church . . .

Or the fruit of your labor as a non-vocational leader – like the fruit of spiritual growth in those you lead, or the joy of having a front row seat to it all . . .

Whatever the case, whether our wages are tangible or intangible – we can and *should* rely on God for them

B/c we are *his* fellow workers (9a) – i.e. we're under his care, and in his employment

And as a perfect employer with unlimited resources, he never fails to make payroll

He never fails to provide for those who lead his church

Which means there's no room for worry warts

There's no room for fretting about whether God will bless the work of your hands

There's no room for *wringing* your hands, wondering whether you can make ends meet
Each will receive his wages it says (8b)

- Now, it may not be the amount you want or think you need
And it may not be the growth you're looking for in your SG members, or student group
Or the numbers you desired, or the joy you anticipated when you went into ministry or became a leader . . .

But it *will* supply your need – God's wages will supply your need

Always just enough, at just the right time

You can rely on him for that, without worry – and you should

I can't tell you the number of times God has given me just the right boost, or just the right encouragement, or just the right good news, at just the right time
Wages as far as I'm concerned; Every time I turn around

- Now, that's not to say that he doesn't withhold our pay sometimes – he does
In fact, it's the first of 3 caveats I want you to understand
3 Caveats to God's promise to pay

1. It's not an automatic deposit
Sometimes God withholds our pay in order to stretch our faith, or make us long for heaven – something that's hard to do when we have it all on earth
Or sometimes he withholds our pay to change our direction in life . . .
Or get us out of one role and into another

He does that from time to time
And it's one of his best methods for conveying his will, and conforming ours to his
His promise to pay is not an automatic deposit

2. It's not a license for foolishness
Like our steps of "faith" that are really steps of folly – most often accompanied by the rationalized spiritualism of "God told me"
It's not insurance against poor decisions – decisions of *our* will instead of *God's* will
God's promise to provide – whether it's spiritually, emotionally, materially, or financially . . . is not a license for foolishness or insurance against poor decisions

3. It's not based on a flat scale
We don't all get the same things, the same rewards, the same blessings, or the same wages – just b/c we're a part of the same family
God's compensation is based on our *labor*
8b – *Each will receive his wages according to his labor*
Implying that little work means little pay; It depends on your labor

- Which we hear very little about in church-world these days, b/c leaders are scared to death that people will leave their churches, if they advocate such a high standard
"We can't ask them to work, they might leave"
Fine, let them leave – they're dead weight anyway
If you're a leader in our church, your responsibility is to speak the truth in love, not fill the seats

We hear very little, or say nothing about working for Christ, b/c we don't want to come anywhere close to those who advocate a works-based salvation
Which is blatantly unbiblical; Got it; Got it

But listen, while grace rules out earning, it doesn't rule out effort
God lavishes us with grace, *and* calls us to work – both; the Bible's filled with it
And our reward and blessing and wages, now and in eternity, depend on it
Depend on God's grace, *and* our work
Each will receive his wages according to his labor (8b)

- So if you want to get rich in *God's* economy . . .

And I'm not talking about rich financially, I'm talking about rich in the things of *God*

If you want to get rich in God's employ, with things like joy unspeakable; And the . . .
Elation of seeing him bless the work of your hands . . .
Satisfaction of being used for his purposes; Awe of his glory . . .
Peace of doing his will; Favor of his gaze; Hope of his promises . . .
Love of his heart; Amazement of his grace . . .
If you want to get rich like that – then work your tail off

Labor for the cause of Christ; Spend and be *spent* like a diakonoi
B/c far from a fixed scale, his pay is based on your labor
And though you may not see it right away, or even in this life – you *will* see it
B/c it's a promise; From the ultimate promise *keeper*

Which means there's no room in leadership, for worry warts
You can and *should*, rely on God; That's leadership his way