

Ministry, Leadership, and People – 1 Cor 16:5-12

1 Cor 16:5-12 (p.962); While you're doing so, you can pass your cups toward the middle of the worship center, and an usher will pick them up shortly

We talked last week about *How To Bless Those In Full-Time Ministry* . . .

By welcoming them into your life, helping them when they need it, blessing them with rest, and protecting them from disrespect

That's the first thread Paul weaves into this passage

- The other, is how to *lead* people in ministry – *Ministry, Leadership, and People*
From which we'll find 5 principles, that apply not just in church, but in our homes, our work, and our play; It's really that broad

So follow along with me as I read once again, starting in v5

[5] I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia, [6] and perhaps I will stay with you or even spend the winter, so that you may help me on my journey, wherever I go. [7] For I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits. [8] But I will stay in Ephesus until Pentecost, [9] for a wide door for effective work has opened to me, and there are many adversaries. [10] When Timothy comes, see that you put him at ease among you, for he is doing the work of the Lord, as I am. [11] So let no one despise him. Help him on his way in peace, that he may return to me, for I am expecting him with the brothers. [12] Now concerning our brother Apollos, I strongly urged him to visit you with the other brothers, but it was not at all his will to come now. He will come when he has opportunity. (1 Cor 16:5-12)

The first principle we find when it comes to leadership, especially in ministry, is to . . .

Manage expectations, but keep it real (v5-6)

IOW don't be a typical politician; Don't be a person who speaks in glittering generalities, and promises far more than you can deliver

Don't exceed what you know to be true; Keep it real; Like Paul

Who said in v6 – *perhaps I will stay with you; Or even spend the winter*

IOW – “I'm not sure, but maybe; It's a possibility”

So that you may help me on my journey [he says], wherever I go

Paul didn't know exactly, so he left it that way; He kept it real

Instead of telling them what they *wanted* to hear, he spoke only the truth

Neither limiting his options, nor exceeding his ability to deliver

- But to the extent he *could*, and to the extent he *did* know – he said so; he managed their expectations
I will visit you after passing through Macedonia, for I intend to pass through Macedonia
To the extent he knew, he said so; And rightly so

B/c managing people's expectations is one of the most other-oriented things you can do
As in letting people know your plans, and what you think, and what you expect, and what *they* can expect

The alternative, is expecting them to read your mind – one of the more *selfish* things you can do; *And* one of the more dangerous; B/c unmanaged expectations will kill you
If you're a leader, and you fail to live up to what people expect of you, it's going to be a problem; At best they'll complain, and at worst they'll desert

Better to manage expectations like Paul

Who not only told the Corinthians what he intended to *do*, but gave them a heads up as to what he expected of *them*

- So whether you're the leader of a SG, Service Team, ministry, family, or sports team – don't assume that those in your care know what you're thinking; They don't

And don't leave it to chance that they'll just pick it up along the way; They won't

That's like thinking your kids will pick up their shoes off the *stairs* without being told

Not happening; And there's too much at stake to leave it at that; Like a broken leg

And the same is true of ministry, with broken lives

So manage expectations, but keep it real

Don't exceed what you *know*, and don't exceed what you can *deliver*

Second . . .

Plan ahead, but hold loosely (v7)

Paul says in v7 – *I do not want to see you now just in passing. I hope to spend some time with you, if the Lord permits.*

Paul not only wanted to see them, but planned on spending some time with them

The key being, he *planned* on it

Which is crucial to *anything* successful as a leader – you have to plan ahead

Which requires, that you *think* ahead

If you're going to plan ahead, you have to think ahead

That's one of the reasons good leaders are constantly thinking – they have to

Otherwise there will be no plans; There will be no vision

And without a vision, the organization dies; The business fails; The family splinters;

The team loses; The church fades

- Think ahead in order to plan ahead . . .

And then, most important of all, make sure you submit those plans to the Lord

Saying like Paul – *If the Lord permits* I will spend some time with you

Or like James – *If the Lord wills*, we will live and do this or that according to our plans (James 4:15); IOW hold loosely; Plan ahead but hold loosely

Don't *presume* on God to automatically bless your plans

We exist to follow him and *his* way, not the other way around

That's the *first* key to holding loosely

Second, is to pay attention to the *obstacles* in your path; The hitches in your plan

Far too often, especially in ministry, we automatically assume that hardship, or barriers, or difficulties – come from Satan as a way to deter us

When often times, they come from God as a way to refine us; Or change our direction

Or grow us in maturity; Not always, but sometimes

So it behooves us to pay *attention* to the obstacles in our path, and despite having planned ahead – to hold loosely

That's the 2nd principle of leadership from Paul's example here; Third, is to . . .

Take advantage of opportunities, but be discerning (v8-9)

Paul loved the Corinthians, and desperately wanted to see them

But duty called; Opportunity knocked – *A wide door for effective work has opened to me* he says in v9; Not just any door, but a *wide* one

A golden opportunity to do the very thing he'd been *called* to do

And he was intent on taking advantage of it – delaying his visit to Corinth until

Pentecost, the Spring, to do so (8)

When God opens wide doors for effective works of ministry, take advantage of them

But therein lies the discernment, doesn't it?

B/c every opportunity is not a mandate; And what constitutes a *wide* door?

- Once again, Paul's situation is instructive

B/c it says in Acts 19 that Ephesus was a place from which *all the residents of Asia* could hear *the word of the Lord* – from right there (10)

A place where the name of Jesus was being *extolled* – i.e. highly exalted/praised (17)

A place where the word of the Lord continued *to increase and prevail mightily* (20)

That constituted a wide door for Paul; A golden opportunity

And having discerned it, he took advantage of it

Even though he had all *kinds* of opportunities like that, in any *number* of cities

And he'd already *been* in Ephesus for 2 ½ *years* – you'd think it was time to move on

But he didn't; He stayed and furthered his investment *there*; B/c the door was wide open

- Which is exactly how we feel about our build-out, isn't it?

It's a wide door for effective work; A golden opportunity for more and better ministry – right here, and from here

In fact, that's what our entire church has been from the get-go – both *inside* these walls, *and* out; Including things like Kids for Christ in some of our schools

And Backyard Bible Clubs in some of our neighborhoods

And 1st Principles as our core discipleship curriculum

And the School of Ministry for advanced study

And our 2 church plants in Chattanooga and Washington DC

And our partnership with the Fellowship all *over* the world

All wide doors for effective works of ministry, from right here

None of which we *had* to walk through; We didn't *have* to do any of them

But having *discerned* the opportunities – we're taking advantage of them; Much like

Paul did in Ephesus

And much like we hope to do the same someday, with satellite campuses

So whatever the capacity of leadership you find yourself in – take advantage of the opportunities, but be discerning

Fourth . . .

Protect what you have, but don't smother it (v9b)

When it comes to ministry especially – protect what you have

You see, Paul not only *wanted* to stay, and was *compelled* to stay due to the opportunity, but he *needed* to stay

Otherwise, wolves would have torn it up; Opposition would have consumed it;

Adversaries would have wrecked it

And there were *many* he says in v9b

3 of whom are mentioned by Luke in Acts 19 – the Sons of Sceva, Demetrius the silversmith, and the riotous crowd in the amphitheater

Adversaries abounded

- Which is always the case, with *every* work of ministry; Opposition abounds

So much so, we should expect it

In fact, to the extent we *don't* expect opposition – we'll be disheartened, disillusioned, and ill-prepared to face it

Just like an army that gets lazy and complacent b/c they don't anticipate combat

Do you realize there are people who hate the conviction they feel due to the truth you proclaim and the life you lead?

Do you realize that some people see us and our beliefs, as a hindrance to their "enlightened" way of thinking, and a threat to their sinful way of living?

I hope you do; B/c if you don't, you'll be ill-prepared to protect our church, and the work of ministry of which you're a part

- We must expect and protect against opposition from *without*, and, unfortunately, from *within*; That's right

Which most often comes in 3 forms:

1. *Divisive tendencies* on the part of unhappy people

People who judge, grumble, and complain as a matter of course

2. *Compromising tendencies* on the part of desperate leaders

Resulting in a watered down gospel and worldly church, in order to accommodate more and offend less

3. *Protectionist tendencies* on the part of *fearful* leaders

The first 2 being pretty obvious, and easily seen

But the latter is just as insidious and equally damaging – protectionist tendencies

The bottom line being, that a death grip on ministry is no good; B/c that's often what it leads to; And protectionism in ministry works about as well as protectionism in trade

Part of what we must protect against, is holding so tightly to our church and ministry – that we smother the passion and suffocate the Spirit

We must guard against failing to trust God to *preserve* our church, with the same faith we had in starting our church

IOW part of the opposition we must *expect* in ministry, and protect against, is our own fear of failure

And the best way to do so, is to continue stepping out in faith as God leads

To keep taking *advantage* of the opportunities at hand, and holding *loosely* to the ones we have; To keep doing what God wants you to do, trusting him for the energy
To keep giving what he wants you to give, trusting him to provide

Protect what you have, but don't smother it

And then last . . .

Urge people to serve, but respect their wishes (v12)

One of the things we tell the new pastors in our Fellowship, is not be bashful about calling people to a high standard

And not to hold back when they see a need – either a need for *volunteers* in ministry, or their need to *serve* in ministry, whether it's needed or not

Urge people to serve like Paul; *I strongly urged* he said in v12; *Strongly*
Referring to his desire to see Apollos visit the Corinthians as well
He urged him to serve; And we should too as leaders in ministry

- But having done so, we need to respect the wishes of those we ask
Push, but don't force it; B/c for whatever reason, they may not *resonate* with the need or opportunity; Or the timing might not be right; Like it wasn't for Apollos
It was not at all his will [Paul says in v12] *to come now; He will come when he has opportunity*
He evidently *couldn't* go, and didn't *resonate* with going; And that's okay

Assuming of course that he's living right
That he's in step with the Spirit; That he has the mind of Christ
When that's the case, you can comfortably respect the wishes of those you urge to serve
Trusting God to provide in other ways, or at a different time
But in no way should that keep you from urging those around you, to serve

- So as July gives way to August in a few weeks, and school begins once again – let me do that; Let me urge you to serve (**Summary**)
To find a ministry in which you give of your time and effort

If it's on the weekends, like in Children's Ministry, great
Worship one service, and work one service
In fact, if that's where you're sensing the Lord's leading or compulsion – start now, plan ahead; B/c it takes at least a month to work through the application process
We don't take that lightly

Or maybe a weekday ministry appeals to you; Or something *outside* these walls
Whatever the case, plug in somewhere, and take advantage of the opportunities at hand
Expecting, and even anticipating, opposition and obstructions; It's part of leading

Pray – God, you know my desire; To make disciples who worship you, walk with you, and work for you in every area of life – including leadership roles; So would you use these principles to reinforce those who are leading well; And change those who aren't?
All for the purpose of increasing your praise
That's the heart w/ which we give now, of our tithes and offerings (*Praise is Rising*)