

Are You A Leader?

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[0 : 00] Well, hey, good morning. My name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church in Greensburg, Indiana. You can always check us out at FCCGreensburg.com or on our FCC Greensburg Facebook page.

But I'm so glad that you've tuned in today, and I just pray that God will take His Word and use it to mold and shape our hearts closer and closer to Him every day.

Now, today, I have one question for you that I don't need you to answer right now, but I just want you to think about for a second. Are you a leader?

Now, in my journey to grow, I've read a few books from the leadership guru, John Maxwell. I've attended several conferences on what it looks like to be a godly leader. I've even sat through college classes on this topic, even looked around a table with peers and discussed this subject in the most practical of ways, and yet you can have all the head knowledge of what godly leadership looks like and still not live it out.

See, when the pressure and stress are on, when the verbal attacks come flying, when the feelings of inadequacy and insecurity invade the mind, when healthy leadership demands sacrifice and people-pleasing is just way too easy, when fear comes calling my name, and yet what has taught me the most about leadership is when I've seen it modeled right before me, when I've seen godly men go into a public restroom and take 30 seconds to pick up the paper towels and wipe the water off the sink, when I've been around leaders who can say no, when everyone wants them to say yes, because their commitment to follow the Holy Spirit's leading always comes before pressure to live up to other standards, when leaders have stayed quiet in the face of false accusations instead of feeling the need to fight back, when I've watched men and women truly care about the people around them on a personal level more than what they can do for them or the organization, when I've seen good leaders get stabbed in the back and choose not to retaliate but instead return good for evil.

[2 : 14] Listen, I am so glad that you are listening today and the answer to that question that I started off with, are you a leader, is a resounding yes.

Whether it's in the church, your workplace, as a parent, a spouse, an aunt, uncle, grandparent, in the community, at your school, with your friends, you are a leader.

If you are a redeemed child of God, if you wear that label Christ follower proudly, then you are a leader. But that leadership looks a lot different than the world's definitions.

So welcome back here to week four of our series called The Power of Unity. We're in the book of 1 Corinthians. You can go ahead and start to turn there with me if you would.

And this is an interesting letter that the Holy Spirit inspires Paul to write to the Corinthian church. We're going to, if you were here with us on Sunday morning here, you would see that we throw up on the screen Paul's second missionary journey, a map of that.

[3 : 15] And what I want to do for our church family is just help us to visualize where the city of Corinth was. For you on the radio, this would be kind of where modern day Greece is.

Corinth was a wicked city devoted to drunkenness, all kinds of sexual immorality. And they were just masquerading all of it as religion as they worshiped the false goddess of love, Aphrodite. And Paul had been led by God to plant this church in Corinth about five years earlier than writing this letter that we call 1 Corinthians.

And as the church grew, Paul hung around there for a year and a half. He kind of helped them to build their foundation, to get their feet under them. He fed them a spiritual baby bottle so they could start to grow up in their salvation as a church that was called to be set apart, a church that was called to look different than this wicked culture around them.

But because Paul was a church planter, he left Corinth to continue his mission, and Apollos came in as their pastor. And it appears that Apollos is a great man of God, a powerful communicator of the word.

[4 : 26] And yet when someone's heart is hardened to the truth and not willing to change, chaos can still happen. And it did in the church in Corinth. So we see Paul in this letter at times approach them with such a gentle hand, reminding them of his love for them, and even more important, reminding them of who they are in Christ.

At other times, like chapter 4 today, he comes with the hammer to deal with some real unhealthy stuff. But in everything, his goal is for them to pursue holiness, which always results in unity in the church.

See, his goal is for them to shine Christ so that others may come to know the ultimate hope of salvation that's found only in the name of Jesus. So, as we've said here many times, as the leadership goes, so does the church.

And in the first three chapters of 1 Corinthians, we see some who are screaming, I follow Paul, the apostolic church planner. Others are on Team Apollos, the powerful preacher.

And still others have met Peter along the way, and he's their blue-collar boss. And while they're elevating leaders to unhealthy, idle status, they're also bashing the others and not showing them the respect they deserve.

[5 : 49] In other words, their view of leadership is worldly. It's unhealthy. And in chapter 4, Paul is going to deal with it. So, let's talk today about two S's of leadership as you go ahead and grab your outline for me and fill in this first point.

Godly leaders are servants. Godly leaders are servants. And by the way, the way you can access our outline is to go ahead and go to the YouVersion Bible app that you can download for free, Y-O-U-Version Bible app.

And then you can go to the menu, go to events, go to First Christian Church of Greensburg, and then you can get to the outline. But first, let's talk about how godly leaders are servants. When I hear this word servant, I think of a man that I never got to meet, but I wish I would have.

A servant-hearted leader in this community and in this church for many years who passed away back in 2003. I'm talking about Pastor Steve's dad, Bob Frenzemeier, who played the organ here, served as an elder, and held a big role in this community as the superintendent of Greensburg schools.

And yet, when those who cleaned this church were maybe had to be gone for a week on vacation, whatever, he would jump right in there, he'd scrub toilets, vacuum floors, get rid of the trash, make sure that the facilities were worthy of worship for a king.

[7 : 19] And I bet a lot of you who knew Bob well didn't know that he scrubbed toilets because he would have never have mentioned it. Now, look at me here, 1 Corinthians 4, chapter 4, verse 1, and we'll see where Bob learned this servant-hearted approach.

Paul says, This, then, is how you ought to regard us, as servants of Christ. Now, I'm going to stop right there. Let's focus in on those words, servants of Christ.

And that word servant in the Greek paints a portrait for us, a picture of the lowest slaves. And you can kind of picture them, you know, those big boats, and you got the bottom level, and that's where you got people rowing.

And you can picture these servants, these slaves, working hard, rowing with those oars. And while I know whenever you hear the word servant or slave, that sends up all kinds of negative emotions, and rightly so, because slavery, as we've seen it in our world, is a wicked, wicked thing.

But if you understand this word in its context, it really is a beautiful picture. Paul is saying, Because Jesus met me in my sin, because he forgave me when I didn't deserve it, because he loved me when I was unlovable, and now because he wants to use me for his glory, and listen, I don't know about you, but that's my story too.

[8 : 46] Because of his amazing grace and freedom that broke every chain off my heart, that continues to sustain me, Paul says, I am willing now to chain myself to him, the perfect master of my soul.

See, he, God, is the only one who spoke and creation sprang into existence. He sits enthroned above the circle of the earth, sustaining us still.

He knit us together in our mother's womb. At his command, the scales fell off, and the blind could see. His touch, with his touch, the leper was made clean, and Jesus will come again with every knee bowing and every tongue confessing that he is Lord.

And Paul is saying a real leader is one who hitches their wagon to him. A godly leader has made Jesus their master, because he's the only one worthy of our worship.

A godly leader has made the word of God their guide, because man's wisdom will always fail.

Here's how Paul put it, if you'll look back here to 1 Corinthians 4 with me, and let's read verses 3 through 5.

[9 : 58] He says, I care very little if I am judged by you or by any human court. Indeed, I don't even judge myself, he says. So Paul's saying, listen, I'm not trying to tick everybody off, but it's not my goal to please you, because I only serve one, and that is my Lord and Savior, Jesus.

Verse 4, My conscience is clear, but that does not make me innocent, Paul says. It is the Lord who judges me. Therefore, judge nothing before the appointed time. Wait until the Lord comes.

He will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will expose the motives of the heart. At that time, each will receive their praise from God. So let me tell you what this isn't.

We hear people all the time say, well, I don't care what anybody thinks of me. God's my judge. And most of the time, they really do care. That's why they keep bringing it up, okay?

And I've met people who said this who didn't even follow Jesus. It's just the thing to say, because it seems often such a far distance. They just didn't want anyone to tell them what they were supposed to do or what was right or what was wrong.

[11 : 05] Little did they know that each of us will stand before Jesus someday, and that is a legit fact. And those good deeds will not get you into heaven. In fact, we will be accountable for every word, deed, and motive before a perfect judge.

And it's only through the grace of God, through my faith in him, that will allow me to enter into eternal paradise. See, Paul is looking at this church that is living way too much like the world, but still dearly loved by God.

And he, as their spiritual father in the faith, is looking at them. He's heartbroken over what he hears. And he's saying, don't get caught up in placing me, or Peter, or Apollos to a level we shouldn't be placed at.

Don't make us an idol. Instead, realize that even the godliest of leaders are still servants to the real master, the one who is deserving of your praise, and that is Jesus Christ.

He's the one we'll stand before someday. He's the one worthy to be our master. So follow him. And I love this quote by Chuck Swindoll.

[12 : 16] He says, Paul even goes on in verse 7 to prove his point that leaders are meant to be servants and not celebrities.

He says, For who makes you different from anyone else? What do you have that you did not receive? And if you did receive it, why do you boast as though you did not? In other words, as a servant, you belong to the master.

And everything you have came from him. And this is the attitude of humility we're called to have as leaders. Because if we can lead people well, listen, that gift came from Jesus.

If you teach in a way that draws people into the word and helps them to grow to spiritual maturity, great, that's all him. If you have the creative ability to play an instrument or do art for the glory of God, and I appreciate people like that because I don't really have it, wonderful.

But he gave you that ability. If you have the gift of hospitality or you just love to jump in there and get your hands dirty and serve wherever the need arises, he wired you that way.

[13 : 29] Now, don't take that to unhealthy extremes where you start treating those in leadership poorly because I just don't want their head to get big, right? We're called to approach everyone with a servant's heart.

So be grateful to the leaders, the spiritual leaders the Lord puts in your life, but realize we're just servants of Jesus trying to row that boat where he's calling us to take it.

And when we start to see our leadership that way, that I'm just a servant of the king, and I'm here to serve him by loving others and leading them to the cross, man, that's when everything changes.

That inner narcissist starts to fade and a person who loves others well starts to emerge. I once read the story of a young woman who wanted to go to college, but her heart sank when she read this application question, are you a leader?

Knowing how timid she was and wanting to be honest, she wrote no, and she returned the application expecting the worst. To her surprise, she received this letter from the college that said, Dear applicant, a study of the application forms reveals that this year, our college will have 1,452 new leaders.

[14 : 46] We are accepting you because we feel it is imperative that they have at least one follower. So I started off this message asking if you're a leader. And then I tell you this story because Christ-like leadership looks so different from the world.

The world says you assert yourself and you lead with a strong, bold personality. You bust your way through. You eliminate anybody in the way. You claw and you scratch your way to the top. And when you get there, you don't give it up.

You keep one eye open. Don't let anybody take it away from you. And yet Jesus calls us to the complete opposite in so many ways. Jesus calls us to lead through weakness, to lead through humility, to cut to the back of the line so others get some food, to spend your life serving others and lifting them up in Christ.

I have to tell you that I have been in the church long enough to see quite a few people come in with big personalities, just gung-ho, wanting to be in leadership, wanting a microphone in their hand right away, wanting to be just the leader, the person people look to.

And I've also seen people come in the opposite way and go ahead and grab a bottle of Windex ready to clean the windows or jump in there ready to set up chairs or whatever needs done.

[16 : 06] And what I've discovered is that those who come in simply to serve with all their heart are usually the ones that the Lord will place in leadership roles at some point in his precious church.

See, the ultimate example of this comes from Jesus. God in the flesh, who had the power to call down angels, probably by the millions or more, to protect him, to set him free.

And here's what he did. Philippians 2. And I'm going to start in verse 3 and then I'll get to what he did in a couple verses later. But it says, do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit.

Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves. Not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of others. In your relationships with one another, here's what I want you to see, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus, who being in the very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage.

Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness, and being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death, even death on a cross.

[17 : 20] Jesus modeled what it looks like to be a servant. He came down off that throne in the perfection of glory to enter this bleak world. That's servanthood.

He lived a sinless life teaching all about the kingdom of God in the face of opposition and false accusations. Servanthood.

He was wrongfully arrested, tried, beaten severely, and nailed to a cross for you and me.

Servanthood. And he calls us to go against the grain of everything around us to pick up our towel and wash the feet of others.

See, that is godly leadership that starts with servanthood, with being a servant. Now let's keep this thought going and look at our second point here.

Godly leaders are also called to be stewards. Stewards. And you can write out to the side there the word faithful. And let me show you where that comes from.

[18 : 20] Look back to 1 Corinthians 4, verse 1 with me. And I want to show you a different part of this verse. It says, This then is how you ought to regard us as servants of Christ.

We just talked about that. And then here's what I want you to see. And as those entrusted with the mysteries God has revealed. Now it is required that those who have been given a trust must prove faithful.

So if you look at the word that the New International Version translates as entrusted, it could also be translated as steward. That word literally means house manager.

And anytime we talk about this word steward, whether it's my time or money or talents, resources, stuff, it's this idea that I am God's manager and it's not mine at all.

It all belongs to Him. And when that concept goes from the brain to the heart, I'll tell you what, it will change your life. How you live, how you love, how you spend money, how you use your time, how you see your legacy, things of this world that always seem so important will fade and the things of

God will become your passion.

[19 : 33] So yes, a leader is a servant full of humility, but that servant has been entrusted by the master with the mysteries God has revealed. So what does that mean?

The mysteries God has revealed. It sounds kind of spooky and kind of mysterious like God is going to tell you something that no one else ever has known. But this Greek word for mystery that's used here literally means that which was hidden and can only be known by divine revelation.

See, we're talking about the truth of God's word. We're talking about the revelation of Jesus Christ as Messiah, the reality that He is the Savior of the world and He is the answer for everything that life will ever throw your way.

It's not some big secret, but it's now been revealed who Jesus is. And while we're called to have a humble heart of a servant, realizing our gifts from God were given by Him, we're also called to take that very seriously and manage our life and our leadership and all God has entrusted to us well.

Maybe you're a single parent or even one that stays home with your kids. I know it can be exhausting, but you have been given a great responsibility to disciple your children in God's word.

[20 : 53] Don't give up. I know you're tired, but don't give up because what you're doing can change the world for Christ. Maybe you're a leader at work. You have the opportunity to take seriously your witness and leading others to the truth.

And one thing that happens when you work day in, day out with others is that you both experience life, right? All the ups and downs, those things happen over the course of the year. And how you walk through the valleys, how you minister to them in the valleys may just lead them into the arms of Jesus.

Maybe you're a student in the public school system and you are faithfully trying to follow the Lord. It's not easy because you have worldly agendas that are screaming in your face, demanding your approval.

You have the opportunity to stay faithful to Jesus, although that's not always easy. You have the opportunity to stand on truth, to wash feet, and to lead in a way that will shine Christ into other students.

Because listen, the stuff many of them are chasing after absolutely will not satisfy. But instead, it's going to leave them empty, longing for more. So be willing to maybe be unpopular, be willing to be set apart, be willing to live out your faith that seems so weird to others because you never know when someone's watching and God may just open that door.

[22 : 16] And from experience, sometimes it's those that you would have never expected who seem the most hostile to the gospel who are the ones that will come wholeheartedly.

So Paul's looking this church he loves right in the eye and he's saying, okay guys, I see all this sexual immorality happening. I see selfishness and jealousy and pride running rampant.

And all of this is causing division and fighting in God's precious church when the Lord has called you to be a Holy Spirit hospital, when you've been called to be a beacon of hope.

And yet there's no way you can be that healthy church when you're being led by the flesh the way you are. So Paul goes on to where it all starts and he says it's all about leadership.

The leadership of the church and the personal leadership that each of us believers have in different parts of our lives. And he points us back to Jesus, the ultimate servant, humbly giving his life for us and calling us to serve sacrificially.

[23 : 22] And then he also gives us the command to be faithful stewards of our lives, managing well everything God entrusts to us. And when each of us are committed to be servants and faithful stewards for the Lord, that's when that chaos will disappear and a spirit of unity will take over the local body of Christ.

And I'll tell you what, I am so thankful for FCC Greensburg because we have that spirit of unity.

That doesn't mean we're perfect because we're not. But God has been building our leadership and they have been seeking him and we see a church body that is unified on a great mission to shine Jesus to others.

But listen, I also love the fact that Paul doesn't just leave it at that even though that would be enough. Look at me here at one more part of this passage. 1 Corinthians 4 verse 14.

We'll start there. Paul says, I am writing this not to shame you but to warn you as my dear children. So once again, he kind of goes from gentle to the hammer to back to gentle.

He says, even if you had 10,000 guardians in Christ, you do not have many fathers for in Christ Jesus I became your father through the gospel. And then he says this in verse 16.

[24 : 42] Therefore, I urge you to imitate me. It's not Paul being arrogant. It's not Paul trying to act perfect. It's Paul loving this church.

God entrusted him to plant and seeing them as his children in the faith that he can help grow to spiritual maturity. It's Paul believing in kingdom math where every disciple is called to make disciples who then make more disciples and in the process we see the world changed by the love of Christ.

And it's also Paul knowing that his life is sold out to Jesus. And he's saying if you need help, come run this race with me. See how I do it in the power of Christ and imitate me.

Could you imagine our average attendance here at the church roughly has been around 500 people here lately. And could you imagine each person grasping this servant-hearted approach?

Could you imagine 500 people taking seriously the call to manage God's church well? And could you imagine 500 people striving to live their life in such a way that they can say, hey, imitate me as I imitate Jesus.

[26 : 01] Wow. Because that kind of church, I'm just telling you, that kind of church doesn't have to get letters like this that we see in 1 Corinthians. That kind of church changes the world in the power of Christ.

So let me give you this challenge. As you realize you are a leader, let's be that kind of church. Pray with me. Heavenly Father, I'm just so thankful for your word that has spoken right into our hearts. I'm so thankful for these two S's that you have called us to as a leadership. that when we live these things out, the kind of chaos we see in the Corinthian church will not be happening in our churches. And yet, we see so many churches today that walk in the same kind of chaos because there is a leadership vacuum. A leadership vacuum in the church and in the personal leadership of each believer.

But Lord, you have called us to servanthood, to wash feet for your glory. You have called us to be faithful stewards of all that you have entrusted to us.

[27 : 14] And when we live out servanthood and when we live as stewards who take your call seriously, Lord, I am thankful for what you will do in us and what you will do through us.

So Father, I just pray that we can be your church, your hands and feet in this world. And we pray all this in Jesus' name. Amen and amen.

Hey, let me give you this invitation real quick. Once again, my name is Ray Sweet from First Christian Church, Greensburg, Indiana. But I just want to give you this invitation.

If you've got questions about your faith, if you'd like to talk about, okay, I want to give my heart to Jesus, I just don't really know what that looks like, please reach out. We would love for you to give us a call, 812-663-8488, or you can email me at ray at fccgreensburg.com.

Hey, God bless you, and we're so thankful that you tuned in today. Have a good week.