

Unstoppable...Healthy Leaders = Healthy Community

9/1/19 – Pastor Randy

Now from Miletus he sent to Ephesus and called the elders of the church to come to him. And when they came to him, he said to them:

"You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, serving the Lord with all humility and with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews; how I did not shrink from declaring to you anything that was profitable, and teaching you in public and from house to house, testifying both to Jews and to Greeks of repentance toward God and of faith in our Lord Jesus Christ. And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. And now, behold, I know that none of you among whom I have gone about proclaiming the kingdom will see my face again. Therefore, I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all, for I did not shrink from declaring to you the whole counsel of God. Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood. I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. Therefore be alert, remembering that for three years I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears. And now I commend you to God and to the word of his grace, which is able to build you up and to give you the inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I coveted no one's silver or gold or apparel. You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak and remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'" Acts 20:17-35

This is Paul's farewell message to the elders (leaders) of the church which he had planted in the city of Ephesus on his second missionary journey and where he spent about three years on his third and final journey. He was determined to get back to Jerusalem for the Jewish feast of Pentecost but before doing so, he stopped at Miletus, a little south of Ephesus. From there he sent word to have the elders of the church meet him there so he could

Unstoppable...Healthy Leaders = Healthy Community

9/1/19 – Pastor Randy

share some important instructions and encouragement. This speech provides us with a wonderful example of what Christian leadership should look like.

This truth is not only applicable to your pastors and other “official” leaders in the church. Everyone Christian is a Christian leader on some level.

“The central task of leadership is influencing God’s people towards God’s purposes.”
- Robert Clinton in *The Making of a Leader*

“Christian leadership is the process whereby servants use their credibility and capability to influence people in a particular context to pursue their God-given direction.”

- Aubrey Malphurs in *Being Leaders: The Nature of Authentic Christian leadership*

Are you a Parent? Then you are a leader.

Are you an employer, manager, or supervisor? Then you are a leader.

Are you a friend? Then you are a leader.

A leader is someone who assumes responsibility to influence others through the powers and authority he/she has at their disposal.

What does Pauls’ farewell address teach us about healthy leadership?

A. Leaders Serve.

*You yourselves know how I lived among you the whole time from the first day that I set foot in Asia, **serv**ing with all humility... (Vs. 19)*

To say that godly leaders are servant leaders is to communicate that they don’t view leadership as an opportunity for selfish gain. This does not mean that leaders are not deserving of certain rewards for their leadership, but it does mean that they are not the kind of people who serve for the reward. Personal gain is not the driving force in their lives.

Look at Acts 20:33 - Paul said, *“I coveted no one’s silver or gold or apparel.”*

Christian leadership is servant-leadership. They are not driven by selfish interests. So what does drive them?

1. Servant-Leaders are driven by a sense of duty.

Unstoppable...Healthy Leaders = Healthy Community

9/1/19 – Pastor Randy

*And now, behold, I am going to Jerusalem, constrained by the Spirit, not knowing what will happen to me there, except that the Holy Spirit testifies to me in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself, **if only I may finish my course and the ministry that I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God.** (Vs. 22-24)*

Paul exercised his leadership with a sense of duty to the calling of the Lord on his life. When Jesus called Paul, Paul didn't ask, "Well, what's in it for me?" Paul didn't tell Jesus his agent would contact Jesus to start negotiations!

Leaders embrace responsibility. There are a lot of people who like to point a finger, but not nearly as many that want to lift one. Don't point a finger in blame unless you are willing to lift two to make a change.

2. Servant-Leaders serve as a labor of love.

*Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has **made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood.** (Vs. 28)*

Authority is not incompatible with love. Oversight, supervision, was a means of expressing care. You can be a loving police officer, teacher, judge, or CEO!

James Kouzes and Barry Posner authored the Leadership Challenge, a text that has set the standard on the subject of leadership. In one of their other books they noted that their *studies of the top CEO's revealed one common characteristic: They genuinely cared for their people.*

I know that after my departure fierce wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves will arise men speaking twisted things, to draw away the disciples after them. (Vs. 29-30)

Sometimes caring for the flock means removing someone from fellowship because they pose a danger to the church. I have had to remove people from specific ministries within the church, and even from the church altogether. These decisions were not made in a mean spirited way. They were only made in order to protect the church, usually to protect minors within the church.

Unstoppable...Healthy Leaders = Healthy Community

9/1/19 – Pastor Randy

B. Servant Leaders Serve Sacrificially

*"...with tears and with trials that happened to me through the plots of the Jews."
"...in every city that imprisonment and afflictions await me. But I do not account my life of any value nor as precious to myself..." (Vs. 19, 23)*

When you embrace the responsibility to lead as an act of service to God and others, you will experience rejection and criticism. There is pain that comes with leadership; the pain of rejection, criticism, and personal failure.

The family is the most basic unit of society and parenting is the most basic form of leadership. There is pain that accompanies the leadership role of the parent. Every parent has made their child angry at times, not because they mistreated them, but because they made a decision in their child's best interest, motivated by love for their child. Parents learn that rejection and criticism come with the territory.

Leading is work. It is physically, mentally, and emotionally demanding work which means it is sometimes painful work.

*"I did not cease night or day to admonish every one with tears" (Vs. 31)
You yourselves know that these hands ministered to my necessities and to those who were with me. In all things I have shown you that by working hard in this way we must help the weak... (Vs. 34,35)*

Paul was ready to make the ultimate sacrifice – he was willing to die for the sake of the mission God had given him.

This third point about sacrifice is the outgrowth of the second point that leading is a labor of love. Work ethic is related to spirit of generosity.

C. Servant-Leaders Lead by Example

You yourselves know how I lived among you... (Vs. 18)

Paul did not sit in an Ivory tower from where he handed down orders. He lived among and worked among the people. He didn't believe the lie that he had to keep his "professional distance" from the people he was leading. He was able to speak to them with authority while living among them as one with them. His moral authority did not come from his position but from his example.

Unstoppable...Healthy Leaders = Healthy Community

9/1/19 – Pastor Randy

Leading others well requires us to identify with the people we lead. We must lead as one who is AMONG the people, not as one who is ABOVE the people.

The leadership at Calvary pursues this model. We are not perfect but pursue. This is a portion of a letter written by one of our Puerto Rico team members. *“Christine, the pastor’s wife sat next to me daily on the bus as we traveled to and from place to place. Initially this made me very uncomfortable because growing up, there was a hierarchy in the churches I attended with my family. The pastor/bishop and their wives were unapproachable. They were like celebrities in church and we were their “fans”. That hierarchy in the church turned me away from the church for years. I was uncomfortable with Christine sitting next to me (I had a problem even calling her by her first name). I felt uneasy, even though she did not make me uncomfortable. I didn’t know what, if anything I could talk to her about. Amazingly, and only by the grace of God, Christine and I talked daily about many things spanning from my childhood to my life right now. The conversations were easy and fluid. This showed me, as I already witnessed in church many times by Pastor Randy, that there is NO hierarchy in a genuine, bible believing and practicing church. No one is more important than anyone else....The Lord is letting me know that it’s safe. I believe that not being/feeling “safe” stems from a childhood of being and feeling uncomfortable because of the circumstances of my life and the trauma that I suffered as a child...I’m sure that Christine doesn’t know the impact that sharing a seat with me on a bus has had on me. She doesn’t know how God used her to show me myself. As a matter-of-fact, Christine texted me after the mission trip for my thoughts/ideas on a child in the Calvary Kids program. Amazing! Right?”*

Leading by example means showing people what to do rather than just telling people what to do. How can I lead you to serve if I don’t serve; how can I lead you to be generous (with time, treasure, and talents) if I am not generous. How can I lead you to have faith if I don’t have faith?

Modeling is the most powerful form of moral, ethical and spiritual instruction. This is also true with technical skills. If you want to be a good carpenter, work with a good carpenter, don’t read a book or watch videos on carpentry.

Jay Kessler, in his book, **Ten Mistakes Parents Make with Teenagers**, cites one huge mistake being the line, “Do as I say, not as I do!”. The classic example

Unstoppable...Healthy Leaders = Healthy Community

9/1/19 – Pastor Randy

would be the mother scolding her adolescent for smoking while holding a cigarette in her hand. Here is a general truth:

"If you do as you say, your children will be more likely to do as you say, because most of the time **they do what we do!**

"If you don't do as you say, your children will be more likely to not do as you say, because most of the time **they do what we do!**

The behavior and attitudes they observe modeled before them exerts more influence than the words spoken to them.

Close:

1. **Pray for your leaders.** Pray they will be godly servant-leaders.

The higher the platform, the greater the temptation to be selfishly motivated. Some leadership responsibilities have little potential for financial gain or personal fame. Some positions are accompanied by significant financial gain and personal fame. These positions are most vulnerable.

2. **Recognize your leadership opportunities.** the sphere in which God has already placed you as a leader!

Who has God called you to influence?! Don't say nobody!!

3. **Lead with a servant's heart.**

Run to responsibility not away from it. Embrace the call of God to influence others towards His purpose for their lives. Serve sacrificially. Lead with love. Lead by example.

The bottom line is LITERALLY the bottom line in this passage – "...remember the words of the Lord Jesus, how he himself said, **'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'**" (Vs 35)

The foundation of a Christ-like life and church is a SERVANT'S HEART.