



INTRODUCTION

From the time I became a Christian, I have devoured various biographies of great Christian leaders—eminent preachers, distinguished pastors, prominent missionaries, and other heroes of the faith. Their lives fascinate and challenge me. I’m strongly motivated by men and women who have served Christ well. Their stories have been a powerful catalyst for me to move ahead in my own spiritual walk.

Collectively, they have influenced me as much as any living, breathing influence I have ever been exposed to. Of course, I am the sum of many influences, not the least of which would include my spiritual father’s godly example as a pastor and preacher of the Word, my spiritual mother’s pattern of prayer and holy living, and many other personal spiritual mentors who have taught me. But I cannot discount the profound impact on my life that has come from biographies written about people I will never meet face-to-face this side of heaven.

Our culture today is crying for pragmatic solutions, easy formulas, three-step, four-step, or twelve-step programs to answer every human need. Certainly the hunger for practical answers is not entirely wrong. Although biblical exposition has always been my primary aim and methodology in my own preaching and writing ministry, I *do* try to be as practical as possible in my teaching.

But I have always found Christian biography to be inherently practical. A book that expounds the history or career of a noble Christian doesn’t usually need to be enhanced with explicit how-to steps or imperatives and admonitions directed at the reader. The testimony of a godly life by itself is sufficient to motivate. That is why I treasure the life stories and memoirs of godly leaders.

Of all the biographies I have read and the lives that have left their mark on my character, no one mortal individual has left a deeper impression on me than the apostle Paul. I sometimes feel I know more about him than anyone else except Christ, because I have spent a major portion of my life studying the biblical account of his life, letters, and ministry, learning leadership at his feet.

I spent several years in the 1990s reading and studying through [2 Corinthians](#), which includes some of the most significant autobiographical material on Paul in all of Scripture. No epistle and no portion of the [book of Acts](#) exposes Paul’s true heart with the same clarity or passion as that often-overlooked epistle. It is more than autobiographical; it is a very personal look into the depths of his soul. It is a picture-window perspective into the character of a Christian who is a leader and who walks closely with God. It reveals what a person can be who truly looks into the face of Jesus Christ.

Here is a model for those who want to be *spiritual* leaders.

Here is the pattern.

Here is the flesh-and-blood example and my mentor.



CH-110 LEADERSHIP 1

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Therefore, I have based most of this book on autobiographical and biographical material drawn from [Acts 27](#) and [2 Corinthians](#). These passages show Paul at his best as a leader. Some who merely scan these pages might be tempted at first to think, *This is all about Paul; it's not really about me*. But it's actually about what we *ought* to be. Paul himself said, **"I urge you, imitate me" (1 Corinthians 4:16)**. **"Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1)**. He was a true example of the Christlike leader.

We'll start with several chapters examining how Paul's leadership was manifest in the most unlikely of situations—in a shipwreck, where he was the lowest-ranking person onboard ship. And yet he rose to the occasion and demonstrated extraordinary powers of leadership.

The second part of the teaching will examine principles of leadership from several key passages in [2 Corinthians](#). My interest in leadership was heightened and my understanding of leadership principles was sharpened when I preached through that wonderful epistle. As we shall see, it is filled with keen insight on how to lead people.

The third part of the teaching rounds out our study of leadership with two key passages, one from [1 Corinthians 9:24–27](#) and one from [Acts 6:1–7](#). These two closing sections feature key insights about the leader's character and personal discipline.

What we learn from the apostle Paul is the same thing Jesus taught: **that character—not style, not technique, not methodology, but character—is the true biblical test of great leadership**. Entrepreneurship is wonderful, but the most skilled entrepreneur in the world without character is no true leader. Strategic planning is important, but if you don't have leaders whom people will follow, your strategic plan will fail. The clarity of a well-drafted purpose statement is crucial, but the true spiritual leader must go beyond merely clarifying people's focus. **The real leader is an example to follow**. And the best example to follow, as Paul knew, is the one who follows Christ.

Therefore, Scripture, not the corporate world or the political arena, is the authoritative source we need to turn to in order to learn the truth about spiritual leadership. That approach, I hope, is what will stand out as the chief distinctive of this teaching.

Of course, for the Christian, biblical principles must also then be taken back and applied in the corporate realm, in family life, in politics, and in all of society. Biblical principles of leadership are not principles for the church only. In fact, **Christians ought to be the trend-setters for all secular, corporate, and political leadership, rather than thoughtlessly borrowing from the world whatever seems to "work."**

I have written this teaching with all kinds of leaders in mind. I've already written other teachings that deal specifically with church leadership and ministry philosophy. That's not my aim here. Instead, my goal in this teaching is to distill the biblical principles of leadership in a way that I hope will be beneficial for leaders in every realm—business leaders, civic leaders, church leaders, parents, teachers, personal disciplers, youth leaders, or whatever.



Is everyone supposed to be a leader? Obviously, not everyone is called to be a leader at the same level, or leadership by definition would not exist (cf. 1 [Corinthians 12:18–29](#)).

1 Corinthians 12:18-29 (NASB)

¹⁸ **“But now God has placed the members, each one of them, in the body, just as He desired.**

¹⁹ **If they were all one member, where would the body be?**

²⁰ **But now there are many members, but one body.**

²¹ **And the eye cannot say to the hand, “I have no need of you”; or again the head to the feet, “I have no need of you.”**

²² **On the contrary, it is much truer that the members of the body which seem to be weaker are necessary;**

²³ **and those *members* of the body which we deem less honorable, on these we bestow more abundant honor, and our less presentable members become much more presentable,**

²⁴ **whereas our more presentable members have no need *of it*. But God has *so* composed the body, giving more abundant honor to that *member* which lacked,**

²⁵ **so that there may be no division in the body, but *that* the members may have the same care for one another.**

²⁶ **And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; if *one* member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.**

²⁷ **Now you are Christ's body, and individually members of it.**

²⁸ **And God has appointed in the church, first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, *various* kinds of tongues.**

²⁹ **All are not apostles, are they? All are not prophets, are they? All are not teachers, are they? All are not *workers of* miracles, are they?”**

But every Christian is called to be a leader of sorts, at some level, because all of us are given a mandate to teach and to influence others. Christ's Great Commission is a command to:

Matthew 28:19-20 (NASB)

¹⁹ **“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit,**

²⁰ **teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”**

The writer of Hebrews rebuked his readers for their spiritual immaturity, saying, **“You ought to be teachers”** ([Hebrews 5:12](#)). Clearly, then, all Christians are called to influence others and teach them the truth about Christ. Therefore, no matter what your status, position, giftedness, or occupation, you are called to be a leader at some level.

So this teaching is for you, whether or not you currently think of yourself as a **“leader.”** My prayer is that you will aspire to the kind of leadership the apostle Paul exemplified: bold, uncompromising, faithful, **spiritual leadership** that inspires people with a hunger to be imitators of Christ.