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Introduction

This essay focuses on observations related to some leadership characteristics of Jesus and the apostle Paul. Jesus is the son of God, and he was more than just a leader. However, he left behind many lessons in his teachings and his life from which to glean leadership insights. At the same time, the apostle Paul is a prime example of embodying the teachings of Jesus and becoming an integral part of the plan of God for the early Church; we can draw a plethora of leadership insights from their lives. Here are seven principles.

Jesus – Leave a Legacy

Bible Verse: Matthew 16:18, Matthew 28:19-20

Observation:

Jesus promised to build His Church through his followers. In Matthew 16:18, he asserted that not even hell could tear down what he came to build (NLT, 2004). His motivation was eternal. Jesus knew that what he came to establish was not of this earth, and he had the authority to build it from the Father, so he had the foresight to know to leave a lasting legacy for the people coming behind him. Perhaps, one of the reasons his ministry was so effective was because leaving a legacy was a priority for him. Jesus knew that he had a limited time for his public ministry on earth.

At the end of his time on earth, he leaves his followers a mandate. After his death and resurrection, he gives his followers the Great Commission to go into all the world and make more disciples (Matthew 28:19-20, NLT, 2004). He spent his ministry preparing that group of people so they could continue with his mandate once gone. If that body of believers contained the good news to themselves, the gospel would not propagate and would not result in more believers. In other words, his legacy would only continue if his followers could multiply their

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disciples. Because his followers accepted the challenge, Jesus' return on his time invested was unquantifiable. Jesus chose twelve people, but there were only eleven when he finished his ministry. However, from the testimony of those eleven, Christianity spread rapidly through the ancient world, and its ripple effects are still reverberating in actuality. If "the nature of influence is to multiply" (Maxwell and Dorman, 2006, p. 111), then Jesus was the embodiment of such a principle. He influenced a small number of people, and those people reached more people; in doing so, he left a legacy that has lasted to this day.

Principle:

Leaving a legacy starts with starting to act differently today. The leader's efforts can have a lasting ripple effect if they are intentional about what they focus on and who they build. In addition, the influence of a leader reaches others beyond the person with whom they interacted; for good or wrong, others experience the waves of the leader's influence. How would leaders act knowing they could reach multitudes? If only they understood that their present actions could unlock a chain effect in others for the better. The type of leadership Jesus's life encourages is for his followers to go beyond their immediate reach.

Jesus – Retreat to Advance

Bible Verse: Mathew 14:22-33, Mark 9:2-13, Matthew 26:36-44

Observation:

When Jesus sends his disciples to the other side of the lake in Matthew 14, he makes time to retreat and pray alone. He had just performed one of the biggest miracles of his ministry in front of one of the largest crowds (Matthew 14:23, 2004, NLT), yet he made time to retreat. Perhaps he retreated to gain perspective on his ministry? Seeking a place to retreat to then advance in his ministry was a pattern exhibited throughout the Gospels. In the Gospel of Mark,

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after he feeds the four thousand and has had some interactions with religious leaders, “Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up a high mountain to be alone” (Mark 9:2, 2004, NLT). At the mountain of transfiguration, he was alone with trusted companions seeking to hear the voice of God. And finally, in the garden of Gethsemane, before his trial and crucifixion, Jesus takes time to pray with the same three disciples. The point is not that the disciples fell asleep when they were supposed to pray, but instead that Jesus was intentionally getting away and seeking alone time to pray before one of history’s most significant moments (Matthew 26:36, 2004, NLT).

Principle:

No matter how hectic the last season was or the next season is about to be, servant leaders must follow the example of Jesus to make time in their calendar and reorganize their priorities. Reorganizing priorities brings focus and clarity. Retreat to advance is strategic as creating space in the Christian leader’s calendar allows God to speak and new opportunities to start with a clean slate.

Jesus – Invite Those Whom Others Leave Out

Bible Verse: John 4:1-38, Luke 19:1-10, Mark 2:15-22, Luke 19:1-10

Observation:

Jesus repeatedly went out of his way to invite people into a relationship with God, especially those marginalized by society. He befriended tax collectors, talked with morally questionable women, and notable sinners, people excluded from the community, were the ones that ended up at his parties (Mark 2:15, 2004, NLT). For example, in John 4, he talks to a woman drawing water in the middle of the day to avoid mingling with others (people usually draw water in the morning when the heat is not as suffocating). Jesus first breaks the barriers as a Jew asking

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a Samaritan for water, which was not customary; this creates a conversation ending in her salvation. In Luke 19, Zacchaeus, the chief tax collector, a man who had become rich because of his dubious business, came to Jesus. When confronted with Zacchaeus, instead of shunning him, Jesus invited himself to Zacchaeus' house. He initiated a relationship, though people in the crowd were displeased (Luke 19:7, 2004, NLT). Yes, he led them to repentance, but the point is that repentance in these cases only came after Jesus established a relationship with them. What was so attractive about Jesus that other religious leaders did not possess? These people were not strange to the message of redemption and probably had heard about it many times. However, it was perhaps the kindness of Jesus that compelled them to repent.

Principle:

In his message, *Forgotten People in Forgotten Places*, Dr. Bryan Jarrett encourages his congregation to “invite the uninvited” (2015). The uninvited people usually do not have a seat at the table; they are people without influence and the outcast of society. A place at the table is an invitation to bring others to opportunities that maybe they could not obtain independently. These marginalized people are the ones who desperately need Jesus the most. Because of that, servant leaders need to go after forgotten people and give them a place where they are accepted.

Paul – Strength is For Service, Not Status

Bible Verse: Romans 15:1-2

Observation:

Strong people must serve those who need strength; “strength is for service, not status” (Romans 15:1-2, 2018, MSG). But the opposite is usually the norm; the many leadership scandals in the news demonstrate it. Society has become numb to the number of leaders who mishandle their strength and influence. If leaders do not serve others first, they succumb to the

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temptation of prioritizing status and seeking pleasure and comfort, which leads to dropping the standards. That is why the command to use strength for service goes against what the world has come to expect of leaders; it has a paradoxical nature. The kingdom of God is full of paradoxes. Do you want to be rich? Give it all away! Do you want to be first? You need to be last! And the greatest among you shall be the least of you. Paul tries to make the point that when leaders operate in the kingdom of God, their actions look different than the standards of this world. In other contexts, seeking status because of power is normal, but in the kingdom of God, people need to use that strength, not for themselves but to serve others.

Principle:

Servant leaders must renew their commitment to others, do good even when bad could be justifiable, and seek to serve and love their neighbor just as Jesus did. The Lord gives strength to his servants. However, that strength is never to feel good about themselves or their relationship with God compared to others. In the regular world, those who possess power are more likely to seek to find status. Yet, the kingdom of God is different. People who abide by his kingdom understand that they must use their strength to benefit those who have none; in other words, to “lend a hand to those who falter” (Romans 15:1-2, 2018, MSG).

Paul – Fix Your Thoughts on What is True

Bible Verse: Philippians 4:8

Observation:

In this passage, Paul exhorts the Christians in Philippi to turn to what is “true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent, and worthy of praise” (Philippians 4:8, NLT, 2004). In light of Paul’s circumstances, this advice is admirable. Paul writes to the Church in Philippi from a Roman jail, yet he would spend the majority of the letter’s length encouraging them to take on

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the joy of the Lord. Paul himself, even though his circumstances were excruciating, was happy and rejoicing in the Lord. Earlier in the letter, Paul wrote that some people were preaching with the wrong motives, slandering and ridiculing him for his imprisonment (Philippians 1, NLT, 2004). However, Paul was secure that any circumstance would glorify Christ. Why is that? Perhaps Paul had his mind on everything true, honorable, and right. Even though his circumstances were not optimal, Paul's conviction to honor God led him to set his mind on things above. Perhaps Paul "turned his eyes upon Jesus and looked full at His wonderful face." Once he did that, things on earth indeed grew strangely dim in comparison.

Principle:

Leaders have many opportunities to fix their thoughts on the wrong things as they confront problems. When dealing with dire circumstances that take the leader's joy away, he has a choice: will he let events take his joy, or will he look to set his mind on higher grounds? This mindset is vital for the leader, as in most cases, the battle with any problem starts in the leader's mind. There is that famous adage by Henry Ford, "whether you think you can, or you think you can't – you're right." Will he let this problem take the best of him? Or will he change his mindset to rise above the circumstances and see the situation the way God sees it? When the leader turns his eyes upon Jesus, he can focus on the critical issues.

Paul – The Three Components of Perseverance

Bible Verse: Romans 12:12

Observation:

Paul wrote Romans to all of those living in Rome "loved by God and (who) are called to be his own holy people" (Romans 1:7, NLT, 2004). The letter contains many foundational theological pieces to understand what it means to be a Christian and follow God. Paul takes the

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first eleven chapters of the letter to teach about the grace of God through Jesus, explicitly dealing with how God accepts them not because of their accomplishments and works but because of His grace available to all through faith in Jesus alone. Then at the beginning of the twelfth chapter, he tells them. “And so, dear brothers and sisters, I plead with you...” (Romans 12:1, NLT, 2004), as if the first eleven chapters were a preamble to what he was about to share next.

Romans twelve describes what it means to be a follower of Christ, one who does not focus on legalism but instead has a relationship with God. This relationship with God spills out into every category of their lives. It impacts how they deal with others because they have their hope in the future God promised them. At the crux of chapter twelve, Paul gives the Romans three commands, “be joyful in hope, patient in affliction, faithful in prayer” (Romans 12:12, NIV, 2011).

Perseverance for Christians then involves these three characteristics: joy, patience, and faithfulness. First, there is a future hope; therefore, the people of God can rejoice. Secondly, while they might experience affliction on the earth, they must confront it with patience, knowing every hardship is only temporal. And finally, to develop perseverance, Christians must remain faithful in prayer. A deep level of prayer speaks to the intimacy they must foster with God; this is to bring every matter in front of Him.

Principle:

Sometimes, Christian leaders suffer from spiritual vision atrophy, where their spiritual vision becomes cloudy, and they can only see their present circumstances. Suffering from spiritual vision atrophy means Christians lose the focus of their walk. As a result, believers stall and find themselves more preoccupied with earthly matters than spiritual ones. However, Christian leaders must focus on persevering regardless of their circumstances. When Christian

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leaders focus on having joy in their hope, showing patience during their afflictions, and remaining faithful in prayer, they show the world what it means to be followers of Christ in praxis.

Paul – Make the Most of Every Opportunity

Bible Verse: Ephesians 5:15-16 NLT

Observation:

The Apostle Paul exhorts the Ephesians to “be careful how you live” (Ephesians 5:15-16, 2004, NLT); this speaks to a diligent living, not careless like the foolish. Paul also encourages them to “make the most of every opportunity.” Other versions say he urges them to “redeem the time” (Ephesians 5:16, 1982, NKJV). Paul’s exhortation speaks to the urgency of the mission of Christian servant leaders; it also speaks to the dominion they must enforce on their lives, creating priorities for themselves without falling into workaholism and living an unbalanced life (Barton et al., 1996, p. 107).

Principle:

In light of this appeal, it is of utmost importance to steward the days and make sure leaders spend the necessary time on matters of importance. The principle of “making the most of every opportunity” reveals the importance of time management. Stanley states, “where you spend your time is an indication of where your loyalties lie” (2011, p. 76). Managing time well implies a life with priorities and a person who can discern the importance of different tasks. It is of utmost importance because, ultimately, our time is our life. Leaders are busy people; they have full calendars, but to apply this principle, they need to consider the motives behind their busyness and packed schedules. The reality is that if we let it, “work expands so that it fills the

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time available for its completion” (Maxwell, 2018, p. 39). So leaders need to ask, who is the master of their priorities? And does their schedule reflect that reality?

Summarization of Leadership Principles

From the example of Jesus, we have learned many things; among them are to (1) leave a legacy. To leave a legacy, we need to focus on building solid foundations for the next generation. We also need to look at (2) Jesus’ rest patterns. He would seclude to pray before or after significant events and remain with a small core group of trusted people. We also learn to (3) invite those left out of the table and fight to look after the marginalized. From the example of Paul, among many things, we learned that (4) strength is to serve others, not to contend against them. We also know to (5) fix our thoughts on what is true. Having a mindset that focuses on these things that Paul encourages is vital. The battle always starts in the leader’s mind. (6) The antidote to lacking perseverance is joy, patience, and faithfulness. And lastly, we learn from Paul (7) to make the most of every opportunity taking advantage of time.

These seven principles emerge around three main categories. The first category focuses on the future (leaving a legacy, fixing your thoughts on what is true, and the components of perseverance). The second focuses on schedule and time management (retreat to advance, and make the most of every opportunity). Finally, the third one deals with serving others (invite those who others leave out, and strength is for service, not status).

Personal Application

I will focus on applying these principles by looking at their impact professionally but, most importantly, personally, as I believe that is the sphere that will determine my capacity to lead at any level. So I will ask myself, how am I as an individual focus on the future? Do I see through the right lens? How do I arrange my schedule? Am I maximizing every opportunity and

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seeking much-needed rest in between busy seasons? And lastly, who am I serving? This last question needs to be specific. I need to identify people in my life who I can diligently help and who no one else is helping. Who does my influence benefit the most?

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