



LEADERSHIP LADDER OF THE NEW TESTAMENT

Philippians 4:2-3

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The leadership ladder of the New Testament and its impact on ministry today, gets its origins from the Old Testament. Biblical leadership takes place when divinely appointed men and women respond in obedience to God's call. They recognize the importance of preparation, allowing the Holy Spirit to develop tenderness of heart and skill of hands. They carry out their leadership roles with a deep conviction of God's will and an acute awareness of the contemporary issues they and their followers face. Above all, they exercise leadership servants and stewards, sharing authority with their followers and affirming that leadership is primarily ministry to others, modeling for others, and mutual membership with others in Christ's body.¹

This New Testament definition of leadership extends to one of the first Patriarchs of the Old Testament which would be Moses. Moses is considered to be the most important leader in Judaism. He was the leader of the Israelites and lawgiver to whom the authorship of the Torah is attributed. But Moses's didn't ascend to greatness without assistance. His leadership was greatly influenced by his father-in-law Jethro. In Exodus 18, Jethro offered important insights that transformed Moses' practice of leadership. Moses would judge matters and conflicts by referring them to the statutes of God, Exodus 18:16. Jethro gives Moses' advice by asking him to appoint other leaders to help judge smaller matters while larger issues will be brought to Moses. Jethro gave wise counsel so Moses wouldn't wear himself out. Moses needed help in the ministry. One of my favorite scriptures is found in Exodus 17:12, AMP But Moses' hands were heavy and grew weary, So the other men took a stone and put it under him and he sat on it. Then Aaron and Hur held up his hands, one on one side and one on the other side; so his hands were steady until the

¹ Kenneth O. Gangel, *The Meaning of Leadership*, Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2007), 177.

going down of the sun.² Moses' assignment in ministry had great leaders assisting him. This account of leadership extends and sets the foundation for ministry in the New Testament. It is here that I introduce the ministry of the Apostle Paul and his letter to the Philippians found in Philippians 4:2,3.

Like Moses, Paul needed help in his ministry. Of course, Jesus is the prominent figure throughout the New Testament and his leadership included the calling of the twelve disciples. Paul gives his history in his letter to the Philippians found in Philippians 3:5,6. Paul was a devout Jew, "circumcised the eighth day of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews: as touching the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal. persecuting the church; touching the righteousness, which is in the law, blameless"³ Paul is also a Roman citizen as Luke references in Acts 21:39 which states Paul is a Jew from Tarsus in Cilicia, a citizen of no insignificant or undistinguished city, which means Paul was born free. Paul is the author of defining ministry or ascension gifts in the New Testament. He is the one who gave order and structure, writing thirteen of the twenty-seven books in the New Testament. He is called an Apostle in Galatians 1:1. He is a special messenger called by Jesus and not by men. The term Apostle was used in defining the call of the twelve disciples. Luke 6:13 AMP, states "And when it was day, He summoned His disciples and selected from them twelve, whom He names apostles (special messengers)".⁴ Paul was not one of twelve, but he was called of God to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. Some argue with the death of the apostle John and the completion of the Old and New Testament canon of Scriptures,

² Holy Bible, *King James Version Amplified Bible Parallel Edition* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 1995), 100.

³ Holy Bible, *King James Version Amplified Bible Parallel Edition*, 1548.

⁴ Holy Bible, *Kings James Version*, 1326.

it has been taught that apostolic ministry was no longer required. However, The Ephesian Epistle distinctly says that Christ, after His ascension, “He gave gifts to men, and He gave some, apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelist; and some pastors and teachers.⁵ Others argue that “Apostles, together with men of their circle, committed the news of salvation to writing, and then in order to keep the Gospel forever whole and alive within the Church, they left bishops as their successors, handing over their own role to them.⁶ Apostle John Eckhardt writes that the doctrine of Cessationism is the teaching that the apostle’s ministry ceased after the death of the twelve. The bishops therefore replaced the twelve as the leaders of the church.⁷ 1Timothy 3:1-7 is the hallmark text for the office of the bishop. In it Paul sets forth the criterion for Episcopacy and sets the bishop apart as one of only three offices that he mentions in his correspondence to the church. Those three offices mentioned are Bishop (1Timothy 3:1-7), Elder/Pastor (Titus 1:5-9), and Deacon (Timothy 3:8-13).⁸ Paul and Titus understood that the duties of the office of the bishop were at least in part to elect, assign, or appoint other bishops (elders) in cities, to set the church in order, and to multiply the church in the surrounding regions.⁹ The debate of using the title of Apostle or Bishop amongst the leadership in the today’s church is still prevalent in many church organizations, but overall, the call of God is acknowledged through their ministry gifts.

Paul established a strong church in Philippi whose structure, hierarchy, and challenges, resemble today’s church. There are differences as well as similarities. Today, there are some

⁵ Kevin J. Conner, *The Church in the New Testament* (Portland Oregon: BT Publishing, 1982), 138.

⁶ Pope Paul VI, *The Office of Bishop* (Baltimore, MD: The Catholic Foundation, 1969), 2.

⁷ John Eckhardt, *Apostles or Bishops* (Impact Broadcasting Service, 2021), 5.

⁸ Johnathan E. Alvarado, *Gifts to Men: Theological Perspectives on Apostles and Bishops* (Lanham, MD: Seymour Press, 2019), 45.

⁹ Johnathan E. Alvarado, *Gifts to Men: Theological Perspectives on Apostles and Bishops*, 45

leaders who are pre-occupied with ministerial titles, prestige, arrogance, and self-gratification through lofty positions. Other ministries don't use titles at all and acknowledge their Pastor and leaders on a first name basis. Whatever the customs are in our ministries, there is a direct connection to the word of God through Paul. Extrapolating from the issue written in Philippians 4:2,3 between two veteran Christian leaders, Euodias and Syntyche is a classic example of internal conflicts today. Two women appear to have been important persons within the church and among its most active workers, perhaps deaconesses; perhaps within each of their homes a separate congregation met for worship. These two influential women who had the potential for upsetting the harmony of the larger community, were quarreling and it caused Paul to mention them in his letter admonishing them to make up their differences.¹⁰ These women were leading figures in the congregation. They were mainstays and seem to be the chief of the church which was there. They are negative examples because they do not "think the same in the Lord". At the same time, they are positive examples because they have "struggled together with Paul in the gospel."¹¹ Paul reiterates five times in the book of Philippians to the congregation, to be of the same mind or to work in harmony in the Lord. He states it in Philippians 4:2; in Philippians 1:27 AMP Only be sure as citizens, so to conduct yourselves that your manner of life will be worthy of the good news of Christ, so that whether I do come and see you or am absent, I may hear this of you: that you are standing side by side and contending with a single mind for the faith of the glad tidings; in Philippians 2:2 AMP Fill up and complete my joy by living in harmony and being of the same mind

¹⁰ Gerard F. Hawthorne, Ralph P. Martin, Word Biblical Commentary Volume 43 Philippians (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004), 241.

¹¹ Robert F. Hull Jr. *Constructing Euodia and Syntyche: Philippians 4:2,3, and the Informed Imagination* (Priscilla Papers Vol 30, No. 2, 2016), 6.

and one purpose, having the same love, being in full accord and of one harmonious mind and intention; in Philippians 2:5 AMP Let this same attitude and purpose and humble mind be in you which was in Christ Jesus: Let Him be your example in humility; and in Philippians KJV 3:15 Let thus therefore, as many as be perfect be thus minded: and if anything ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you.¹² Paul is not only dealing with two leaders in a church dispute, he is dealing with the mindset of the entire congregation. He mentions three other leaders by name in Philippians Chapter 2 and Chapter 4, who assist him in the gospel and are great leaders to the church. They are Timothy, Epaphroditus, and Clement. Paul is sending them to help stabilize, so to speak the ministry. Clement who could be a Bishop, is mentioned to directly help in the dispute between Euodia and Syntyche in Philippians 4:3 AMP, and I exhort you too, my genuine yokefellow, help these two women to keep on cooperating, for they have toiled along with me in the spreading of the good news, as have Clement and the rest of my fellow workers whose names are in the Book of Life.¹³

Paul is mentioning techniques and strategies that results in a healthy church before the Lord. These strategies most certainly can be applied to the church today. A modern technique is building teams. Leadership is necessary to build effective teams, which in turn advance the kingdom of God. The same components that build a small team can transform a local congregation, a neighborhood, or a workplace. Individualism and conflict are obstacles to teams. Individualism focuses on ones-self rather than the group. Individualism cripples team efficiency and effectiveness. Conflict is inevitable, and leaders strengthen their teams when they accept it

¹² Holy Bible, *Amplified Bible Parallel Edition*, 1547.

¹³ Holy Bible, *Amplified Bible Parallel Edition*, 1549

as such. Conflict is either resolved (spreading grace) or buried (feeding bitterness). False niceness can limit our credibility, but resolving conflict by confessing, forgiving, and reconciling transforms us, our teams, and our neighbors.¹⁴ A current crisis can impact an entire congregation rather than individuals within a congregation. Apostle Paul was concerned about this in his letter to the Philippians. Such wisdom and divine truth that can be applied to any modern application when it comes to the church. Some crises can escalate to the point where the entire church is negatively impacted. This calls for deep healing on the congregational level. Our modern-day revivals, bible studies, conferences, shut-ins, and programs all come from the strategies given to us by Apostle Paul. Is there a current day Timothy, or a Epaphroditus, or a Clement that can help a crisis in the church become of one mind for His sake. The leadership manual we need is found right in Paul's letter to the Philippians where the leaders and the church are addressed at the same time with strategies to heal conflicts. This Apostle or special messenger wrote letters from prison that gave us timeless truths for ministry. He states "Be careful for nothing; but in everything by prayer by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known unto God. And the peace of God which passeth all understanding, shall keep your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus. Finally, brethren, whatsoever things are true, whatsoever things are honest, whatsoever things are just, whatsoever things are pure, whatsoever things are lovely, whatsoever things are of good report; if there be any virtue and if her be any praise, think on these things." Philippians 4:6-8 KJV.¹⁵

¹⁴ Jack W. Hayford, *Leading Christians: Leadership Handbook of Management and Administration*, 212.

¹⁵ Holy Bible. *King James Version*, 1550.

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