

## What You Should Expect from Leaders in God's Work

2 Corinthians 8:16-24

August 5, 2007

Tony Campolo was once speaking at a women's missionary meeting. There were about 300 women there. Before he spoke the president of the organization read a letter from a missionary. It was a very moving letter. In the letter the missionary expressed a need for \$4,000 to take care of an emergency.

So the president of the organization said, "We need to pray that God will provide the resources to meet the need of this missionary. Brother Campolo will you please pray for us?" Tony Campolo, who is very outspoken said, "No." Startled, she said, "I beg your pardon." He said, "No, I won't pray for that." He said, "I believe that God has already provided the resources and that all we need to do is give. Tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to step up to this table and give every bit of cash I have in my pocket. And if all of you will do the same thing, I think God has already provided the resources." The president of the organization chuckled a little bit and said, "Well, I guess we get the point. You're trying to teach us that we all need to give sacrificially." He said, "No, that is **not** what I am trying to teach you. I'm trying to teach you that **God has already provided for this missionary**. All we need to do is **give it**. Here, I'm going to put down all of my money I have with me."

Later he wrote, "I only had \$15 in my pocket so I wasn't too worried about that." So he put down his \$15 and then looked at the president of the organization. Reluctantly, she opened her purse and took out all of her money, which was about \$40, and put it on the table. One by one the rest of the ladies filed by and put their

money on the table, too. When the money was counted they had collected more than \$4,000."

Tony Campolo said, "Now, here's the lesson. God always supplies for our needs, and he supplied for this missionary, too. The only problem was we were keeping it for ourselves."

God supplies the need! Last week we began looking at the Great Offering that Paul was taking up for the sake of starving believers in Judea. As we look at the passage for this week, what I want to do is take that text and kind of expand it out to see not only some principles about giving, but also some principles about spiritual leadership.

The book of Acts tells us about this great famine. While it affected the whole Roman world, Judea, Samaria and Galilee were hardest hit.

The apostle Paul decided to do something about the plight the poor believers in Jesus. Everywhere he went he encouraged the mostly Gentile churches he ministered with to take up a special offering for these destitute Jewish believers.

Whenever you take up an offering, you're both handling the money of the people who gave it as well as money that now belongs to the Lord. In this passage, Paul mentions the people, the principles and the procedures for the right handling of the Lord's money. And along the way, he also gives us great insights into the elements required of any who would be used by God as leaders in God's kingdom.

I want to give you those elements briefly and then show where they're found here in 2 Corinthians 8:16-24.

I think we can identify at least four...

### **Elements of Spiritual Leadership in Giving**

1. Concern for the Spiritual Growth of Givers
2. Enthusiasm for the Task
3. Initiative to Set the Pace
4. Partnership in Ministry

### **Concern for the Spiritual Growth of Givers**

2 Corinthians 8:16:

*I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus **the same concern** I have for you.*

“The same concern” as what? Or who? Paul in the earlier part of this chapter spoke of his desire that God use this great offering as a means of **bringing more of His holiness into the lives of the believers**, as an **opportunity to strengthen the bonds of unity between Jewish and Gentile believers** and to **express their gratitude to the Jews** for the spiritual blessings they have received through faith in the Messiah of Israel.

God stirred up the same vision, the same passion, in Titus. It was not a means of raising money so much as a means to raise the faith level of the believers there.

Let’s broaden that out. One thing we can take from this is that anyone in any position of spiritual leadership should have is a deep desire to see all of God’s people grow in faith. It doesn’t matter if you’re a senior pastor or if you lead singing in the children’s church, you’re in a position of leadership. The bottom line motivator for any kind of leadership in God’s work is that God should receive the glory by God’s people growing and going farther along the path of spiritual growth and service.

Those are the markers: God's glory by the growth of God's people.

Ego has no place in this. It's not about me or how I look or what people will think of me. It's not about church pride. "We need to do thus and so, because if we don't, we won't be thought of as the great church we are!" It's not about denominational pride. I'm found of saying that I never pray, "Lord, help me today to be a good Baptist." And frankly, I'm a little worried about anyone who would pray that way!

Let's move on to the next one, which is

### **Enthusiasm for the Task**

2 Corinthians 8:16-17 says,

*16I thank God, who put into the heart of Titus the same concern I have for you. 17For Titus not only welcomed our appeal, but he is coming to you with much enthusiasm and on his own initiative.*

Titus is cranked up about this task. He's excited about it. He has "**much enthusiasm.**" The Greek word is the comparative of the word for "great zeal." The task has captured his heart and his imagination.

This isn't just going through the motions. You may be able to do that at work, but you can't do that with God's work. Remember, he sees the inner you, so don't even bother to put on a show. God sees right through any show we try to put on.

The Old Testament tells the story of how King Saul rebelled against God, so God told the prophet Samuel that he was to find the man to replace him. The Lord led him to the house of Jesse in Bethlehem and told him that one of

his sons would become King of Israel. The oldest son was a big, good-looking guy named Eliab, so Samuel said to himself, "That must be the guy." That's when God spoke to Samuel (1 Samuel 16:7b):

*The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.*

What he saw was the heart of the runt of the litter, a kid named David. It's the same thing that God saw in the heart of Titus: a joyful enthusiasm to do God's work.

One thing I've learned about spiritual leadership is that nobody wants to follow somebody who looks and talks like their miserable. Joy attracts people. They want to follow a joyful leader. I'm talking about a confident joy in God that becomes infectious. I'm talking about an inner life that's "too blessed to be stressed."

When I talk about giving, I want you to know that I really mean what I say about the joy of giving. Today I turn 50 years of age. Maybe the passage of time makes this easier, but I really don't care that much for stuff and accumulating more and more. I want to get rid of more and more. I want to give more and more. I want to send as much of it on ahead as possible in the form of giving. I know this liberation from the tyranny of things, and I'm enthusiastic about sharing this freedom with all the Jesus-followers within my influence. You don't need half the stuff you have, so share as much as possible for the kingdom's sake!

Now in vs. 17, Paul mentions another characteristic of spiritual leadership. Titus did what he did: "*on his own initiative.*"

### **Initiative to Set the Pace**

What this tells me is that those whom God has called to spiritual leadership; He's also called to **take initiative**. No one had to tell Titus what to do the whole way. Once Paul cast the vision, Titus worked to fill in the details.

I know a pastor who moves from church to church about every three years. It seems that's about as long as either he can stand the church, or the church can stand him.

One of the problems he has is that he has a need to control everything. For example, in his last church he told the Sunday school teachers that he would have to personally approve all the material they used to teach with. Frankly, that kind of thinking has never made a bit of sense to me. That kind of control is wrong for a lot of reasons, but one that I'm thinking of right now is that it robs people from the opportunity to take initiative. What if Paul had said to Titus, "So we're going to take up this offering. Enclosed are my EXACT INSTRUCTIONS on how to do it." That would have placed Paul in between Titus and the Holy Spirit. That would have been a mistake!

When the Spirit of God moves on willing hearts, He creates something fuller and richer and grander than anyone on earth can plan or engineer. God stirs up that original initiative in us. Then the power of that initiative spreads to others.

Take it a step further. There's a saying: "The speed of the leader is the speed of the team." By taking the initiative, Titus **set the pace** for the churches he ministered to. He set the speed for others to run by. Let's apply this. A prayerless pastor will produce a prayerless church. A prayerless Sunday school teacher will produce a prayerless class. On the other

hand, a giving leader, a praying leader, a studying leader, a witnessing leader will produce praying, studying, giving and witnessing followers. The speed of the team is set by the speed of the leader.

If you ever want to know if your pastor is a giver, I'll tell you right now: you have my permission to ask the office for our giving record. That same pastor I mentioned earlier had the crazy idea that he didn't have to give because he was the pastor. I don't get it. Why would anyone want to miss out on the joy of giving? I give to God, and that's something that all followers of Jesus should do. Giving is a spiritual discipline, a "spiritual growth habit" just like worship and Bible study and prayer. A leader sets the pace by his or her life style and activities; he takes the initiative.

The next thing the leader does is that he builds a team; he has a

### **Partnership in Ministry**

Look at 2 Corinthians 8:18-24 for the partnership that came together to gather and administer this offering:

*18And we are sending along with him [Titus] the brother who is praised by all the churches for his service to the gospel.*

We have no idea who this is, even though many people have speculated it was Luke or some other well-known person.

*19What is more, he was chosen by the churches to accompany us as we carry the offering, which we administer in order to honor the Lord himself and to show our eagerness to help.*

When Paul says, "he was chosen by the church", he's actually using the phrase that normally meant, "He was elected by a show of hands." Carrying the offering was a big responsibility. You couldn't carry a cashier's check or wire it to your account. They had to carry hard currency, in large amounts. This guy is basically their guard. Maybe he was elected because he was 6 foot 7 and weighed 350 pounds, all muscle!

*20We want to avoid any criticism of the way we administer this liberal gift. 21For we are taking pains to do what is right, not only in the eyes of the Lord but also in the eyes of men.*

In other words, when you transport a whole lot of money, you put in checks to secure it, and to make people rest easy that you're not skimming some for your retirement!

*22In addition, we are sending with them our brother who has often proved to us in many ways that he is zealous, and now even more so because of his great confidence in you.*

This is another unidentified worker in God's kingdom. Add Paul and you get at least four people who are watching over this offering on its way from Greece to Judea.

*23As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker among you; as for our brothers, they are representatives of the churches and an honor to Christ. 24Therefore show these men the proof of your love and the reason for our pride in you, so that the churches can see it.*

What we have here is a whole ministry team. In God's work, the leaders aren't those who excel at doing things alone, but who excel at building teams of workers.

When it comes to giving, a team must be involved. The team makes sure that the offering is protected and that no one turns the offering into their personal gain. So some collect, others transport, others count, others administer. That's the way it should be.

Whatever the ministry is, you need a team. Solo ministries become breeding grounds for laziness, pride and unaccountability. A team spurs one another on; it brings out the best, as we rely on one another to minister according to our abilities and gifts. A team turns us from a "look what I did" mindset toward a "look what God has done through us" attitude, and that's very different. A team holds one another accountable. Paul and Titus set the pace, but the team also had to run the race.

As you look over the story of God's work down the centuries, it's not so much the story of individuals as it is people working in teams. There were 12 tribes of Israel, 12 apostles of Jesus, and then the churches, these dynamic expressions of the body of Christ principle. There were movements, team movements, that transformed the church for the good, from the early monastic movement to the Reformation to the modern missions movement. These are all example of the team principle of ministry. The team, the body, the family of God: that's how God gets things done in this world.

Let me tell you how it's *not* supposed to be. For its annual picnic one year, a company rented two racing boats and challenged a rival company to a race. The rival company accepted. To the consternation of the host company, the rival team immediately moved to the front and was never headed. It won by 11 lengths.

The management of the host company was embarrassed by its showing and promptly appointed a committee. Here's their report:

"They had eight people rowing and one guy in the back steering and shouting out the beat. We had one person rowing and eight guys in the back. Our recommendation: **Our guy has to row faster!**"

No, we're all in this boat together! Some row, a few steer, but for Jesus' sake there's a world out there that needs a church that is unwilling to wait, unwilling to watch, and more than willing to do, to go, to send, to give, to pray, to love, to strive, to serve. That's our call. Let's do it!

**END/PRAYER**