

The Leader as an Example

by Peter Maiden

The sermon emphasizes the importance of being a leader by virtue of our performance, rather than just our position or title, and highlights the qualities of Paul's leadership, including his teaching, way of life, faith, patience, and endurance.

Duration: 36:33

Scripture: Philippians 1:12-18, Philippians 2:2-3, Philippians 3:10, Philippians 4:7, 1 Timothy 6:11, 2 Timothy 3:16

Topics: "Leadership"

Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of leading by example and living a life that aligns with the teachings of Jesus Christ. He shares a personal anecdote about a young man who became an adamant Calvinist after attending Bible college. The speaker highlights the significance of being observed by others and encourages leaders to imitate the Apostle Paul, who boldly proclaimed, 'imitate me as I am an imitator of Jesus Christ.' He concludes by urging listeners to prioritize setting an example in purity, life, and doctrine, and to strive to be leaders who are thoroughly equipped for every good work.

Transcript

2 Timothy chapter 3 and verse 10. You, however, know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings. What kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra.

The persecutions I endured, yet the Lord rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted. While evil men and imposters will go from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.

But as for you, it's a key phrase in the second epistle of Timothy, you'll find it four times. Paul is saying the world is going that way, the church is in a sense almost disintegrating. But as for you, Timothy, continue in what you have learned.

Become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it. And how from infancy you have known the holy scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting, and training in righteousness.

So that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work. And then just one verse in the first epistle of Timothy. 1 Timothy chapter 6 and verse 11.

But you, man of God, flee from all this and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, endurance, and gentleness. And then finally in the Philippian epistle, Philippians chapter 1 from verse 12 to verse 18. Philippians chapter 1 verse 12.

Now I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard, and to everyone else, that I am in chains for Christ. Because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly.

It is true that some preach Christ out of envy and rivalry, but others out of goodwill. The latter do so in love, knowing that I am put here for the defense of the gospel. The former preach Christ out of selfish ambition, not sincerely, supposing that they can stir up trouble for me while I am in chains.

But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this, I rejoice. Paul's second epistle to Timothy was, of course, his final letter.

And it's surely one of the most moving parts of Holy Scripture. Bishop Hanley Mole wrote that he found it difficult to read the epistle without, and I quote, finding something rather like a mist gathering in his eyes. Here's Paul the aged, languishing in some dark, dank dungeon in Rome, from which there is to be no escape but death.

His apostolic labors are over. He writes, I have finished the race. But now he must make provision for the faith after he is gone, and especially for its transmission to future generations.

So he sends to Timothy this epistle. It's a solemn, solemn charge. Timothy, the world is going to destruction.

There's enormous backsliding in the church. My solemn charge to you is to preserve what you have received. At whatever cost, you must hand it on to faithful men who in turn will be able to teach others.

For over 15 years, since he had first been recruited, recruited in his hometown of Lystra, Timothy had been Paul's faithful missionary companion. He traveled with him throughout the second and third missionary journey. He'd accompanied Paul to Jerusalem.

He may well have been on that perilous journey to Rome. He was certainly in Rome during the first imprisonment of the Apostle Paul. Can you imagine the privilege it must have been to live so closely and to listen so carefully to this man, the Apostle Paul? Just listen to the power of example coming right through this second epistle to Timothy.

Chapter 1, verse 3. I constantly remember you, Timothy, in my prayers. Verse 8. Join with me. I'm not asking you to do something which I'm not doing.

Join with me in suffering for the gospel. Verse 13. What you heard from me, keep as the pattern of sound teaching.

Chapter 2, verse 2. The things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses, entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others. Verse 3. Endure hardship with us. Chapter 3, verse 10.

You, however, know all about my teaching, way of life, and so on. Chapter 4, verse 7. Timothy, I have fought the good fight. I have finished the race.

I have kept the faith. Paul was not the kind of leader who sat in his ivory tower sending instructions to his subordinates. He was not the kind of leader who appeared to preach his exhortations to his people and then return to the comfort and safety of his hotel suite.

He was truly known by his colleagues. They were able to observe him carefully in all kinds of circumstances and situations. We're going to concentrate in a few moments in these words of chapter 3 and verse 10.

You, however, know all about my way of life. I think one message which has been coming so clearly through this conference is that you and I are not leaders by virtue of our position. We are leaders by virtue of our performance.

You may have a great title. You may have no title. That's not the question.

The question is, what do others see as they look at your life? As they follow you, what do they observe? Paul was a man who was not afraid to be fully observed by others. To such a degree that he was able to write to the Corinthians and to the Philipians and to the Thessalonians, you must imitate me as I am an imitator of Jesus Christ. Even more incredible, on a number of occasions he could call upon God to be the witness of the quality and the holiness of his life.

Just listen to 2 Thessalonians 2 and verse 10. You are witnesses, and so is God. How holy, righteous, and blameless we were among you who believed.

Now because of this quality of life, Paul was the kind of leader men wanted to follow. To use Nigel's illustration, when he looked behind him, he saw many, many people who were eager to follow. That's what we see in verse 10 of chapter 3. Some translations just use the word observed.

You have observed. But the word is much stronger than that. John Stott says it means not that Timothy was an impartial student, a detached observer of the apostle, but he was someone who had become absolutely dedicated to this man and to this man's Lord because of his example.

How we need leaders like that in the Church of Jesus Christ today. Leaders whose way of life inspires and motivates others to follow. They don't lead by instruction from a distance, but they lead by example right there alongside.

They're not just interested in words, but in deeds. You're probably all familiar with the opening phrase of the Acts of the Apostles, where Dr. Luke writes, In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote to you about all that Jesus began to do and to teach. It was a notable feature of the life of Jesus that there was absolutely no dichotomy between his words and his deeds, but absolute complementarity.

When John the Baptist sent his disciples to inquire whether Jesus was the Christ, Jesus replied, Matthew 11 and verse 4, Go back and report to John what you hear and what you see. The blind receive their sight,

the lame are walking, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Surely, one of the most attractive aspects of the life of Jesus, that which people found so utterly irresistible about him, was that here at last was a spiritual leader whose deeds matched his words.

What, particularly then, in the Apostle Paul, drew the attention and the devotion of Timothy? Look with me at this tenth verse of chapter 3. You, however, know all about, number one, my teaching. Now it was a day of extremism in doctrine. In 1 Timothy 1 and verse 4, Paul warns of those who devote themselves to myths and endless genealogies, which promote controversy rather than the work of God.

Then he writes in verse 6 of the same chapter, of those who had wandered away from the faith and were turning to meaningless talk. In the midst of such instability, Timothy had found a man who was not blown around by every wind of doctrine. It found a man who knew what he believed, and he was willing to stand for it, even though it meant intense suffering.

If you look at chapter 1 of 2 Timothy, you'll find in verse 13 and 14, Paul writing, What you heard from me, Timothy, keep in the pattern of sound teaching. With faith and love in Christ Jesus, guard the good deposit that was entrusted to you. That's what Paul gave his son in the faith.

He gave him a solid foundation of Christian doctrine. Paul was not a man who led just on the basis of his charismatic personality. There was a substance to the man.

There was a conviction. There was a stability in his teaching. Notice how in verse 14 of chapter 3, Paul urges Timothy to continue in what he has learned.

If you look on down the chapter, he urges him through the right use of the scriptures to become a man of God thoroughly equipped for every good work. I was a member of quite a large youth fellowship when I was a teenager, and there was a young man in that fellowship with a very powerful personality. He went off to Bible college when he was about 17 or 18.

He came back from Bible college first time, an absolutely adamant Calvinist. We heard nothing but the five points of Calvin all the time he was home. And the only reason we heard five, I'm sure, was that he couldn't have found a six.

That was all that he was interested in, the five points of Calvinism. And he got a little group around him, and he taught these wonderful truths to them. And then he went off and had another term at Bible school.

And he must have heard another lecturer, because he came back absolutely adamant that the goal in life of every believer should be sinless perfection. And he preached that during the time he was home from college, and he gathered a little group around him. You know, that man matured, he's a church leader today, praise God, but he did great damage.

He divided the youth fellowship, and some have never quite recovered from the emphasis on perfection, the overemphasis on the doctrines of grace. If we are going to exemplary Christian leaders, there must be a foundation, a stability to our lives and teachings. A stability which we've seen throughout this weekend can only come through the prayerful study, the careful meditation of the Scriptures.

One of the great tricks of the enemy, I haven't been in Christian work for many years, but I've seen this already, one of the great tricks of the enemy is to get Christian leaders so over-committed in activities that

they just do not get time in the Word of God. What happens? They become spiritually dry. They lose their biblical perspective.

And as issues arise which need their leadership and their counsel, they begin to flounder because the foundation is weak. But Timothy had followed Paul's teaching. He had found a man who knew where he stood and who knew why he stood there.

Secondly, Paul writes, you know all about my way of life. Listen to this magnificent verse, 1 Corinthians 4 and verse 17. For this reason I am sending to you, Timothy, my son, my son whom I love, who is faithful in the Lord.

He will remind you of my way of life in Christ Jesus which agrees with what I teach everywhere in every church. What a tremendous thing to say. He will remind you of my way of life which agrees with everything I've taught in every church I've taught in.

He said of Jesus that at last people had found a spiritual leader whose deeds matched his words. That was also true of Timothy. He had found such a man in Paul.

Paul wasn't perfect, but he had found consistency. He had found sincerity. He had found reality.

Donald Guthrie writes, Timothy had traveled with Paul. He probably often lived in the same room. He'd visited him during his imprisonment.

He had observed Paul in all situations as well as the public occasions. He had watched the way of life of the apostle. Because Paul had been such a tremendous example in these areas of life and doctrine, he's able to exhort Timothy with real authority.

For example, he writes in 1 Timothy 4 and verse 12, in life, in love, faith, and purity. I find that so terrific. Paul is saying here in 2 Timothy 3, Then in verse 16 of chapter 4 of 1 Timothy, Paul links life and doctrine together again.

He challenges Timothy, We'll be looking at some very important issues this weekend. Some very practical issues. I trust you've found the seminars practical and relevant.

You know, their importance pales into insignificance in the face of the challenge of 2 Timothy. Can you, can I, can we go back to our churches after this weekend? Back to those youth groups. Back to those Christian unions.

And can we honestly say, That must be the primary aim that we have as leaders. Now let's look at the third characteristic. Paul continues, Other translations render this, Paul met Timothy, according to Acts 16 and verse 1, in the city of Lystra, probably his native city.

But this wasn't Paul's first visit to Lystra. You might well remember the first occasion he visited this city. He healed a crippled man.

The man had been lame from birth. And the reaction of the crowd was enthusiastic, to say the least. They came running to him, shouting, And they named Barnabas Zeus and Paul Hermes.

You remember how the priest of Zeus brought the bulls and reeds? Because he and the crowd wanted to offer sacrifice. He is trying to divert Paul from his purpose. He is offering to Paul the easy road.

The road of the praise of men. When he gets no response there, he uses the second tactic. He brings in some Jews from Antioch and Iconium.

They come and stir up the crowd to such a degree, that Paul is stoned by the crowd. He's only left because they're convinced that he's dead. We read about that stoning in Acts 14, 19.

And then in verse 20 we read of him leaving the city. But then, incredibly, we read in the next verse, And Paul returned, we're told, to strengthen the disciples. To appoint elders.

And according to verse 22, Can you imagine the power with which that message came across? He'd been left for dead a few days previously. Now he comes back to strengthen them. And to teach them that it's only through hardship that we enter the kingdom of God.

Now I believe Timothy must have known about this. He probably witnessed the stoning. When he agreed to join Paul's team, he knew what he was committing himself to.

He had found a man who knew where he was going. Who was sure of the call of God. And would not be deflected from it.

Either by offers of the easy road, or by hardship. Nothing would deflect this man from this sense of purpose which God had given to him. The leader is someone with clear-cut objectives.

He's also someone who can persuade others to follow him as he aims for those objectives. Two great characteristics of a Christian leader. Clear objectives.

And the ability to motivate. Someone once said to me, you can ask a leader two questions. You want to know whether he's a real leader.

Ask him first of all, what do you want? It's a simple question, isn't it? What do you want? Another way of putting it, are you dreaming big dreams? We had a little glimpse last night of the world situation. We know the divine purpose for the church of Jesus Christ. There is room, brothers and sisters, for big dreamers in the church of Jesus Christ today.

Men and women who can dream great dreams. Men and women who know what they want, and know what God wants of them. And then you can ask a second question.

Where are your people? Where are your people? Yes, you know what you want, but where are the people who are following you? I believe the church of Jesus Christ is crying out for men and women of purpose, of clear direction. They're not ruled by the fashions of their generation. They're ruled by the calling and the gifts of God, and they can take others with them.

John Wesley used to say to his students, you have only one business. And that is the salvation of souls. David Braynard wrote at the close of his now famous diary, I did not care how I lived.

I did not care what hardships I went through. If only I might gain souls for Jesus Christ. It's so reminiscent of the man whose example we're considering this morning.

Remember Acts 20, 24. I do not consider my life worth anything. If only I might finish the race, complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me.

The task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. He was a man of purpose. Fourthly, Paul writes, you know all about my faith.

Now the word is used here in the subjective sense, meaning active reliance on God and his promises. That's why I read to you from Philippians 1, 12 to 14. I believe many believers were asking questions about Paul's imprisonment.

Why have you spent so much time under arrest, Paul? You're commissioned to be the apostle to the Gentiles. What is God doing? Why does he allow it? How are you feeling about it all? And so Paul writes, I want you to know, brothers, that what has happened to me has really served to advance the gospel. And as a result, it's become clear throughout the whole palace, God, and to everyone else, that I'm in chains for Christ.

And because of my chains, most of the brothers in the Lord have been encouraged to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. That's a marvelous example of the power of example. Here's Paul under arrest, and the brothers come to him.

They've got their questions. They probably want to minister to him, feeling that he must be depressed. But as they watch him, as they listen to him, as they see his strength, as they sense his joy, Philippians, remember, is the epistle of joy.

It inspires them. They come away from the prison visit determined to speak the word of God more courageously and fearlessly. There's the encouragement which comes through the example of faith.

Do you want another example? Do you remember the shipwreck of Acts 28? It must have been a very violent storm. Verse 18 records, What's needed in that situation? Absolutely no hope. Everyone's disconsolate.

What's needed? A leader. Through it all, the apostle Paul, held on by faith. What to? The character and the promises of God.

God had told him that he would stand trial before Caesar. And even though everything now argued against that, Paul believes God. Verse 25 reads, and Paul is speaking, Then in verse 36 you read these simple words, That's leadership.

Bringing encouragement. Bringing hope in the face of adversity. And bringing it by the example of faith.

Once again, if you look at verse 11 of 1 Timothy 6, You'll see that on the basis of his own example, he's able to exhort Timothy. Fifthly, Paul writes, The word used here has reference particularly to patience with people. John Stott defines it as, Yes, Paul was certainly a man of purpose.

He was a man of strong direction. He was a man of daring faith. A man who knew quite definitely where he stood doctrinally.

But as well as these strong, choleric aspects to his temperament, There was a wonderful patience. There was a magnificent long-suffering and love. We need that balance in leadership.

Leadership is conceptual. It's goals. It's objectives.

It's strategy. But leadership is relational. Some leaders have fantastic ability to stir others.

But sadly, they don't know where they're going themselves. Others seem to know where they're going, But they just don't have the ability to take anyone else with them. I find one of the most impressive aspects of Paul's leadership, His care for individuals.

His concern for the weak. His leadership position, his enormous responsibilities, His obviously busy schedule. And yet when you have a moment, just glance at the last chapter of Romans.

Very interesting chapter. It's just a long, long list of individuals To whom Paul wanted his personal greetings communicated. Or glance at the little epistle of Philemon.

And note the immense care Paul was willing to give to just one slave, Onesimus. I'm sure you must have been impressed by such chapters as Romans 14. Where again Paul takes special care, special attention, To ensure that the weaker brother is never stumbled By lack of consideration from those who may have been stronger.

You know one of the real tensions we face in OM at the present moment Is that of size, on the one hand, and personal care. We have to be so sure That as we have grown and as we continue to grow, Individuals are not forgotten. Personal needs are not relegated to second place With the needs of the organization taking precedence.

That didn't seem to happen with Paul. Without all the modern means of communication, His attention to individuals remains a great challenge to me. A great example, I'm sure, to every Christian leader.

You know, sometimes those individuals were most aggravating people. Think again of Philippians 1, this time verses 15 to 17. Here's the situation.

Before Paul had come to Rome, There were certain leaders in the church who were very prominent. And their name was on everyone's lips. And they felt very proud, I imagine.

And then Paul came to their city. There he was in the dungeon. And people came to visit him.

And they came away talking about his faith. Talking about his joy. Talking about his example.

And the Roman church leaders were put in second place. And they weren't very happy. And so they began to preach the gospel in such a way, I don't know quite how, But in such a way that they made it even more difficult for Paul as he sat there in his chains.

They wanted, says Paul, to stir up trouble for me, even when I was in chains. An angry, bitter, hurt response from Paul surely wouldn't surprise you. But that's not what we get.

What does Paul say? Why does it matter? As long as Christ is preached. Patience. Long suffering.

Even with the most difficult people. It's an essential for every Christian leader. Once more, because Paul was such an example, he's able to challenge Timothy.

You'll find the challenge in 1 Timothy 6 and verse 11. Pursue gentleness. Now we're going to have to rush through the other characteristics, but you'll see that sixthly, Paul says, You know all about my love.

He's been talking about his patience with people. He now talks about his love. He talks about his commitment to people.

Really, I think the great leadership manual of the Apostle Paul, if you like, is in 1 Thessalonians 2 and verse 8. This is what Paul writes to the Thessalonians. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God, but our lives as well, because you have become so dear to us. There you've got leadership.

You've got Paul goal-orientated. He does have a gospel to communicate, but you also see his people orientation. You have become so dear, and that's a process.

You have become so dear to us. Once again, on the basis of this example, Paul exhorts Timothy, You've seen my love. Now, Timothy, pursue love.

Finally, he says, You've seen my endurance. You've seen my persecution. You've seen my suffering.

Notice he refers particularly in verse 11 to the persecutions he endured in Antioch, in Iconium, in Lystra. These were the places Paul had visited on the first missionary journey, the journey in which he'd first met Timothy. Timothy had probably witnessed the stoning.

Probably then or shortly afterwards, he was told of the immense difficulties Paul had endured prior to entering Lystra in Antioch and Iconium. Timothy knew all about the suffering, the persecutions, and then he'd spent so much time visiting Paul in his imprisonment, in Paul's patience, in the most adverse circumstances. Indeed, his joyful perseverance through them all must have been an immense challenge to Timothy.

Leadership is not an easy calling. I hope you've grasped that this weekend. We've thought something of the cost of leadership.

It's high, but Timothy's observation of Paul's way of life left him in no doubt that it was worth it. He'd seen the cost, but he'd seen the joy in it all. Now what I want you to notice in closing is that Paul's way of life, so carefully observed by Timothy, gave him the right of exhortation.

Paul says to Timothy, you've seen all these things in me. Now I exhort you, pursue love, pursue godliness, endure hardship with us as a good soldier. Nothing is more powerful, nothing is more effective than the challenge of a good example.

Paul's words to Timothy came with such power, with such strength, because behind the words there was the life which Timothy, in every circumstance, had witnessed. This afternoon we drive or travel back to our homes, back to our areas of ministry. I just pray that I will ask the question, that you will ask the question, does my way of life, does my example inspire others to follow?

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