**Model Church: Strong Ministers**

*1 Thessalonians 2:1-13*

Strong leadership is needed to help the church navigate difficult times, spiritually prosper and grow amid persecution.

**Media**

**The-Model-church\_.png**

*The Model Church: Leadership*

(Full resolution image can be found in the Media folder of your export.)

**Introduction**

**1. Leadership - Closer Look**

**Explanation**

* Leadership is influence: If you influence even one other person, you’re a leader.
  + If you teach a child in a Sunday school class, you’re a leader.
  + If you’re a parent, your children look to you for leadership.
  + If you’re a Christian, you will draw your friends closer to Christ or drive them farther away from him by your example.
  + Leadership is a gift. You may be a “born leader,” who has always aspired to lead others.
* Some of us naturally gravitate toward leadership.
  + Perhaps for as long as you can remember, you’ve been the captain of your basketball team, the first chair in the orchestra, or the president of your class at school.
  + On the other hand, some are reluctant leaders. Moses and Jeremiah initially lacked self-confidence.
* Leadership is a gift, but it’s also a learned skill—and sometimes it’s simply the right person willing to do the right things in the right place at the right time.
  + A leader makes things happen; he isn’t satisfied with the status quo.
  + A natural leader brings improvement and makes things better. “The pessimist complains about the wind.
  + The optimist expects the wind to change. The leader adjusts the sails.” A leader has a compass in his head and a magnet in his heart—he knows where he’s going, and he’s able to draw others to pursue the vision too.

**Illustration**

Great Leaders:

* When you consider outstanding leadership, maybe you think of a coach like Tom Landry or John Wooden (the “Wizard of Westwood”). He won ten NCAA national championships in 12 years as head coach for the UCLA Bruins, including a record seven in a row.) Or an entrepreneur who builds a successful business or turns a struggling company around, like Bill Gates, Henry Ford, or Lee Iacocca. Maybe you think of a person who inspires social change, like Mother Teresa or Martin Luther King.
* Or maybe you think of someone whose leadership has touched your life directly. An inspiring boss. A teacher who shaped your thinking and your character. A minister, elder, or a bible class teacher encouraged you to grow in your faith—a parent or grandparent who led by example.
* You probably can think of some bad leaders, too. A corrupt politician who lies to get votes. A coach who uses profanity and bullies his players. A boss who mistreats his employees. An ineffective teacher who doesn’t care about the subject or the students. A religious leader who fleeces the flock instead of caring for it.
* The Bible tells about different kinds of leaders—good and bad ones.
  + Deborah was a wise woman who led during the time of the Judges.
  + Joshua and Gideon were men of faith who organized and led the armies of God.
  + The Bible tells about selfish, wicked rulers like Ahab and Jezebel and faithful Daniel, who rose to a high position in government without compromising his faith and values.
* One of my favorite biblical examples of leadership is David, who led armies to battle and organized choirs to sing and worship God.
  + When David was on the run from King Saul, he hid in a cave. Four hundred men came to join David, and the Bible says, “All those who were in distress or debt or discontented gathered around him” (1 Samuel 22:2). How would you like that for your support group? “In distress, in debt, and discontented”? Those 400 men were dysfunctional with a capital D!
  + But the Bible goes on to say, “And [David] became their leader” (1 Sam 22:2). By the end of David’s life, he had a group of loyal, heroic soldiers around him who were nicknamed “David’s mighty men” (2 Sam 23:8–39).
  + I wonder: Did some of these “mighty men” come from the distressed, discontented group mentioned earlier? Take some people with potential, expose them to good leadership, and eventually, God will shape them into “mighty men and women” who can do great things.

**2. The Greatest Leader**

**Explanation**

* The most outstanding leader who ever walked the earth is Jesus Christ. He is the Master of the Ministers, the Pastor of the Pastors, the Head of the Body, the “great Shepherd of the sheep” (Heb 13:20).
* Jesus modeled visionary leadership.
  + His purpose was clear: to seek and save the lost.
  + His mission was comprehensive: to make disciples all over the world.
  + His vision was bold: to establish a church that would bash down the gates of Hell.
  + His values were unmistakable: to speak the truth and act in love in every situation.
  + His motivation was pure: to accomplish the will of the Father.
  + His passion was selfless and unquenchable, for he came not “to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Mark 10:45).
* Jesus redefined leadership, telling his disciples, “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you” (Matt 20:25, 26).
  + Jesus rejected the secular model that says you get to be a leader by being self-promoting, power-hungry, and autocratic.
  + He said, “Whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all” (Mark 10:43, 44).
  + He said, “All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me,” but he humbly washed his disciples’ dirty feet. He taught with incredible insight, yet he allowed people to question him. He accepted people just as they were, but he also inspired them to become better than they were. He led by example. He practiced what he preached.
  + Jesus recruited, trained, equipped, and unleashed a little band of committed men and women who changed the world. Two thousand years later, the world still feels the influence of Jesus’ leadership.

**3.   Six Characteristics of a Godly Leader in 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12**

**Explanation**

* A godly leader perseveres despite criticism and hardship
  + 1 Thessalonians 2:1-2
  + Paul and Silas were criticized and attacked for preaching an unwanted message.
    - Acts 16: Demon-possessed slave girl Paul and Silas arrested, beaten, shackled, and thrown in prison. Midnight earthquake Holy Spirit unshackled and threw open the prison doors; the jailer was about to commit suicide, Paul intervened. That night jailer and his household were baptized.
    - On a football team, if you carry the ball, you will be tackled.
    - Public scrutiny is one of the prices of leadership.
    - Doug Harvey (MLB umpire) – “When I am right, no one remembers. When I am wrong, no one forgets.”
  + The Lord’s ministers will always preach an unpopular message to the world and the church regarding abstaining from sin and fleeing immorality. A true leader will forge ahead amid criticism, not water down the message, and become men-pleasers.
  + Pastors of the flock will also stand tall and strong when unpopular decisions are made.
* A godly leader is authentic
  + 1 Thessalonians 2:3, 5
    - When Paul, Silas, and Timothy walked into Thessalonica, they encountered a people accustomed to charlatans and snake oil salesmen (c.f. Acts 5:33). Paul explains to the brethren that he was sincere, authentic and his conduct was absolutely above board. (vs. 5) He was transparent and honest.
    - Sine cera Roman sculptors, wax and cracks, the seal of guarantee, Paul claimed that God as their witness they were sine cera
  + William Barclay once said, “A man’s message is always heard in the context of his character.” If you want to be a godly leader, be authentic. Don’t just play a role and pretend to be something you’re not.
  + Application to ministers and elders (Prov. 26:24-25)
* A godly leader seeks to please God, not men
  + 1 Thessalonians 2:4, 6
    - People can be very hard to please! A story about getting rid of pews and buying chairs. Then carpet replacement, color was an issue. Then painting the auditorium. Then on replacing the baptistery, instant hot water or constant water. No matter what color, pews or chairs, curtain or no curtain, someone will not be happy. That is a part of human nature.
    - My most significant concern was, would we please expend this much energy in reaching the lost?!
    - Even Jesus didn’t please everyone. He didn’t please the mother of James and John (Matthew 20:20-28), or Judas, or the Jews who murdered Him, or many of us today who refuse to serve each other and love our neighbor. (Matthew 25:40)
  + John 14:6 – Jesus is the only way; 2 Tim. 4:4-5 – a time will come when people will not endure sound teaching-will turn away from the truth ears to myths, but you be sober, you be strong, you do not falter.
* A godly leader leads by example, not merely by words
  + 1 Thessalonians 2:8
    - Paul, Silas, and Timothy loved the brethren so much that they not only shared the Gospel with them, but they shared their lives with them. They lived with the brethren. Shared in their struggles and their victories. They knew each other. They did not just tell each other they loved each other; they showed it by their actions.
  + Ministers need to have the same love for the brethren they serve. This means spending time with them in their homes, rejoicing in times of joy and weeping in times of sorrow, and staying up late at night praying with them over the phone when their world seems to be crashing down. Ministers need to show up at the hospital at 4:30 am before surgery to pray with the brethren. Ministers need to be willing to stay at the hospital for days with the family of those hanging on by a thread. This shows love without having to say the word at all.
  + Pastors must be willing to do the same as they are burdened with caring for the flock spiritually and to “anoint” with oil if need be.
* A godly leader demonstrates a strong personal work ethic
  + 1 Thessalonians 2:9
    - Paul was a tent-maker by trade. He had no problem making tents when he was running low on money to continue preaching the Gospel. The ideal situation is to have a full salary where a man can dedicate his entire time to the ministry, but sometimes circumstances require a man to “make tents.”
    - Paul makes this point to the Thessalonians, “I worked with my hands to serve you and not take your money.” This way, no one could accuse Paul of taking advantage of a new church.
  + Ministers cannot do their work that pleases God and be lazy.
    - If a minister is lazy, he will quickly lose the respect of those he serves.
    - Living in a farming community where farmers get up at the crack of dawn to work, and the preacher sleeps in until 9 am, he will find it hard to gain the community’s respect.
    - Gene Warman 5:00 am for Bible reading; people showed up because they did not think he was being too honest.
  + Elders and ministers, as leaders, need to be active and workers in the Kingdom (Proverbs 14:23)
* A godly leader treats people like family
  + 1 Thessalonians 2:7, 11-12
  + Most people do not picture Paul as a man with motherly instincts, but more of a rugged, rough-around-the-edges kind of man with a witty tongue and maybe even a bit of a temper. Scars on his body from the beatings and shipwrecks, but not as a man with maternal and paternal instincts.
* Godly leadership doesn’t mean bossing people around and being a bully. The church is not the USMC or the corporate world – it’s a healthy family.
  + This is why one of the qualifications for an elder is to be a family man (1 Tim. 3:5)

**Conclusion**

* When we read the 1st letter to the Thessalonians, we see a Model church, imperfect but a model church. Thus far, we have seen: a strong church (1 Thess. 1:1-4), a strong conversion (1 Thess. 1:5-10), solid and accurate ministers – leadership (1 Thess. 2:1-12) – and this produces a strong people with a strong faith.
* Our nation desperately needs men and women of integrity to be leaders.
* The Lord’s church desperately needs strong leadership.
* Our families desperately need strong leadership.
* What kind of a leader will you be?
* To be a leader, you must first be a follower. In this case, a follower of Christ. Plan of salvation.