

## 1 Corinthians 12:27-31, "Leadership, A Gift to the Church"

10.11.20



**Turn in your Bibles to 1 Corinthians 12.** Church family, I think we all know that a church body is like any other organization, group, team, company or family...everything rises and falls with good leadership. If you have poor leadership, there will likely be failure, but with good leadership, there will likely be success.

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This morning I would tell you...perhaps the best thing that ever happened in the church at Corinth, in the first century, was the fact that someone had enough courage to send the Apostle Paul a letter and say, "We're in trouble, please help us." And thus, we have the letters to the Corinthians. And we have made our way to chapter 12 and what have we seen for 12 chapters...they're in a mess!

The Apostle Paul, as you remember, had established the church six years earlier, and in that period, Apollos had been there...and even Peter... Very good leaders. Yet, in the interim, the church had fallen into great disarray, and in my opinion, it seems they were now suffering from poor leadership. After all, there was great division, fussing, in-fighting...even lawsuits against one another. And so, Paul has this huge task from 350 miles away...in Ephesus, to TRY...to set things straight.

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Thus for 12 chapters he's been seeking to do that...and we find ourselves smack-dab in the middle of a discussion about spiritual gifts. Now you will remember, the Corinthians were majoring on the minors. They had taken the area of spiritual gifts and turned the possession of these gifts, into some sort of contest...people bragging about what gift they had in some sort of self-absorbed, self-styled, elementary school, talent contest. To the point that their church services had become a confusing, chaotic mess. Everyone was speaking at the same time and no one seemed to be in charge...their church had become a disaster. And so, Paul seeks to re-establish order, and that begins with leadership.

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### **1 Corinthians 12:27-31**

**<sup>27</sup> Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it. <sup>28</sup> And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then miracles, then gifts of**

healing, helping, administrating, and various kinds of tongues. <sup>29</sup> Are all apostles? Are all prophets? Are all teachers? Do all work miracles? <sup>30</sup> Do all possess gifts of healing? Do all speak with tongues? Do all interpret? <sup>31</sup> But earnestly desire the higher gifts. And I will show you a still more excellent way.

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Now you will remember from last week how Paul used the human body as the analogy of how a church should work. Just as the eyes, ears and nose are all different...yet they have a very specific function within the body and are all necessary in making certain the WHOLE body functions properly. The same is true of each of us in the church body...we're all different, with different giftings, but we're all necessary and needed in order for the church body, as a WHOLE, to function properly...and Paul has just reminded them of that in verse 27.

He tells them...don't get caught up in all of these gifts that you have been majoring on...the Charisma gifts of healing, miracles, tongues...he said...no...you should desire the higher gifts. Do you know what that is? **Do you have a heading in your Bible over chapter 13?** Mine says, "The Way of Love." That is the higher gift...and that's where we're headed...we're going to be talking about the greatest gift of all: LOVE! That is the more excellent way (verse 31). But, FOR NOW, did you notice what Paul did in verse 28...he sort of breaks rank from his discussion about spiritual gifts to remind them of the importance and priority of good leadership. Watch the flow of this...

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### **1 Corinthians 12:27-28**

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Paul here is reminding them of the proper order of leadership for the church. And we see, yet again...that all of this, just like with spiritual gifts is directed totally, by God...for it is God who appoints these letters...that's verse 28, "God has appointed," who? First Apostles, second prophets, third teachers...those are the leaders of the church. **Turn in your bibles to Ephesians 4.** I want to show you the companion passage to this passage. I told you last week (we would return to these verses, and so we are).

Now, again, I can't state emphatically enough: leadership, good leadership is ABSOLUTELY essential in anything...if there is going to be success...and the Apostle Paul makes this fact crystal clear to the church at Ephesus as well, there must be good leadership.

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Now I want you to watch the wording, as we pick up in verse 11 of chapter 4. Notice the word "gave"... that's God giving gifts:

### **Ephesians 4:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds<sup>[c]</sup> and teachers,<sup>[d]</sup><sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,

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Quite simply Paul is saying: Spiritual leaders are gifts from God. Now, that might sound a bit self-serving, since I am a spiritual leader, (and I don't mean for it to), but I'm simply teaching what's found here in Scripture. Listen, Apostles, prophets, evangelists, shepherd-teachers are gifts to the church...for the building up of that church for the sake of Jesus Christ and His Kingdom. It's that simple. **Now, keep reading...and we'll see this idea expounded**... These gifts...**leaders** are given so that we may attain...

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### **Ephesians 4:13-16**

<sup>13</sup> until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood,<sup>[e]</sup> to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, <sup>14</sup> so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. <sup>15</sup> Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, <sup>16</sup> from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.

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Church family, I want to tell you what I am convinced is the biggest issue that can take down any church. Are you ready? False teaching and a close second is: Biblical illiteracy in the flock. Listen, false teaching and Biblical illiteracy, has literally destroyed churches since the first century and it's continuing to destroy churches today. Dear church family, please listen, when churches stop teaching the Word of God and people stop reading the Word of God, they will eventually die. Listen, when churches and their leaders stop teaching the Bible in its purity and its totality, (leaving out the parts they don't like or the parts that don't fit with the current culture), well, that church will begin to crumble from within... And it's happening throughout America today. The Bible is no longer being read, nor is it being taught...instead leaders in so many churches are teaching some sort of self-help, psychological, "feel-good," anything-goes message, and it's destroying the Church.

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You see, bad leaders are folks who come in and confuse the flock...(that's what we just read), people who teach "every wind of doctrine, in crafty and deceitful ways," drawing people away from the truth... these people offer a "cotton-candy, no substance teaching" with no standards...no morals... where nothing is sin. And...oh the word: "Repentance" is considered a bad word and is never uttered from their lips. Have you been praying this week?



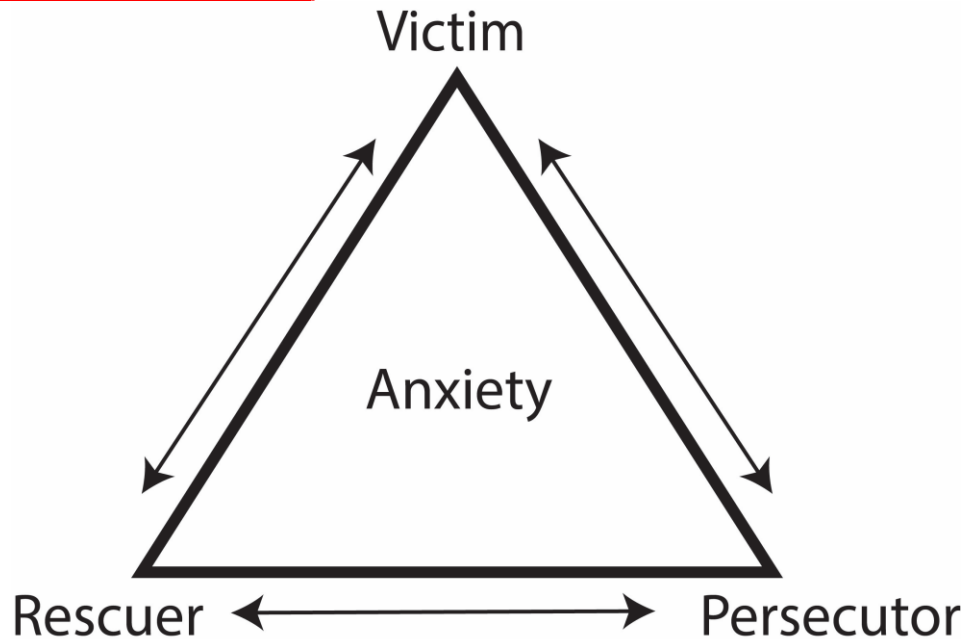
The emphasis was on repentance and the cards you'll be given today (for next week) will emphasize: your RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS. (Download the card from the website.)

No, false teaching will never emphasize or mention repentance, holiness, purity. And Church family, who do you think is behind all of this? Satan! He is the Father of Lies and false teaching and slothfulness. And all of this is like termites...it will destroy the church's foundation, even before the majority even detects it.

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Church family, without question, in that church in Corinth, Satan was behind all the confusion, fighting and problems ravaging those folks...And I'm telling you...when there is confusion...you don't have to look far...Satan is nearby.

Now Church, I want to stop here and say something about Satan's tactics to confuse and bring turmoil...to any situation...a church, a home, a relationship. Let me tell you how he does it. Satan seeks to bring chaos when there is misinformation and poor communication. Let me show you what's called the "Drama Triangle." See screens. This will likely be what you remember today. **(AV Keep on the screens as I describe.)**



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It's a triangle of ANXIETY and here's how confusion and drama come into most situations and relationships. Let's say, for argument's sake, YOU ARE THE VICTIM...see the top of the triangle...you're the VICTIM... You've had someone hurt you...we'll call them, the PERSECUTOR, bottom-right. Now instead of going one-on-one and talking to the persecutor...the one who has hurt you, no...you don't want to do that...instead, you call or text who we'll call the RESCUER, bottom-left...and they in turn, agree with you about how "wronged" you've been.

Listen now...do you know what's happened...you, the VICTIM and the Rescuer have formed an alliance against the Persecutor. And guess what...the Persecutor, may have no idea they've even hurt you, because you haven't gone to them...and the truth is they won't know until you (do as the Bible says in Matthew 18:15) that we must go one on one. Now if they refuse or rebuff you...or lie to your face...that's on them. And you can still choose to forgive and not perpetuate the drama.

Oh Satan loves to bring division and dissension and choose sides...that's what was happening in Corinth. Everybody talking behind everybody else's back. Drama...confusion...pain.

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Do you know what I'm talking about? Sure, you do...we all do... We've all done this...and we've all played all three parts in the triangle...and you may be doing it now. You see, the church at Corinth was literally falling apart because of this back-stabbing and lack of communication and honesty with one another. But Church, aren't you glad, the Lord provides the prescription in Matthew 18 on how to seek peace. And I'll tell you what else (in His mercy that He provides) good leaders to help



churches navigate through troubled times. Leaders who use the Word of God to do so. **Now go back and look at 1 Corinthians 12:28 and we'll see this...**

**1 Corinthians 12:28a**

**28 And God has appointed in the church first apostles, second prophets, third teachers,**

Now we've looked at these three before. Remember, we talked about them a couple of weeks ago when we went over the list of Spiritual Gifts found in the NT. First... **#1 Apostles.** Now, we learned, there are no Apostles today, in the sense that the office of "Apostle" was held by the 12 Apostles, whom Jesus hand-picked. Instead, today, this gift is often exhibited by missionaries and church planters in that they are willing to start new ministries and go to places where the Gospel hasn't been preached. They're typically entrepreneurial and are able to take risks and perform difficult and courageous tasks. But there are a couple of places in the New Testament that the word "apostle" is used with a lower-case "a." Let me show you one. See the screens... Titus...whom Paul mentored is mentioned in...

**2 Corinthians 8:23**

**23 As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker for your benefit. And as for our brothers, they are messengers<sup>[1]</sup> of the churches, the glory of Christ.**

That word: "messengers" can also be translated "apostles." So, Titus was considered an apostle, or "messenger" of the church. So were Barnabas and Timothy. Yet, I believe this role died out with the BIG-A, Apostles and their helpers or proteges, because none of these men were replaced with someone else. You see, they served during a special season of time as the churches were being established. And I believe the same is true of the next group: **#2 Prophets.**

Now understand, there have been NO Prophets, (as we would know them), since the Old Testament...men like Jeremiah and Isaiah, Amos and Ezekiel. No, a prophet in the New Testament, was someone who had the ability to take the Word of God and use it to: exhort, correct, teach, equip and inspire the body of Christ. Who does that sound like? A Pastor and thus, we have a segue, right here, from the Old Testament prophet, to the New Testament office of Elder or Pastor or Pastor-teacher. Group **#3 "TEACHERS."** That's really what I am.

I'm a pastor-teacher, or shepherd-teacher. It's my job, (as we saw earlier from Ephesians 4), to teach and to equip the body of Christ for works of ministry. Remember our example from last week...I'm like a quarterback...



and right now we're in huddle, a Holy Huddle, and God is the head coach and He gives us the play by way of the Playbook...the Word of God and then I teach it or call the play, in the huddle and

then we BREAK...and we go out and run the play...and the salt gets out of the shaker and we go **to be** the salt of the earth for our Savior, the Lord Jesus. And that's my job, as a pastor-teacher, to equip and train you. See it again...

**Ephesians 4:11-12**

<sup>11</sup> And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds<sup>[c]</sup> and teachers,<sup>[d]</sup><sup>12</sup> to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ,=

It's my job to equip you, and how do I do that? With the Word of God! It's the playbook! **Turn in your Bibles to 1 Timothy 3.** Young Timothy...was a protégé of the Apostle Paul...he is also called an apostle, "messenger, for the Lord," and he ended up in Ephesus about 10 years after Paul wrote this letter to the Corinthians. Paul described to Timothy the two offices of Elder and Deacon...that's the first part of chapter 3...down to verse 13, and after he describes those two offices, or leaders, in the church, Paul describes what we're to do in the church...

**1 Timothy 3:14-15**

<sup>14</sup> I hope to come to you soon, but I am writing these things to you so that, <sup>15</sup> if I delay, you may know how one ought to behave in the household of God, which is the church of the living God, a pillar and buttress of the truth.

Take a look at this...



those are buttresses holding up that church. WE ARE BUTRESS for the truth! We hold it up for the world to see!

Church family, as we close this morning...I burdened by the condition of our country. Can I be blunt? We're going down the tubes...it was a slow fade when I was kid...but we're moving at warp speed now...so many in this nation have turned their backs on God. And a big part of the reason why I believe this has happened is because of weak preaching and weak teachers and weak leaders in our churches. Pastors, many of whom, have totally abandoned their biblical role as ministers of the Word of God and have become nothing more than therapists in pulpits... They have abandoned biblical Christianity for some sort of inner-directed "spiritual experience," and I'm going to tell you what this is called. It's called: "Progressive Christianity." Pastor Dale shared about this with our Deacon's this past Wednesday night in our Deacon's meeting.

In case you haven't heard about it...Progressive Christianity views the Bible as nothing more than a book of suggestions, and at worst a book of fairy tales...it's not seen or taught as the

authoritative Word of God. Progressive Christianity teaches: you don't need to deny yourself and repent, no you're good to go, just the way you are. You can lie, steal, cheat, cuss, live with your girlfriend, treat people like dirt and God's okay with it. No, He's not! That's a lie from the pit of Hell...and that line of thinking is where a person fashions a god made in their own image...to justify your lifestyle, and the person who does that is an idol worshipper...they're actually worshipping themselves

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QUITE SIMPLY: Progressive Christianity is the religion of SELF, pride and arrogance...and it comes from the most arrogant, prideful, self-absorbed being in the universe: SATAN... and pastors who teach this kind of garbage, have sold their souls to the him and his world system. Oh church family, it's my job to hold the truth, as a pillar and a buttress for the Word of God, like a waiter in a restaurant...bringing the food from the kitchen of God, to your table, so can eat from the bread of life...

Oh...don't be deceived, Jesus still calls sinners to repentance and He still calls His church to holiness and to righteousness and to purity. And what is more, JESUS CHRIST is the greatest leader of all time... Why? Because He marched up a hill called Calvary and He allowed Himself to be nailed to a Roman cross...and He shed His blood for you and for me, so that we might surrender our lives and follow Him to heaven!

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Church family, good leadership...oh, it will make or break a business, a company, a team, a family, a church... We all get that... But, listen, if you follow the wrong leader out of this life...it will cost you your soul... No, don't do that... follow the leader...Jesus...for He said:

**Matthew.16:24**

<sup>24</sup> Then Jesus told his disciples, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me."

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Are you following Him? If you are...you have peace and purpose...HERE AND NOW and one day...you'll get heaven, but if you make a poor decision and don't follow Jesus...you will convict your soul to Hell with the Devil for all eternity.

Choose well dear friend. Choose well!

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