



The Gift of Leadership

Brownsburg Church of Christ

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PM Assembly



Introduction:

In a body, there are eyes, ears, hands, and feet. Each part is gifted with its unique ability and therefore fulfills its function well. Just so, according to **Romans 12:3-8**, in a congregation there are different parts that have different gifts and therefore can fulfill different functions. The great thing, according to **I Corinthians 12:18**, is that God has placed each part of the body right where He wants it to be to accomplish exactly what He wants it to accomplish. Think about what that means for you. You are here because God knows how He has uniquely gifted you. He knows what blend of grace He has bestowed in Your life. Therefore, He knows exactly what functions He wants you to fulfill and has placed you right here to be able to accomplish them. That means we need someone just like you.

What is your function in the congregation? Have you discovered that you are a Server? A Teacher? A Sharer? Maybe, you are a Leader. Please, don't hear the word "Leader" and think this is about the eldership. **Acts 15:22** calls Judas and Silas "leading men among the brothers." They were not elders, but they were seen as leaders. You may be gifted to lead and yet not be a shepherd in the congregation. Likewise, I believe someone may be qualified to pastor the flock and do a great work in that even if their greatest natural gift is something other than leadership. Today's lesson is not examining the eldership. Rather it will examine the strengths, struggles, and opportunities for those with the gift of leadership.

Discussion:

I. Am I a Leader?

- A. When we recognize that at its core leadership is influence and good leadership is positive influence, we understand that all of us have responsibility in leadership. As **I Timothy 4:12** demonstrates, we need to be an example to others. That is leadership at its heart. However, there are clearly some who have a natural talent for leading. They excel under the pressure of gathering people together to overcome obstacles and accomplish goals. With this ability comes responsibility. If you have this gift, you need to function in it within this body of believers. That is why God put you here.
- B. You may be wondering, "Is that my place? Am I a Leader?" Allow me to demonstrate five characteristic strengths of the gift of leadership. We will be looking at the work of Nehemiah to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem to help with this.
 1. *Leaders focus on accomplishing goals (Nehemiah 1:1-4)*: As soon as Nehemiah heard about the still ruined walls of Jerusalem, he was filled with passion to do something about it. While the news of the walls was sad to Nehemiah, the goal energized him. Leaders need goals. They are energized by the obstacles and challenges of striving to overcome the hurdle of reaching a goal. They are task-oriented because they want to get things done and go places. They aren't interested in standing still. Some folks are willing to come in everyday and just do the same thing. But Leaders usually aren't. They want to be getting something done.
 2. *Leaders organize people to accomplish the goals (Nehemiah 3:1-32)*: Nehemiah was able to organize the people in and around Jerusalem to get the goal done. Leaders don't have to do everything themselves. Don't misunderstand. Leaders are goal and task-oriented, not people-oriented. As they interact with people it is not about the relationships, it is about the accomplishments. However, Leaders are able to bring others on board to accomplish the goal. They are good at assigning and organizing people to get the goal accomplished and thereby accomplish more than they ever could by themselves.
 3. *Leaders look for solutions, not problems (Nehemiah 4:7-23)*: When Sanballat, Tobiah, the Arabs, the Ammonites, and the Ashdodites started to get in the way, some folks would have been paralyzed. Some folks can only see problems. But Nehemiah saw solutions. He saw the way to deal with the problems and overcame. Some folks just have a knack for seeing problems. They can come up with 10 problems for every solution. Their favorite phrase is, "Yeah, but..." "Yeah, that would work, but there is also this problem." They love to play the "ain't-it-awful" game and the "everything-is-hopeless" game. That allows them to believe failure is not their fault, it was just insurmountable problems. Leaders aren't like that. Leaders see problems merely as challenges to overcome. They are constantly on the lookout for alternatives and solutions.
 4. *Leaders are not easily quelled by criticism (Nehemiah 2:19-20; 4:1-6)*: When the enemies were trying to sow insecurity and doubt in the Jews, they criticized their wall and their ability. Nehemiah was unmoved by this. He simply kept the people working. Many people hear criticism and begin to buckle. They begin to second-

guess and doubt. Leaders are not swayed by every bit of criticism that comes their way. They are often willing to take the heat and keep on moving.

5. *Leaders see the big picture (Nehemiah 2:17; 5:9)*: When Nehemiah was striving to get the people to buy-in to the wall-building, he didn't simply talk about the ruined walls. Rather, he talked about the derision they were suffering. Additionally, when the people were charging excessive interest and selling their brethren into slavery, Nehemiah didn't just talk about the random acts of unkindness. Instead, he talked about walking in the fear of God which would prevent the taunts of the enemies. Nehemiah was able to see behind the surface matters to what was really important. Leaders are able to see the big picture. They don't get bogged down by the surface issues, but look to the deeper issues. Of course, that upset others because they come to a Leader with a certain problem and the Leader wants to deal with the real issue while most people want to deny real issues and focus on surface issues instead. Leaders want to deal with the big picture problems because they know if they don't, they'll only have to deal with another surface issue again later.

C. If these characteristics fit you, you have a place in the kingdom and this congregation. We need Leaders like you.

II. The Leader's Struggles?

A. As with all of the gifts, the Leader has some natural weaknesses and struggles. If you have these weaknesses and struggles, don't spend time beating yourself up about them. Certainly, they demonstrate that you have room for growth and areas to work on in your life. However, they don't mean you are bad or un-useful. They simply indicate that you may well be a Leader. You have a role and we need you to fill it.

B. While King David was a superb leader, we get to see many different parts of his life. In fact, perhaps more than any other character in Scripture, we get to see the good, the bad, and the ugly of David's life. While we definitely could have looked at David as an example of the strengths of leadership, we will use some of the darker days of his life to recognize the struggles that leaders naturally face.

1. *Leaders can view others as tools for personal benefit (II Samuel 11:1-4)*: How on earth could David commit such an egregious sin? How could he misuse one of his finest soldiers and also take advantage of one of his subjects? Because when he saw Bathsheba, all he could think about was his own potential pleasure. He saw his own benefit and Bathsheba and Uriah became nothing more than tools to give him that benefit. It extended even more when he made Joab an unwitting conspirator in Uriah's death. Because Leaders are goal and task-oriented, but also good at getting others to help accomplish the goal, they can lose sight of the people element. Others simply become objects and pawns to accomplish whatever goal the Leader has. David's was an extreme case focused on sin, but even when the goal is a proper one, Leaders can lose sight of the people element, walking on other's feelings, ignoring the goals and needs of others, all in the name of getting a goal accomplished.
2. *Leaders can easily be angered when people don't see things their way (I Samuel 25)*: David had a plan. If he took care of Nabal's flocks and herds, Nabal would provide for him on the feast days. When Nabal didn't see it that way, David flew off the handle. I certainly think Nabal was in the wrong. But even David was brought to see that his immediate reaction was an overreaction and improper when Abigail brought him up short (cf. **I Samuel 25:32-33**). Leaders don't understand why others don't see everything the way they do. Leaders don't understand why everyone else doesn't jump on board with them to accomplish their goals. Servers become resentful when others aren't helping out with the service. Teachers become discouraged when others don't listen to their knowledge. In like manner, Leaders can get overly upset when others don't recognize their leadership by falling in line behind their goals and plans.
3. *Leaders can jump to quick conclusions without considering all the angles (II Samuel 6)*: David wanted the Ark of the Covenant moved to Jerusalem. It seemed like a good idea to him and he jumped in with both feet. He even had the people go out of their way to show honor for the Ark by having it put on a new cart (**II Samuel 6:3**). He quickly surveyed the plans, made a decision, and pursued it. However, he had not considered every angle and it got him into trouble. He had neglected to consider how God wanted the Ark moved. In **I Chronicles 15:13**, David said the death of Uzzah happened because they didn't seek God's way on this matter. Leaders are often able to survey the playing field and make quick decisions. They often make good decisions this way. That's one of the things that makes them good Leaders. However, strengths carried to extremes become weaknesses. Leaders have to be careful because they get so focused on accomplishing a goal that they don't consider everything they need to and they get themselves and their followers in trouble.
4. *Leaders can overlook family obligations in the haste to lead others (II Samuel 13-14)*: If there is one thing we see in the Old Testament over and over again it is that good Leaders can get so caught up in leading others that they let family obligations go. Eli's boys were ungodly. Samuel's boys were ungodly. David's kids were messed up. Amnon developed an unhealthy obsession with his half-sister Tamar and ended up raping her. Absalom killed Amnon. Absalom rebelled against David and nearly tore the kingdom away from him. Just be-

fore David's death, Adonijah tried to force himself onto the throne rather than letting David establish the next king. The struggle is apparent. Sometimes Leaders can get so focused on the task of leading others that they forget to lead their own families. They end up ignoring their home front in many ways.

5. *Leaders can sometimes forget who is really in charge (I Chronicles 21:1-7):* David apparently became proud of the expansion that had happened under his reign. He wanted to number the people. But God had not authorized this. Joab even tried to talk David out of it, but David wouldn't listen. With all of his success and leadership, for a moment, David had forgotten who was really in charge. He forgot that God was the real boss and he needed to surrender to Him. Leaders can sometimes forget that they are not the ultimate authority in the world. This can come in the form of thinking they are above the law. It can come in the form of assuming they are entitled to special privileges. It can come in the form of assuming that because they thought of it, it must be right. Leaders have to remember that they are under God's authority and they need to have a constant reminder of what their place really is. God may use them to accomplish great things as they lead men and women, but they are still God's servant.

- C. If these struggles sound all too familiar to you, your place in the kingdom and this congregation may just be as a Leader. Don't beat yourself up too much. As we said earlier, they show areas where you need to grow. But they also demonstrate that you have a place here. We need Leaders.

III. Opportunities in the local church for the Leader to motivate and encourage.

- A. There are numerous ways that you can exercise your function as a Leader in the work of this congregations. We have a place for you and we need you to ask, "What am I doing with my leadership ability?" Here are some opportunities for you to use your gift.

- B. Some opportunities to lead in the congregation as a whole.

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| 1. Shepherd | 5. Program leader (Guest Evangelism, etc.) |
| 2. Deacon | 6. Mission trips |
| 3. Planner (curriculum, conferences, etc.) | 7. Goal-setting |
| 4. Workshop or seminar leader | 8. Vision-casting |

- C. Some opportunities to lead in your relationship with other Christians.

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| 1. Mentoring | 4. Home study leader |
| 2. Studying | 5. Tap someone on the shoulder |
| 3. New Converts/Struggling Christians | 6. Organizing individuals to accomplish work |

- D. Some opportunities to connect and evangelize.

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| 1. Leading well on the job | 6. Chamber of Commerce |
| 2. Leadership in community volunteering | 7. Lead a neighborhood study |
| 3. Neighborhood leadership | 8. Lead an on the job study |
| 4. Civic club leadership (Kiwanis, Rotary, etc.) | 9. Lead mission trips |
| 5. Affinity club leadership (Toastmasters, etc.) | 10. Organize evangelistic efforts |

IV. Improving your leadership (help for the non-Leader).

- A. As we recognized earlier, not all of us have our greatest gift in leadership. But we all have some responsibility to lead (cf. **I Timothy 4:12**). When others are heading in the wrong direction, we cannot back off and do nothing, claiming we don't have the gift of leadership. Instead, we need to step up to the plate and lead.

- B. So, let's wrap up with a little help for the rest of us. How can we improve our leadership and through that leadership motivate and encourage those around us.

1. *Become friends with a Leader:* One of the best ways to learn about any gift is to spend time with someone who has it. Leadership is no different. Watch the Leader in action. Pay attention to how he or she thinks, reacts, responds, works, organizes.
2. *Be led:* This may seem odd, but before one can be a really good Leader, they have to learn how to be a follower. If you don't know how to submit to real authority, it is almost guaranteed you'll never know how to wield it either. So, don't just be friends with a Leader, let a Leader lead you.
3. *Lead yourself first:* Some folks think of leadership as some kind of grand promotion. Therefore, they want to jump into a role of leadership without doing the work it takes to grow into leadership. If you want to grow in leadership, you need to first work on yourself. As Gandhi said, "Be the change you want to see in the world." Before trying to step up to the plate and get other people to some point, work on getting you there first.
4. *Think of two or three solutions for every problem you think of:* Work on your ability to see options, alternatives, and solutions. Everyone can find problems with anything that is done. But leadership is about overcoming those problems. The only way to do so is to think of solutions. So, the next time you hear yourself saying, "The problem with that is..." stop and force yourself to come up with two or three solution options.

5. *Remember its none of your business what others think of you:* While Leaders grow from constructive criticism, they allow the pursuit of the worthy goal to take precedence over what everyone else thinks about them. Folks may criticize, but Leaders keep pressing on to the goal. They know that the goal makes what everyone else thinks pointless. When you know you are pursuing a worthy and right goal, determine that what everyone else thinks about you and your goal really doesn't matter. Don't let their criticism paralyze you or stop you from pursuing your worthy goal.

Conclusion:

We all have a place in the kingdom and this congregation. Is yours as a Leader? What will you do about it? When and where will you lead? Don't be embarrassed if you can't do what someone else does. Don't be ashamed because you don't have someone else's gift. Make sure you are pursuing the gift God has given you. We need the leadership, direction, and challenge you can offer through your leadership. As **Ephesians 4:15-16** explains, you are a joint in this congregation and we need the leadership with which you are equipped. If you are a Leader, the question for you is what will you do with God's gift? Are you leading? Who? When? Where? How?