

**Intro:**

We're in our series "Church: are you serious?," a series through the Bible book of 1 Corinthians. Our hope is that we can move from feeling distant and disgusted about Jesus and church, to feeling dedicated to Him and His cause. Today we talk about a very important aspect of Jesus and church: leadership.

Leadership is such an integral and crucial part of our human existence. Whether it be at work, in the family, in the community, or in the church- leadership is essential. But not only is leadership needed, *good* leadership is crucial because everything rises and falls on leadership.

What does the Bible have to say about good leadership? That's what our passage is about. Turn with me if you will to 1 Corinthians 3, and let's read together. If you're new here, please be aware that we've been reading through this Bible book for the last month together and are jumping in the middle of a section that began two chapters ago, and so things may seem hard to grasp at first. No worries, we'll walk through it together, and so at the end we should all be on the same page.

Read text: 1 Cor 3:1-23

If you've been with us, you can see how divisiveness based on personality and style preferences in leadership at work in the first paragraph. Paul has been building his argument, and says here that their divisiveness proves that they are immature/childish- in fact, Paul calls that behavior essentially unchristian (he can't even call them spiritual!). He essentially reiterates it in the last paragraph as well,

They have a totally incorrect view of leadership, and that's what he takes time talking about. Two major points he makes.

**1. Leadership is about God, not leaders!**

**Leaders are servants. (v. 5)**

**Leaders get their ability from God. (v.5- "assigned" is usually translated "given")**

**God produces the result. (v.6)**

Paul's first metaphor for his discussion is from agriculture. It's pretty clear that this is his point (v.6). But he elaborates:

- As such we are not the focus. (v.7)

- As such we should see ourselves as one- in status and purpose.(v.8) This is not just seen in his mentioning that they are one, but also as he talks about the wages- the words used for receiving wages and the context of agriculture come together in two of Jesus' stories Matt. 20, and John 4:36- both stories emphasize the oneness aspect!

**God owns it all- leaders and the church. (v.9)**

It is simply not about us!

**Implications:**

- *We need to remember that it's about service.*

As it relates to serving/loving God- sometimes God will have us in places where it's not about our gift set. It's just about doing what he wants.

As it relates to serving/loving people- it's not about you, it's about others. The "do lunch" idea.

Our definitions of leadership need to reflect this:

*Good leaders are fervent disciples of Jesus Christ, gifted by the Holy Spirit, with a passion to bring glory to God. They use their gifts of leadership by taking initiative to focus, harmonize and enhance the gifts of others for the sake of developing people and cultivating the kingdom of God.*

- *We need to pray for God to give the church the gift of leadership, and that there are differences in leadership types and functions.*

The differences mentioned here: Pioneering, managing (starting something new, growing something that has been started already). There are more people have come up with- see, for example.

<http://www.theforgottenways.org/apest/>. This is important to note because, especially if you are a new or aspiring leader, you may feel like you have to be able to do what you see in others. Or you may think- I'm not a pioneering type, or I'm not a managing type, therefore I'm not a leader... Well, that's incorrect!

Prayer Challenge: this month. God, give two leaders to every ministry we are called to have.

*We need to acknowledge God for all good leaders, giving praise to Him.*

*We need to put away divisiveness.*

### **Q: Any other implications?**

#### **2. Leaders must lead carefully. (v. 10-17)**

Paul changes metaphors, talking about the church now as a building, which will later be specified as the temple of God. It has a foundation- Jesus. And people- leaders- build the church on that foundation. Now, you can build it with a variety of things- some of which will last, some of which will not (v. 12). Here's the point: however one chooses to build will be ultimately judged by God on the day of judgment, so leaders need to be careful of how they go about leading the church! This is what v.13-15 explains: If we build well, we receive a reward (we're not too sure what that is, but we know it's something awesome from God). If we build poorly, our work won't stay, and we will suffer loss- not that are ultimate eternity with God will be jeopardized- the verse clarifies that. But we will experience a loss of reward, or some type of judgment from God. In fact, the passage goes on to say with even more severity- we will experience God's destruction! In v. 16, the church is further called the temple of God- drawing a picture of both the great Roman temples of the time as well as the great Jewish temple of biblical history. You, as Jesus followers, are that temple. It is something holy, sacred, set apart for God. If anyone destroys that temple, God will destroy them!

Again, We know it isn't an eternal sort of judgment or destruction. We really don't know what this exactly means, but it is definitely something serious. It's interesting to note that later in the book, in 1 Cor 11:29-30, it notes that people in Corinth were actually getting sick and dying because they were taking communion while being divisive among socioeconomic lines, and so experienced God's judgment.

All this to say that Leaders must lead carefully because the will be assessed at the day of judgment.

Question: How should we lead? What does it mean to build well, so that our work is not shown to be nothing at judgment day?

Answer: Given the larger context and also the last paragraph, I think it's clear what the passage suggest:

Mindset: shaped by Jesus-on-a-cross, not human ingenuity... (v.18-20)

Which should lead to...1) humble and loving, not proud and divisive. 2) Jesus looks greater, not us. Boasting in Jesus, not boasting in ourselves. (v.21-22).

(note: this is what Paul is trying to get at by saying "all things are yours." The Corinthians have been saying I belong to this and that leader; Paul is saying they actually belong to you. More than that, he says in fact everything belongs to you, is subservient to you, but it's not because of You but Jesus- "you are Christ's." So it's actually not even about you, but about Jesus! So stop boasting in yourselves!)

Leaders must lead carefully.

#### **Implications:**

Current leadership: How much are we shaped by Jesus-on-a-cross?

Aspiring leadership: you may feel intimidated. Take the challenge; there's nothing quite like it. Let someone know that you want to be developed.

All of us:

a) Pray for your leaders. Pray that God helps them in the very serious task of leading. Join the Prayer Team for this.

b) Take church seriously, specifically the issue of divisiveness. Remember the problem of divisiveness was not with leadership, but with the church as a whole. Our divisiveness kills the church.

c) Remember Jesus- it's all about him! If you're a seeker... get to know this Jesus he actually has so much to give you.

#### **Communion and challenge:**

What is God telling you? Say yes to him.