

# Week 5

## Day 29: Love your leaders, don't idolize them

Read 1 Corinthians 3:3-4

*For whenever someone says, "I'm with Paul," and another, "I'm with Apollos," are you not unspiritual people?" 1 Corinthians 3:4*

How many church pastors have been compared to their predecessor with the comment, "Bro. so and so didn't do it that way?" These comparisons are seldom helpful and make life difficult for the leader God has assigned to the congregation today. While every church member should be encouraged to show honor to past ministers, we make a mistake when we begin to think that their approach to ministry and church leadership is the only approach God can use.

The Corinthian Christians had divisions in the church because of different leadership personalities that God had used in their congregational life. The members picked which side they were on, to the exclusion of the people who preferred the other leaders.

Paul pointed out their error and challenged them to put away carnal favoritism. We would do well today to honor past leaders God has used in the church, while at the same time submitting to the Christ-like leadership God has set before us today.

What is one thing you can do this week to honor your pastor and staff?

Prayer

Maybe this would be a good day to pray for your pastor and staff. You might consider praying that God will fill them with the Holy Spirit, restoring the joy of their salvation, affirming them in their calling, and refocusing them on the mission at hand.

## Day 30: Become a church cheerleader

Read Hebrews 10:24-25

*"And let us be concerned about one another in order to promote love and good works, 25 not staying away from our worship meetings, as some habitually do, but encouraging each other, and all the more as you see the day drawing near." Hebrews 10:24-25*

The job of a cheerleader is to support the team and call the fans to action. Fans at a ball game can really make a difference as they cheer their team on to fight for victory. In church, while each of us has a part on the team, we also have a part like that of a fan. Sometimes we are in the game, while at other times we are in the stands cheering for those who are working hard for the sake of Christ's mission.

We cheer each other on when we affirm the way God is using one of our brothers or sisters in the work of ministry. We cheer our team when we amen the truth brought out by our pastor. We cheer the team when we participate joyfully in worship and greeting the guests. The positive attitude of one person can make a real difference as that individual vocalizes his or her support of the team in the hallways and gatherings of the congregation.

What is coming up, or happening now, in the life of your church for which you can offer your vocal support?

Prayer

Pray today that God will show you ways you can support your church vocally with encouraging words as you move toward congregational health.

### **Day 31: Discover and Do Your Part**

Read 1 Corinthians 12:1-7

*"A demonstration of the Spirit is given to each person to produce what is beneficial." 1 Corinthians. 12:7*

There are two essential truths that should be vocalized and magnified as a church desires to move into congregational health. Those truths are that every person has a part, and that one person really can make a difference. 1 Corinthians 12 teaches that God gives a spiritual ability to every member of His church. God indwells us in the form of the Holy Spirit and empowers us to serve the body in some important way. That explains the first truth.

The second truth is also vital: one person really can make a difference. Many of us feel hopeless about church growth because we think the entire congregation will never get on board. While congregational buy-in and unity matter, it is also true that one person can make a huge difference as he or she serves God wholeheartedly in the church to which he or she belongs. One person who will witness, pray, give, serve, love, and live for Christ will inspire and impact others as well as be used by and blessed by God in his or her faithfulness. Instead of waiting for others to join in, decide today to be one person who will make a difference.

Will you surrender yourself afresh today to Jesus in hopes of being used to revitalize your congregation?

Prayer

Consider praying today a prayer of re-surrender. Maybe you could offer yourself to God the way you did when you first came to Him. Maybe also you could ask God for personal direction in how to live your Christian service to the fullest in the place where He has put you to serve and grow.

## Day 32: Build Up The Church

Read 1 Corinthians 14:6-12

*"since you are zealous for spiritual gifts, seek to excel in building up the church." 1 Corinthians 14:12*

In these verses, Paul is speaking to young Christians in Corinth. There is some desire to have certain spiritual gifts. Paul reminds the people here that spiritual gifts are used to build up the church.

One of the problems in the church today is that people do not know their spiritual gifts. The Bible teaches that each person is given at least one spiritual gift from God.

HAVE YOU DETERMINED YOUR SPIRITUAL GIFT(S)?

The other problem related to spiritual gifts in the church is the lack of people using their gift(s). If you know your spiritual gifts, then how are you using them in the church? If God gives us these gifts, He expects us to use them!

Many pastors I speak with tell me about their great need for workers in the church. If we are putting our gifts to work, then the church would have all the workers it needs, right?

A healthy church is one that is using the spiritual gifts of the members to build up the body of the church and reach that community for Christ.

Prayer

Pray today for God to show you your spiritual gifts and how He wants you to use them to build up His church!

## Day 33: Love One Another

Read John 13:34-35

*"... I give you a new commandment: love one another. Just as I have loved you, you must also love one another." John 13:34*

In the Upper Room, Jesus gave some final instructions to His apostles, whom He would soon leave. He began that final lecture by challenging His disciples to love one another as He had loved them. Addressing this issue first in the Upper Room speaks to its importance.

Love and unity in the church are critical to growth. Jesus stated that all people would know we are His disciples by our love for one another. Some of our churches are stagnant or in decline due to their lack of genuine love for one another and subsequent disunity. A watching world wonders if it can be loved by a group of people who do not seem to love one another.

In *The Mark of the Christian*, Francis Schaeffer states that the love of Christ in the lives of believers is what sets them apart from the world. He concludes that the world has a right to judge the authenticity of Christ's claims to be the Messiah, the Savior, the Son of God, by what they see in the lives of His followers. Is Jesus the one who can change lives?

Are the lives of His followers different than those of the world? Do they truly love one another in difficult times? Do you live in unity and love with other Christians?

Prayer

Ask God to help you love your brothers and sisters in Christ as He has loved you.

### **Day 34: Church Check-up**

Read Acts 11:19-30

*"The Lord's hand was with them, and a large number who believed turned to the Lord". Acts 11:21*

Are your life, marriage, family, career, and church healthy? The church in Antioch was healthy and strong. News about the church reached Jerusalem. It's a fact that people talk about the church (good or bad).

Barnabas reported that he saw the "grace of God" when he arrived in Antioch. What are people saying about the church you serve? As people attend your church, do they see the "grace of God" at work?

What signs distinguish a healthy church? A healthy church...

Expects commitment. Persecution couldn't stop the witness of early believers.

Shares Jesus. Early believers didn't talk about the economy, sports, or Hollywood. Jesus was the subject of their conversations.

Welcomes change. The church in Antioch saw the Lord change lives, marriages, and families. The church's message must never change. However, methods need to change as the Lord leads.

Serves together. Barnabas needed Saul's help to teach the believers in Antioch. Healthy churches embrace a "team" approach to ministry.

Disciples believers. Barnabas and Saul taught a great number of believers for one year. Healthy churches never separate evangelism and discipleship.

Practices generosity. A worldwide famine convicted the early believers to give. Generosity is a must in a healthy church.

Trusts the leaders. The Antioch church trusted Barnabas and Saul. Leadership trust is essential in healthy churches.

How is our church doing?

## Day 35: The Power of Agreement

Read Acts 6:1-7

*"So the preaching about God flourished, the number of the disciples in Jerusalem multiplied greatly, and a large group of priests became obedient to the faith". Acts 6:7*

Some churches avoid voting on issues of importance in the church because they believe votes divide people and give opportunities for church problems to occur. These people do have plenty of evidence to back up their practice. Many church splits have happened because half of the congregation wanted to go one direction while the other half wanted to go another.

In Acts 6:1-7, there was a different mindset toward congregational decisions and outcomes. The church needed help with its ministry to the widows of the congregation. A solution was proposed by the leadership, and the proposal found favor with the congregation (6:5). The result was a unified church that continued to reach out with the gospel and make more disciples for Christ.

How can you aid in congregational agreement regarding upcoming decisions in your church?

Prayer

Please pray that God will give wisdom to your church leaders regarding a plan for church health and that their plan will find favor in the congregation.