

## Apologia Series #1: Servants, Helpers of Joy, and Examples

God bless you in the name of Jesus Christ.

True spiritual leaders do not lord over or control others but in contrast are servants, helpers of others' joy, and set a good example for others to follow.

Here in Acts 26 the Apostle Paul is brought before Agrippa and he has been accused of certain things. His accusers are religious leaders who practiced control over others. And we pick it up in verse 1.

Acts 26:1,2:

Then Agrippa said unto Paul, Thou art permitted to speak for thyself. Then Paul stretched forth the hand, and answered for himself:

I think myself happy, king Agrippa, because I shall answer for myself this day before thee touching all the things whereof I am accused of the Jews [or as we understand it more precisely, the Judeans]:

The words "answer" and "answered" are a Greek word *a-po-lo-geo-mai* (it is the verb form of the Greek noun *apologia*), and one way of understanding this Greek word is "an answer of truth in the face of accusation." The meaning of this word is not an apology, which is to admit guilt and or ask pardon for some wrongdoing. That was not what Paul was meaning here. The concept of an *apologia* can be traced back to ancient Greek philosophers like Socrates as an opportunity to address accusations with truth as a defense. How wonderful it is that the Apostle Paul is given this occasion to answer in the face of these accusations.

Those that were accusing him are the religious leaders of the day. These are individuals steeped in the law and performing works to determine people's value, as opposed to people's value derived through God's grace in Christ. They were accusing the Apostle Paul of various things.

An *apologia*, as I said, is an opportunity to answer accusations with truth. These accusations are false. Why would somebody do something like that? Well, desire for power to control others has a strong influence on why. We'll get into that in a little bit. Now, no one is perfect, we all know this, but the Word says in Matthew 12:33:

Matthew 12:33:

Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by *his* fruit.

Sure, trees are known by their fruit, that's obvious, it's not difficult to understand. Well, so are people. People are known by their fruit.

That is one of the great keys to understanding what goes on in a situation where you have two sides contending and you're trying to figure out what is going on. So fruit is one way to help us when sometimes we see things that don't seem to line up and we are trying to make sense of what is going on. Anyone who has been accused falsely can attest to this. But if we dig deep enough (and sometimes it takes a little bit of time), the fruit will show itself, good or bad. And we accept the responsibility for the fruit of our own lives. I have no problem with that before God. I am very comfortable in my own skin.

Galatians 6:7-9:

Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap.

For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not.

Absolutely, and sometimes it takes a little time; and that's okay. When anyone habitually says one thing and does something else, this is called hypocritical behavior, and their fruit will eventually show itself.

I want to look at three leaders to help paint a picture of what a true Christian leader should be. As we do, we will specifically contrast with what a leader should not be, and that is to lord over others and endeavor to control people. The examples we will look at are Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul and the Apostle Peter. And I have a very specific reason why I want to look at them in this sharing. Each one denounced the practice of leadership lording over God's people, and we'll read it right from the Word. I'm not going to read into it. Such practices of lording over people we might call top-down leadership today, and this is when someone consistently imposes one's will upon another. A leader imposing his or her will on others is not what a grace era minister is authorized by God to do. This practice is done in worldly organizations all the time. Christians have the authority to address issues and concerns with each other but are not given the authority to control others. That kind of leadership does a lot of damage by disincentivizing others to rise to God's calling. They squelch others' heart and desire by trying to control them.

Now sometimes all leaders (I will include myself here because I am sure I have crossed the line at times too), fall prey to frustration, may become worn down and tired and as a result make

the mistake of imposing their own will on somebody else, that happens at times. Any parent knows what I am talking about when it comes to their children frustrating or wearing them down too. That sometimes happens, but that's not the pattern we should follow as grace era ministers.

Jesus Christ contrasts this "lording over" with service. That's the answer he gave, service. That's the right thing to do. The Apostle Paul, he contrasts "lording over" God's people with being a helper of other's joy. That's the right thing to do as well. Then, the Apostle Peter, he contrasts being lords over God's people with being a good example. Each of these categories add to the picture of what Christian leaders are to be as opposed to what they are not to be. And I think in every one of these categories (again, not perfectly, I'm very clear on that), we have endeavored to do our best despite accusations to the contrary.

Now being lords over people is the approach to leadership done in the world all the time. That is the way that they operate. They have a top-down leadership corporate ladder mentality and anyone who has worked in the world understands this, even at the local level. Yet Jesus Christ on the night he instituted the bread and wine to set in remembrance his soon-to-be broken body and shed blood; he handled this leadership truth. And again, like I mentioned, he gave the right perspective, which is service. Let's read it here.

Luke 22:25:

And he [Jesus] said unto them, The kings of the Gentiles [that's the leadership of the nations who were not of Israel, so leaders from a worldly perspective] exercise lordship over them: and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors.

Interesting, look at the context here, look at verse 24.

Luke 22:24:

And there was also a strife among them, which of them [talking about his leadership that were with Jesus the night he instituted the communion] should be accounted the greatest.

So, they're arguing amongst themselves who is the greatest, meaning somebody is above somebody else. Right? Sure, who's the greatest? That's where he said the kings of the Gentiles exercise lordship over people, and they that exercise authority upon them are called benefactors. But ye shall not be so. He told them this is not you.

Luke 22:26,27:

But ye *shall* not *be* so [I mean, it couldn't be any plainer; "But ye *shall* not *be* so"]: but he that is greatest among you, let him be as the younger, and he that is chief, as he that doth serve.

For whether *is* greater, he that sitteth at meat, or he that serveth? *is* not he that sitteth at meat? But I am among you as he that serveth.

He was setting the example among them as a servant. Because he told them as a leadership group, do not do lord over people by following the example of the world. Now I'll explain what I mean by that. This dispute among the apostles who is the greatest, is totally from the world. It's not what Jesus Christ taught. The world does this with everything, for example the Olympics, you know who's the greatest Olympian, the World Series, who's the greatest baseball team that particular year, who won the Super Bowl, who's the greatest football team, the world cup who is the greatest soccer team, the Oscars, oh my gosh, the best movie, the best actor, the best screenplay, it's the best, the best, the best, the best. That might work for the world, but that is not the way it's supposed to be in Christian leadership. Wow, what a wake-up call! This is the way of the world. That's right. When this happens in the Christian community it causes problems.

The words "exercise lordship over," in verse 25, are translated from one Greek word *kurieuō*, it means "to be lord over any person or anything." To be lord over any person or anything. Wow, that's interesting. You see things are to be used, people are to be loved; and we can never, I mean never, mix up the two. When we mix up the two, people will suffer.

Things are to be *used*; people are to be *loved*. God's people are so precious to Him. I use my table, I use my car, I use the coffee maker and if it breaks, I may throw it away and get a new one. But we don't throw away people. Now one way of applying this truth, in a way, is looking at the ministry of Christ that we are supposed to be advancing. The Christian ministry has two basic components from one way of looking at it. It has a corporate or business side and it has a biblical side. And how do you reconcile the two? Well, we live in a day and time in modern cultures as we engage in Christian service, we need to reconcile these two aspects, and it's not an easy thing to do. Anybody who has endeavored to that knows it can be a challenge.

The dominant structure and function of the business side of the Christian ministry from my perspective is for the stewardship of the physicals. That's right. The physicals must always be second to the biblical side of the Christian ministry which is the Word and the people.

The Word must always be first. That is not an easy line to walk at times because of the cultures in which we live, but it is manageable. The world is always trying to get Christians, especially

Christian leaders to compromise on the Word, when that happens people suffer. And this is a challenge and I believe it is a great key to understanding what goes on in Christian organizations. If the business side dominates the biblical side, then the Word is not first; therefore, God is not first. That's idolatry. So as a result, what happens is people can be treated poorly causing hurt and confusion.

When people are treated as if they are physical things that can be manipulated, used, discarded, that's a worldly influence. When there's an imbalance that exists with a top-down leadership approach rather than an inclusive, balanced, biblical approach among leadership, there's a problem. And consequently, there's a disconnect. Mutual respect and spiritual unity get interrupted. That's exactly what Jesus Christ warned against.

We have been accused of not endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace, as others have as well.

Ephesians 4:1-3:

I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that ye walk worthy of the vocation wherewith ye are called,

With all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love;

Endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.

Just because I may not do what you want me to do in terms of an organization, does not mean I am breaking the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace. God is at work on many fronts to make His case for grace. Anyone who has been involved can tell you the same thing, that along with my wife, we have endeavored to build a team environment. Now did we do it perfectly? No, no one does.

Look at Ephesians 4 please. This is probably the best model in terms of the principles of truth involved for leadership to be enacted. A pyramid approach where you have a point at the top and a big base at the bottom illustrates top-down leadership where all the authority and the decision-making is at the top. That may be the model for an organization, corporation, or company, but that is not the way Christians are instructed to function in the body of Christ. Ephesians 5:21 tells us we are to submit ourselves "one to another in the fear [respect] of [Christ]". Each Christian has Christ in them through the gift of holy spirit. Incorporating more of a body of Christ approach where each believer is a member and has equal standing and value before God gets better results. Now wisdom tells us, there are times when our efforts need to be more streamlined, especially when time is of the essence or in an emergency. This is

common sense. This approach is more atypical though and not to be applied for daily routine living of the gospel among Christians.

Ephesians 4:11-16:

And he gave some apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers;

For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ:

Till we all come in the unity of the faith [the faith of Jesus Christ we all share in the family of God], and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ:

That we *henceforth* be no more children [children spiritually, not in age], tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, *and* cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into Him in all things, which is the head, *even* Christ:

From whom the whole body [all living Christians], fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplieth [it is not just a few that supply, but every], according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, maketh increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love.

That's why it is so important to build a team in whatever spiritual assignment and responsibility that people have, because it reflects more of mutual members of the one body of Christ approach. There must be a lot of listening, there must be a lot of working together and endeavoring to make things work.

An organization in the Christian ministry is a vehicle that helps us move the Word and help others. It provides an organizational structure to facilitate communication and steward and funnel resources. So, we don't want to throw out the baby with the bath water, so we need some sort of organization but let's keep it on the Word.

We're going to follow this concept of "lording over" and build our understanding. Jesus Christ said the answer was service. Here Paul states it in kind of a different way.

2 Corinthians 1:24:

Not for that we [Paul, Silas and Timothy] have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

The leadership of Paul, Silas, and Timothy are saying we don't have dominion over your faith. Faith is to believe God, and, in our day, we have the faith of Jesus Christ so his capacity to believe God. The words "we have dominion over" are translated from one Greek word, the same word we learned earlier from the scripture with Jesus Christ, *kurieuō*, to be lord over any person or anything. We don't have dominion over people, so what are we supposed to do? Paul notes, leaders are to be helpers of others joy. See how this fits beautifully with what Jesus Christ said about leadership and how we are not to be like worldly leaders but serve. This is where real understanding of free will comes into play for a leader. Giving people room to grow and make mistakes and encourage them to freely give themselves to the cause of Christ. This produces the genuine joy and organic growth the bible declares.

Dominion over others is about control. You control *things*: I control my car, I control the lights in my room, I control the thermostat, but not *people*. There's nothing wrong with taking charge of yourself and perhaps a situation you find yourself in. Jesus Christ was a master at this. He took charge of himself, and he was the master of every situation because he loved and he knew what service he was sent to carry out. The Gospels are clear. He was the master of the situation. But leaders are not authorized to be in control of *people*. They don't have dominion over them or of their faith. That's important.

I love this quote from Thomas Jefferson, it's one of my favorites from him: "Upon the altar of God I pledge eternal hostility against every form of tyranny over the mind of man." Free will is something very interesting to work with, because as a leader, we love people into loving God, into loving themselves and others. Love and life cannot be forced.

Here in Corinthians, it's talking about not lording over Christian believers. This is not how true Christian leader's function. Rather, we teach how to believe God by way of His Word to help others have joy in their lives and stand unmovable on the truth.

Joy is an encouraging fruit and indicates quality of life. We want quality and stability in the lives of God's people. It's not about control.

Galatians 4:16,17:

Am I therefore become your enemy, because I tell you the truth? [ That's what Paul is saying to the Galatians. I'm telling you the truth, does that mean that I'm your enemy? No, we're supposed to speak the truth. Then it says]

They zealously affect you, *but* not well; yea, they would exclude you [the text is “us”], that ye might affect them.

Now this is an awkward translation; but here is a different rendering I would like to read.

Galatians 4:17:

They [who trouble and pervert the gospel] are zealous for your allegiance, but not in a good sense. No, they desire to isolate and control you so that you are zealous for their beliefs only.

That’s control and it’s usually done through intimidation and fear. It is about controlling people. People do not need bars to have prisons, they can be imprisoned in their minds through the intimidation of others.

2 Corinthians 1:24:

Not for that we [Paul, Silas and Timothy] have dominion over your faith, but are helpers of your joy: for by faith ye stand.

Paul contrasts having dominion over others with being helpers of their joy. See, the temptation is to fall into having dominion over people, trying to control what you want them to do. That is the wrong approach. We must win the heart of people one by one, from the youngest to the oldest, from the least experienced to the most seasoned believer. We win people to God’s team so that we can all work together and move the Word.

What we see in this verse again is the service of leadership. How Paul worked *with* people, and he did not control them! And again, the control isn’t physical. You isolate people off usually through intimidation and fear.

The calling and the authority of Paul’s ministries never left him wherever he traveled. He helped people. Look at how he’s working with the Corinthians as a helper of their joy. The word “helpers” is very interesting. It’s the Greek *sunergos*. Many of you are familiar with this. It’s translated “helpers”, “workfellow,” “labourers together with” God, “fellowhelper,” “companion in labour,” or “fellow workers.” One lexicon defines it as “working together in conjunction with.” That is how Robin and I have worked with people (or endeavored to, anyway). To work with, in conjunction with. To labor with them, not against them.

We’ve looked at Jesus Christ, we’ve looked at the Apostle Paul, and now let’s look at Peter. Remember, things are to be used. People are to be loved, not the other way around.



Here in 1 Peter 5, in this section on leadership in the context of the crown of glory, one of the great categories of rewards to those who choose to lead others as God would have them lead, is the truth again *not* to be lords over God's people. Why? Because it's so important.

We want to be helpers of others' joy. We want to be servants. Here, the Apostle Peter instructs that rather lording over people we should be examples.

1 Peter 5:1-3:

The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed:

Feed the flock of God [which is a figure of speech. God's people aren't sheep, but we can pastor people, lead, guide, feed and care for people is the point] which is among you [meaning locally], taking the oversight *thereof*, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre [not for money], but of a ready mind;

Neither as being lords over *God's* heritage, but being ensamples to the flock.

Peter is saying that the leadership are not to be lords *over* God's people. The Greek word used in translating this phrase is the same word referenced earlier with Jesus Christ and Paul. Here in Peter, it also has a preposition in front of it. Sometimes the Greek takes a preposition like "on" or "to" or "under" and then it adds it to another word, and it becomes what's called a compound word. You put the two words together to make this compound word like here in this verse. It's the word *katakuriuō*. It's the *kurieuō* with the preposition *kata* (further emphasizing the downward idea). By adding *kata* to *kurieuō* the lording over idea is intensified with even more pressure downward. So, this is a powerful condemnation of lording over people. In contrast, we're to be examples.

The word "ensamples" is just the King James English. It means an example, a type; like a typewriter makes an impact on a piece of paper. Some of us still remember what a typewriter is. Here the lording over those we are supposed to care for is contrasted with being examples of good Christian character for others to follow.

So, we've seen with Jesus Christ, the Apostle Paul and now the Apostle Peter. By these three examples, it becomes clear that leadership are not authorized by God to lord over people. Service, helpers of their joy, working with them and being examples with good motive of character is what these three leaders show us what is right to do as leaders.

Considering leadership, we should touch upon Romans chapter 13 where we have the higher powers mentioned. This is not speaking about government officials as some claim, but ministers to help promote good and denounce evil among God's people.

Romans 13:1:

Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers. For there is no power but of God: the powers that be are ordained of God.

These higher powers are not in terms of higher in elevation, as if the higher powers are up above our heads and the rest of us are somewhere down below their feet. That cannot be because we are all seated at the right hand of God. No one can get any higher than that! The "higher" refers to the direction from where that power comes from. This word "power" meaning authority here, comes from God. That is the highest of the high. It identifies the direction from whence the authority comes, it comes from heaven.

And higher powers do not indicate that it should be applied to an authority structure that man devises, like organizations, corporations, or companies. Ministers, like all members of the body of Christ function in unity under the life-giving authority of Christ as the head. Everyone can function within a Christian ministry structure, but someone does not necessarily need a structure to function as a member in the body of Christ.

A Christian organization can provide a structure for access to positively inspire people. The more responsibility one has, the greater the access to inspire others. However, the structure of an organization does not mean the head of that organization is the head of the body of Christ or in any way changes the spiritual functioning of the body of Christ. What affects spiritual functioning is love and fear. Belief and unbelief. The organizational structure of a Christian ministry does perhaps change the access one may have to people based on the responsibility they carry in the organization; but it doesn't change the spiritual function they are called to perform in love in the body of Christ.

The gifts and the calling of God are without repentance. And each individual, couple, or family adapts themselves to their various locations and access to others at the time. For example, someone can function spiritually as God has called them whether they are in another country or whether they're in the United States. Changes in location or Christian organizational titles or positions should not affect the functioning of the gifts of God's grace called *charismata* in the Greek because the *charismata* are acts of dividing by the Spirit, God Himself is the one that calls people to such endeavors.

So, if what has been shared makes biblical sense to you, and you have experienced such practices of lording over God's people in your sphere of influence, I would recommend that you

Speak up about it. Again, not in a hurtful sense, no, not at all. But do it fearlessly, with the love and confidence of Christ.

2 Timothy 1:7:

For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind.

Fear is no way to live. It's torment I John says. Fear ruins Christian ministries because people do not speak up when they should, I believe it, I've seen it. I have been afraid in my life, and I've not spoken up and taken a stand when I should have. All that is behind me and my wife now and we are interested in moving ahead with the grace of God. Now, again, taking a stand does not mean that we must be harsh. No way. We do it with love and tenderness, but we're firm.

May Ephesians 6:19 and 6:20 be spoken of every one of us. I will read these verses to you.

Ephesians 6:19,20:

And for me, that utterance may be given unto me, that I may open my mouth boldly, to make known the mystery of the gospel,

For which I am an ambassador in bonds: that therein I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

I will pray. Dear heavenly Father, thank You for the time that we've had, and for Your wonderful grace and mercy and peace. And Father, thank You for Your wisdom, for Your solutions, and Your direction. And may we each walk more boldly and more confidently on the truth of Your Word with great love and tenderness in the days, weeks, months, and years ahead, and for prospering our way in the name of Jesus Christ. God bless you.