

# **A Thriving World**

**Serving Leaders Produce a Thriving World by  
Practicing the Five Actions of Serving  
Leadership™**

**By Jon Byler**

The following is a compilation of a biweekly email newsletter series about producing a Thriving World. These “Reflections for Serving Leaders” were written for serving leaders around the world to learn what it means to lead like Jesus. The issue number and date used are the dates for the original publication.

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# Serving Leaders Produce a Thriving World: They Shape the Vision

#382 September 18, 2024

Serving leadership works! Serving leadership produces environments where people come to life, find meaning and purpose, and bring their best selves to the mission of the organization. Everything, even the bottom line, improves and thrives as a result!

The biblical foundation for serving leadership, and The Serving Leader Model<sup>®</sup>, is found in Paul's vision for the church.

*<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:11-16).*

The serving leadership principles outlined by Paul in this passage produce a thriving church and will also produce a thriving workplace because they are based on God's design for the universe! In this series, we'll look at five actions serving leaders take. First, in this issue, the shaping of vision. The Serving Leader Model<sup>®</sup> calls this "Run to Great Purpose™". Vision addresses the question, "Why do we exist and why does it matter?"

## ***Serving leaders shape the vision by identifying purpose.***

Paul invites his readers to see the purpose of where they are going. "...until we all reach unity...we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ." As he describes this vision he gives meaning and purpose to all that they are doing.

Some leaders focus on the tasks people need to do and push for completion of the tasks without articulating a higher purpose. But serving leaders connect the work to a higher purpose. They clarify the purpose and share it with everyone in the organization. This does not mean that they must create a new or different vision from a previous leader but they do ensure that it is clearly identified.

## ***Serving leaders shape the vision by raising purpose high.***

Some leaders put a purpose statement on their official documents but never refer to it again. But serving leaders work continually to keep it in front of the people they serve. They talk about it; they share stories that connect with the purpose. Serving leaders help people thrive by continually keeping the vision in front of the entire team.

## ***Serving leaders shape the vision by embedding purpose.***

Some leaders talk about their vision but don't deliberately get the vision embedded into the systems of the organization. But serving leaders keep working until every aspect of the organization is infused with purpose. This includes all the internal systems. Serving leaders ensure that vision is used when bringing new people to the team; they use the great purpose

to evaluate individual and team performance and they use their purpose to make financial decisions. They recognize that where purpose is clearly identified, continually shared and embedded throughout the organization people thrive!

*For further reflection and discussion:*

Reflect on your own leadership in the area of vision/purpose. How effectively does my leadership shape the vision of my organization? How does my leadership in this area impact the thriving of our team?

Do we have a clearly defined vision? If so, what can I do this week to raise it higher? If not, what process will I follow to develop one? (Use the Vision Discovery tool below to assist you in this process.

How well is our vision embedded into all our internal systems? What is one step we can take to include vision in our internal training?

Read again the scripture above (Ephesians 4:11-16) considering your organization in the area of vision or great purpose. What is one step you can take this week to improve?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at how serving leaders create thriving by setting the values.

# Serving Leaders Produce a Thriving World: They Set the Values

#383, October 2, 2024

Serving leaders create a world in which people thrive. This world is described by Paul:

*<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:11-16).*

Paul's vision is of a thriving body, where leaders are doing their work and the followers have also found their place to thrive. In this issue, we focus on how serving leaders produce thriving as they set the values of the organization. The Serving Leader Model® calls this "Raise the Bar™". Values answers the question, "How will we relate to each other and those we serve?"

## ***Serving leaders set the values by naming them.***

Paul clearly identifies at least one value in this passage, "speaking the truth in love." He wants to make clear the kind of communication that is expected in this body so he names it. All organizations have values whether or not they are named. You can observe the values of any group by observing behaviors and noticing what is allowed, what is encouraged and what is rewarded. However many leaders don't name their values, they just focus on getting the work done with little thought or concern about how people are relating to each other. But serving leaders, like Paul, take the time to think about the values that they want to see expressed in the organization and name them. They find a few values that they really want to focus on and keep them in front of everyone in the organization.

## ***Serving leaders set the values by defining them.***

A value like "speaking the truth in love" may look good on the wall, but what does it actually mean in daily interactions? Some leaders assume that if a value is named, everyone will understand what it means. But serving leaders understand that values need to be clearly defined if they are to impact behavior. So they work hard to define what each value looks like in real life. They give examples of what it looks like as well as what it does not look like and make sure everyone understands what that value looks like. Then serving leaders look for opportunities to connect an action they observe with a value of the organization.

## ***Serving leaders set the values by enforcing them.***

What happens when someone does not speak "truth" or not speak it "in love"? This is a test for leaders. Followers watch closely to see what happens when a value is not practiced. They watch to see if the leader practices the value or just tells others to practice it. They

watch to see if all will be held accountable or only certain persons. Some leaders are not willing to uniformly hold everyone to the shared values. But serving leaders hold the standards high and enforce them diligently. They are willing to have hard conversations around values instead of hoping that with time the behaviors will change. They understand that naming, defining and enforcing values creates a thriving world for their organization.

Where values are clearly understood, defined and enforced, people thrive!

*For further reflection and discussion:*

Reflect on your own leadership in the area of values. How effectively does my leadership name, clarify and enforce values? How does my leadership in this area impact the thriving of our team?

Are the values of my organization clearly named? If so, how well am I living out these values as a leader? If not, use the tool below to name your values. You may want to do this with your leadership team or other key individuals in your organization.

How well does every person on our team understand what our values look like in real life? What can I do this week to strengthen our team in this area?

Is there someone on our team that has been violating a value but I have not taken any action? What do I need to do and when will I do it?

Read again the scripture above (Ephesians 4:11-16). Are there other values implied in this passage? If so, what are they?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll examine how serving leaders create thriving by sharing the mission.

# Serving Leaders Produce a Thriving World: They Share the Mission

#384, October 16, 2024

We have reflected on two actions that serving leaders take which produce a thriving world—they shape the vision and set the values. A third action serving leaders take to produce thriving is to share the mission. Again, consider Paul’s vision of the church body.

*<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead of speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:11-16).*

Paul describes a thriving world in which each part is doing its part and the body is growing to healthy maturity. In this issue, we focus on how serving leaders share the mission of the organization. The Serving Leader Model® calls this “Blaze the Trail™”. Mission addresses the question, “What do we do that brings value to those we serve?”

## ***Serving leaders share the mission by clarifying priorities.***

Paul reveals the mission of the body in this passage. There are “works of service” and an acknowledgment that “each part does its work.” There is work to be done and clients, customers, or members to serve. Each member has a part to play in fulfilling the mission and every organization has a unique way in which they add value to the world. Many leaders focus on making sure everyone is busy. But serving leaders share the mission with everyone by clarifying priorities so that everyone is busy doing the right things. They make it abundantly clear to everyone what work serves the customer/client/member in ways that ensure the mission is accomplished.

## ***Serving leaders share the mission by teaching.***

Paul encourages the leaders to “equip his [God’s] people for works of service.” He understood that thriving required the leaders to teach others how to do their work. Many leaders, especially founders of organizations, intuitively understand the special value that they bring and what special “flavor” of service they bring to the world. And they assume that in time others will learn it from them. But serving leaders realize that mission critical work must be taught. They are quick to say, “Let me show you how we do this in this organization and why doing it this way helps us accomplish our mission.” They teach, train, observe, correct and instruct until the work is done in the right way.

## ***Serving leaders share the mission by removing obstacles.***

Paul talks about the “waves” and “winds” that will distract people from the real work of the church. He recognizes that it will be easy to lose focus and start doing things that don’t really produce maturity. Over time many leaders slowly allow excessive reporting, unnecessary meetings, redundant tasks, and inefficient workflows to develop. But serving leaders work continually to remove obstacles to the mission.

Where the mission is clear and everyone knows how to do their part to accomplish the mission people thrive!

*For further reflection and discussion:*

Reflect on your own leadership in this area. How effectively does my leadership share the mission of our organization? How does my leadership in this area impact the thriving of our team?

How clear is our mission? What do I need to do as a leader to clarify what activities are mission-critical in our organization?

What percent of my time is invested in teaching others how to do their work? What should it be? What do I need to do to move in the right direction?

What areas of waste exist in my organization? (Consider inefficient movements, wasted time, meetings that are not focused, paperwork, time spent on email and other areas.) Which one of these will I do something about today?

Read again the scripture above (Ephesians 4:11-16) considering your organization in the area of your mission. What is one step you can take this week to improve?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we’ll look at how serving leaders create thriving by synchronizing their teams.



# Serving Leaders Produce a Thriving World: They Synchronize the Team

#385, October 30, 2024

When the vision, values and mission of any organization are clarified and embedded deeply into the culture of the organization people thrive. But Paul's vision also includes two more actions serving leaders can take to build a thriving world.

*<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:11-16).*

In this scripture, Paul describes a thriving world, one in which each person is contributing their best to the whole. In this issue, we focus on how the serving leader synchronizes the team. The Serving Leader Model® calls this “Build on Strength™”.

## ***Serving leaders synchronize the team by acknowledging strengths.***

Paul's vision of the church body is diverse. He mentions a variety of gifts for the leaders and concludes by saying that the body will grow “as each part does its work.” Each part has a unique work. No part can do every work. Some leaders assume that if someone can do a job well, it must be a strength. But serving leaders look for areas of service that are life-giving to people. They first identify their own strengths and then work with their entire team to help each one identify areas in which they are not only good at doing but also enjoy doing.

## ***Serving leaders synchronize the team by aligning strengths to tasks.***

When strengths are identified it is possible to begin to align assignments to those strengths. Paul would not ask the evangelist to prophesy; he would expect the evangelist to bring in new members. In the same way, serving leaders identify activities that bring life to their team members and then as much as possible align their assignments to that area. Each one will use the strengths that they have to bring their best to the team. Many leaders assign people to tasks simply based on what needs to be done and who is available. But serving leaders recognize that each person is uniquely wired to thrive at specific tasks. Wherever possible they adjust responsibilities to align with strengths.

## ***Serving leaders synchronize the team by adjusting team roles.***

The beauty of teams is that each part needs the others. Paul implies that no leader with one of the gifts mentioned will be able to lead alone. They need the others. Some leaders believe they should be able to do everything well. But serving leaders acknowledge that there is no such thing as a “well-rounded leader” but there can be well-rounded teams! They

deliberately work to bring people around them that will help strengthen them in complimentary areas. And they work to align their teams to thrive by adjusting roles as much as possible to get people working in the areas of their strengths. Where teams are synchronized, people thrive!

*For further reflection and discussion:*

Reflect on your own leadership in this area. How effectively does my leadership synchronize my team? How does my leadership in this area impact the thriving of our team?

Are there things I am good at but do not enjoy doing? What should I do about this? What about those on my team? Do I actually know what they enjoy doing most? How can I find out?

When I identify strengths on my team, what can I do to shift their assignments towards areas of strengths?

How can we talk as a team about individual strengths and make adjustments as much as possible and appropriate?

Read again the scripture above (Ephesians 4:11-16) considering your organization in the area of teamwork and finding the right place for every person. What is one step you can take this week to improve?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

# Serving Leaders Produce a Thriving World: They Spread the Power

#386, November 13, 2024

Paul's description of a thriving body that grows and becomes stronger and stronger is a powerful image for any organization and a healthy model for any leader to follow.

*<sup>11</sup> So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, <sup>12</sup> to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up <sup>13</sup> until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. <sup>14</sup> Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. <sup>15</sup> Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. <sup>16</sup> From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Ephesians 4:11-16).*

In this scripture, Paul describes a thriving world. We have already looked at the actions of clarifying and embedding the vision, values and mission and building teams on strengths. In this final issue, we focus on how serving leaders share their power with others. The Serving Leader Model® calls this “Upend the Pyramid™” as this concept turns the traditional model of leadership upside down! Serving leaders spread their power.

## ***Serving leaders spread the power by delegating.***

Paul says that the work of the leaders is to “equip his [God’s] people for works of service.” Many leaders see their work as doing the work. They work hard and demonstrate how much they can do. They insist on doing the work themselves and want to keep all the power. But serving leaders realize that the work of leadership is to delegate power to others who are called to do the work. They recognize that they are *in power to empower* others. Their work is to serve those doing the work. They reflect on what tasks they are doing that others could do. Then they delegate that work to others and give them the corresponding authority.

## ***Serving leaders spread the power by equipping others.***

Delegating releases power to others; equipping trains them to do the work well. Some leaders assign tasks to others but assume that they’ll learn how to do it on their own. But serving leaders spend more and more of their time equipping others. They recognize that as they grow others, they are developing other leaders not simply followers. As they do so they are also growing an organization where people thrive.

## ***Serving leaders spread the power by preparing for succession.***

When leaders are spreading the power, growing and developing others around them, they are effectively preparing the organization for the time that they will no longer be in the leadership role. Some leaders work hard with little thought to what will happen after they are gone. But serving leaders prepare for the long-term success of their organization by delegating responsibility, sharing their power and equipping others to do the work. Little by

little the organization becomes mature and able to thrive even in their absence. Where leaders spread the power people thrive!

*For further reflection and discussion:*

Reflect on your own leadership in the areas of delegation and empowering others. How effectively does my leadership release power? How does my leadership in this area impact the thriving of our team?

When is the last time I delegated something to others? Was it primarily to develop them or to avoid doing the work myself? Did I clearly articulate what I expected from them and what level of authority I was giving them? What was the result and what can I learn from it?

How much of my time is spent doing the work and how much time is spent equipping others to work? What can I do to increase the time I spend on equipping others?

What would happen in my organization if I was suddenly gone? Would it survive? Thrive? What does this say about my leadership and what can I do to better prepare for the time I will be gone?

Read again the scripture above (Ephesians 4:11-16) considering your organization in the area of empowering others. What is one step you can take this week to improve?

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at a new series!

## About the Author

Jon Byler has a passion to serve the body of Christ by using his gifts of teaching, writing and encouragement. He especially enjoys serving the leaders who build the church. He lives with his wife, Loice in East Petersburg, PA. Together they pastor an emerging church and are the parents of three adult children.

Jon served in Kenya for 13 years and in different capacities in the church including pastoral ministry and leadership development. He currently serves in Center for Serving Leadership. He has authored several books including *7 Keys to Financial Freedom*, *The Heart of Christian Leadership*, *The Art of Christian Leadership*, and *Signposts for the Journey, Vol. 1, II, and III* and several booklets on other topics. He writes a bi-weekly e-Zine *Reflections for Serving Leaders* which is distributed by email in English and Spanish. (Sign up to receive a free copy on his website.)

Jon is available for speaking and consulting especially in the areas of leadership, church growth, and missions. For more information see his website, [www.LeadersServe.com](http://www.LeadersServe.com).