

Paul: The Five Actions of Serving Leadership™



By Jon Byler

About the Author

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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.

The following is a compilation of a biweekly email newsletter series about the leadership of Paul. 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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Paul: Run to Great Purpose™

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The apostle Paul is a model leader in so many ways. In this series, we'll examine how Paul's leadership is an example of the Five Actions of Serving Leadership™ (*see note). The first of the five actions is Run to Great Purpose™ which calls every organization to pursue a great purpose (or vision) that makes a difference in the world. God created the world with purpose and every person intuitively seeks to find meaning and purpose in what they do. Great leadership begins with a compelling purpose.

Paul's great purpose was defined for him at the point of his first encounter with Jesus.

¹⁵ "Then I asked, 'Who are you, Lord?' " 'I am Jesus, whom you are persecuting,' the Lord replied. ¹⁶ 'Now get up and stand on your feet. I have appeared to you to appoint you as a servant and as a witness of what you have seen and will see of me. ¹⁷ I will rescue you from your own people and from the Gentiles. I am sending you to them ¹⁸ to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me' (Acts 26:15-18, NIV).

Paul's life shows us that great leadership begins with a compelling purpose.

Paul clarified his great purpose.

Paul's vision was very clear, he was called to bring the message of Jesus to others, especially the Gentiles, allowing them to experience forgiveness and reconciliation with God. He devoted his life towards this great purpose—planting church movements throughout the Roman world, breaking down the barriers between Jews and Gentiles. Some leaders assume that the purpose of their organization is obvious or that it is nothing more than making money. But serving leaders take time to reflect deeply on the purpose of their organization and define it in clear and compelling language so that everyone will find meaning.

Paul raised his great purpose high.

Often during Paul's missionary journeys and writings he referred to his great purpose or vision. As he trained and mentored other leaders like Timothy and Titus, he often reminded them of the vision. He lifted it high so that everyone would understand what they were doing and why. As a team, the vision was so compelling that they were able to endure persecutions, hardships, and many challenges without giving up. Some leaders focus on getting their team to produce results, but serving leaders focus on getting their team to recognize why their work matters. Their work matters because the vision matters.

Paul embedded his great purpose throughout his team.

Paul ensured the great purpose was embedded in the lives and behaviors of everyone on his team. He trained and equipped church leaders who carried the same vision. He planted churches with the intent that they would carry out the vision in their own region. He wrote letters to them reminding them of the high calling that they had to be the representatives of Christ in their location. He was passionate about the vision enduring long after he was gone.

Some leaders put their vision in writing and post it on the wall or in corporate documents. But serving leaders don't just post their vision on the wall, they embed it in the hearts of their people.

For further reflection and discussion:

Paul's purpose was defined for him by God. What difference did this make in how he lived and led? Are there dangers in creating my own vision?

How clear and compelling is my own great purpose/vision? Have I worked to articulate the purpose of my organization in a way that captures the hearts of those who are on my team? If not, when will I work on this?

What have I done with my team to inspire passion for what they are doing? Why should they care about what they are doing? What can I do this week to strengthen our team in this area?

Have I embedded the great purpose so deeply in our organization that if I was no longer the leader, I am sure that the vision would continue? If not, what needs to change in my leadership?

In addition to the scriptures used in this issue, read and reflect on how the following passages also illustrate how Paul acted to Run to Great Purpose™: Acts 9:15-16; 26:15-20; 2 Corinthians 10:16; Romans 15:18-21; Ephesians 3:2-11; 1 Timothy 3:14-16; 6:11-16; 2 Timothy 1:7-14; 2:8-10; Titus 2:11-15

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at how Paul used values to shape his team.

*Note: The Five Actions of Serving Leadership™ were recognized by Dr. John Stahl-Wert and illustrated in the book *The Serving Leader*. These actions have been applied by many organizations to integrate serving leadership into everyday leadership practices. See www.CenterforServingLeadership.com for more information.

Paul: Raise the Bar™

Issue #394, March 19, 2025

Effective leadership begins with a compelling purpose. But the vision will not be accomplished unless teams are built around shared values that align peoples' actions with the vision. Values guide the actions of everyone on the team and shape the culture. Values are expressed when someone says, "That's how we do things here!" Raise the Bar™ is the second of The Five Actions of Serving Leadership™ (*see note) and focuses on values. Values are grounded in faith and great leaders, like Paul, make their values clear to the entire team.

¹*As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received.* ²*Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.* ³*Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:1-3, NIV).*

Paul's life and leadership provide a model of how serving leaders build a culture of values.

Paul identified and defined core values.

In this passage, and many others, Paul identifies five distinct values that he calls others to follow. Later in this chapter, he will explain what these values look like in real life. Again and again, in Paul's writings, he calls people to live out the values that express their faith. There was no ambiguity in how he lived and how he called people to behave. (See additional references below.)

Some leaders ignore values and focus primarily on getting the work done. They do not realize that every organization has values even when they are not identified and explained. But serving leaders take time to identify values that best reflect their unique purpose. Then they make sure that everyone on the team understands what these values look like.

Paul embedded core values in his team.

Repeatedly Paul talked about the values that he believed were essential for the church. He talked about them, preached about them and wrote about them. He "caught people in the act" of living out the values and shared their example with others. (See Philippians 2:19-30 for two examples.) These stories encouraged everyone to live up to the same values.

Some leaders put values on the wall. But serving leaders embed values into the hearts and lives of their people. They model the way and are not afraid to say, "That's how we do things here." They create a culture of shared values.

Paul addressed values gaps.

Paul often faced situations where people did not live out the values he had defined for them. This is a huge challenge for all leaders. What will we do when someone does not live out the value we have identified? Paul was quick to address these gaps. (See Gal. 2:11-14 for one example and others below.)

Some leaders ignore values gaps in hopes that the misalignment will go away and not impact the team. But serving leaders address values gaps by coaching people towards change. If the person is unwilling or unable to change, the leader serves the team by removing that person rather than compromising the value!

Serving leaders take full responsibility to build a culture of values on their team.

For further reflection and discussion:

What happens when the values of a leader are not clear?

Have I clearly identified the values of my organization? If not, what will I do to begin this process?

Does everyone in my organization understand what these values look like in real life? If not, what can I do to guide my team to a better understanding?

What do I do this week to remind my team of our values? How can I embed this into the regular life of our team? What story can I tell of someone who demonstrated one of our values?

Do I currently have team members that are not living up to our values? If so, what do I need to do to “Raise the Bar™”?

In addition to the scriptures used in this issue, read and reflect on how the following passages also illustrate how Paul acted to Raise the Bar™:

Identifying values: (Galatians 5:19-26; Ephesians 5:1:15-20; Philippians 1:27; 2:1-11; Colossians 1:10; 3:12-14)

Embedding values: (Phil. 1:3-5; 4:15; 2:19-30; 1 Thessalonians 1:2-3; Rom. 16:1-4; Philemon 1:4-7)

Addressing values gaps: (1 Tim. 1:19-20; 1 Cor. 1:10-12; 3:1-4; 5:1-2; 6:1-8; 13:13; 2 Tim. 4:10; Titus 1:10-13; Gal. 2:11-14; 2 Thessalonians 3:11-15)

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we’ll examine how Paul clarified his mission for the team.

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Paul: Blaze the Trail™

Issue #395, April 2, 2025

Successful leaders maintain a laser focus on the organization's success and ensure everyone is aligned with accomplishing the mission. This is the third action of the Serving Leader Model®, Blaze the Trail™ (*see note). This action reflects what organizations do—their mission. Faith leaders, like Paul, see their organization as a part of God's plan to make the world a better place so they have added reason to carry out the mission. Consider these verses reflecting Paul's leadership:

¹⁵ Neither do we go beyond our limits by boasting of work done by others. Our hope is that, as your faith continues to grow, our sphere of activity among you will greatly expand, ¹⁶ so that we can preach the gospel in the regions beyond you. For we do not want to boast about work already done in someone else's territory (2 Corinthians 10:15-16, NIV).

*Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles. And let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us, (Hebrews 12:1. **see note).*

Paul helped his team focus on the factors that were critical to the success of the mission.

Paul clarified key success factors.

Paul's mission was clear: to preach the gospel, especially in "the regions beyond" where there was no church. He defined both his objective and the geographical area in which he would focus. This was his unique contribution to the growth of the church. Every leader and every organization has a unique contribution to make to the world, a "special sauce" that makes their organization distinctive. Some leaders, especially founders, understand this intuitively but don't know how to clarify this for their team. But serving leaders make these factors clear to everyone on their team. They are able to state with confidence, "These are the things that make us unique."

Paul taught for success.

Paul calls his followers to "run with perseverance the race marked out for us..." The markers along the way show the runners where to focus. Paul devoted his life to training others how to achieve the mission. Leaders who Blaze the Trail™ mark the path of success so that others can follow along behind them. They establish standard patterns of operation that can be taught to new team members.

Some leaders expect team members to figure out on their own how to succeed but serving leaders take time to teach what is needed. They are able to say with conviction, "These are the actions we take to succeed and this is how we do it."

Paul removed obstacles to success.

Paul does not want anything to hinder the focus on the mission. He urges, "let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles." Great leaders name the obstacles to success and do whatever it takes to remove them. They work hard to eliminate wasted time and energy. These obstacles may include lack of training, missing information or necessary equipment, distractions, unnecessary paperwork, wasted time and energy, etc. Some of these activities may be good things, but when they keep people from success, they need to be removed. Some leaders press workers for success but do little to help them

remove obstacles. But serving leaders aggressively look for and remove obstacles from their teams. They are able to say with courage, "These things will keep us from success."

The world needs leaders who "blaze the trail" by showing their teams the way to success.

For further reflection and discussion:

Do I clearly understand what makes my organization (department, team, etc.) uniquely special? If not, what will I do to clarify what brings us success? Who do I need to talk to? What questions will I ask them?

How well does my team understand our mission? What can I do this week to remind them of the activities on which we need to focus?

How well do I teach my team what actions bring us success? How has this impacted my leadership capacity? In what ways can I strengthen the training processes with those I lead?

Take 10 minutes to reflect on waste in the organization you lead. What are the 3 main areas of waste? (See the short list of suggestions above for ideas). What will I do to remove them?

In addition to the scriptures used in this issue, read and reflect on how the following passages also illustrate how Paul acted to Blaze the Trail™: Acts 20:20-24; 26:19-20, 2 Timothy 2:2, 22-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-11; Philippians 1:27, 3:7-14; 17; 1 Corinthians 4:14-17, 11:1, 15:58; Colossians 1:28-29, 3:2; Galatians 2:7-8; and Ephesians 5:8.

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll look at how Paul build teams based on strengths.

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**Note: It is not known if Paul was the writer of Hebrews although it was traditionally attributed to him. However, even if Paul was not the author, it was almost certainly written by a close disciple or associate of Paul and was in alignment with Paul's leadership and teaching.

Paul: Build on Strength™

Issue #396, April 16, 2025

Great leaders build teams around them to help accomplish the vision. They understand that there is no such thing as a well-rounded leader, but there are well-rounded teams. Build on Strength™ is the fourth action in the Serving Leader Model® (*see note). It means leveraging the strengths of each individual to build a high-performing team. Faith leaders acknowledge the need for teams and their power as something God put into the DNA of the universe. Paul was a great leader and relied heavily on his team. Consider these verses:

- ⁵ *What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Paul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe—as the Lord has assigned to each his task. ⁶ I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but God has been making it grow....¹⁰ By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. (1 Corinthians 3:5-6, 10, NIV).*

- ³ *For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you. ⁴ For just as each of us has one body with many members, and these members do not all have the same function, ⁵ so in Christ we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. ⁶ We have different gifts, according to the grace given to each of us (Romans 12:3-6a).*

Paul built teams based on strengths that greatly expanded his work.

Paul was aware of his team member's strengths.

Paul was aware that he was not good at everything, his work was to lay “a foundation” and allow others to build on what he established. He also recognized the gifts of those on his team. He taught them about the different parts of the body and how each part is needed to accomplish all that needs to be done.

Some leaders think they should be great at everything, but serving leaders humbly acknowledge that they need others. They look at themselves “with sober judgment” to assess their own strengths and to see areas in which they need others. They have conversations with their team to understand where each one is strong.

Paul aligned each person's work to their strengths.

Paul carefully aligned his team members to their own individual strengths. He allowed Luke to use his strengths as a doctor and historian. When a church needed strong leadership to straighten out problems Paul sent Titus to Crete. When the need was for nurturing and strengthening relationships he sent Timothy to Ephesus. (See references below).

Some leaders focus on the task that needs to be done and assign a worker to do the task. But serving leaders focus on the person and align the task to their strengths.

Paul used strengths to develop high functioning teams.

As Paul aligned the assignments of his team members to their strengths, the team performance increased. The individuals thrived and were fully engaged in their work and loved what they were doing. They were able to acknowledge the strengths of the others and affirm them in their roles. They could share responsibilities with others on the team based on strengths.

Some leaders assign teams to accomplish a goal with little thought or communication about the strengths needed for the assignment. But serving leaders openly talk with their teams about individual strengths and affirm what each one brings to the team.

Serving leaders know the only way to build strong teams is to build teams on strengths. They acknowledge that their strength lies in recognizing the strengths of others.

For further reflection and discussion:

What are my top three strengths as a leader? In what areas do I need others around me to complement my strengths?

How well do I understand the strengths of my team? Do I assume that because someone is doing a job well that they enjoy doing it? When will I meet with them to ask what activities really bring them joy?

When I understand the strengths of my team members, what adjustments can I make to bring greater alignment between individual strengths and assignments?

How well do my team members understand the strengths of others on the team? If we have not already done so, when can we meet as a team to talk about strengths?

In addition to the scriptures used in this issue, read and reflect on how the following passages also illustrate how Paul acted to Build on Strength™: Romans 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 3:5-10; 12:1-31; Ephesians 4:7, 11-16.

Also consider how Paul referred to Timothy and Titus in these passages and the different roles to which he assigned them. (Timothy: 1 Corinthians 4:17, Philippians 2:19-23; 1 Timothy 4:12-16. Titus: 2 Corinthians 8:16, 23; Titus 1:5)

Until next time, yours on the journey,

Jon Byler

In the next issue, we'll examine how Paul grew others and prepared his team for succession.

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Paul: Upend the Pyramid™

Issue #397, April 30, 2025

Effective leaders grow the people around them and continually delegate more and more responsibility to their teams. This builds leadership depth and prepares the organization for the time that they will no longer be the leader. Faith leaders take a long-term perspective to their work believing that God's design is for one generation to build on the foundation of the previous. The Serving Leader Model® (*see note) calls this action Upend the Pyramid™, to reflect the way serving leaders turn the traditional leadership model upside down. Paul demonstrated this action in so many ways. Consider these examples:

- *He [Paul] was accompanied by Sopater son of Pyrrhus from Berea, Aristarchus and Secundus from Thessalonica, Gaius from Derbe, Timothy also, and Tychicus and Trophimus from the province of Asia (Acts 20:4, NIV).*
- *The reason I left you in Crete was that you might put in order what was left unfinished and appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. (Titus 1:5)*
- *¹⁴ I thank God that I did not baptize any of you except Crispus and Gaius, ¹⁵ so no one can say that you were baptized in my name (1 Corinthians 1:14-15)*
- *And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable people who will also be qualified to teach others (2 Timothy 2:2).*

Paul grew his people.

Paul was hardly ever alone in his work; he always traveled with a team, sometimes as many as 8 others (Acts 20:4 mentions 7 plus Luke who was writing). What was his goal? He was deliberately growing people and strengthening his team. He selected people in whom he saw potential and then grew them into strong leaders. He poured significant time and energy into writing detailed instructions to Timothy and Titus to help them grow as leaders.

Some leaders prefer to work alone and take pride in their personal achievements. Serving leaders, like Paul, grow others around them and boast that others are doing the work!

Paul delegated authority and responsibility.

Paul continually delegated authority and responsibility to his team as fast as they were capable. He first baptized 2 or 3 in Corinth; then others did the rest. He first appointed elders in the churches; but later sent Titus to do the same in Crete. He sent Timothy to Ephesus, Corinth and Thessalonica. He empowered Titus to handle a significant financial contribution for the church in Jerusalem.

Some leaders believe that the only way to get something done right is to do it themselves. But serving leaders see the potential in others. They delegate power and authority and rejoice to see the work expand far beyond what they are able to do alone.

Paul prepared for sustainability and scalability.

Paul's vision was huge; he wanted to reach the world. He knew that he could not accomplish this alone and needed strong leaders to help him. He knew it would take much longer than his own lifetime to accomplish. So he grew others and delegated authority and responsibility. He challenged Timothy to pass it on to the next generation of leaders. By these actions Paul ensured that his vision would expand exponentially and continue on long after he was gone. We are a testimony to the success of his model.

Some leaders fail to reflect on what will happen after they are gone. But serving leaders turn the pyramid upside down and prepare their team to not only survive but to thrive for generations to come.

For further reflection and discussion:

Am I willing to invest the time and energy that Paul did to model the way, encourage and train others to do the work I now do? How will this impact my leadership legacy?
What is my plan to grow the people I lead? Who on my team is ready for greater responsibility and authority? What is needed from me to make this happen?
What would happen today to my team if I was gone? Are they ready to thrive without me? If not, what is needed to prepare them for that time? Reflect on what happened when Paul was imprisoned for years and how his leadership model laid a foundation for continued growth without his presence. How can I prepare my team in the same way?
In addition to the scriptures used in this issue, read and reflect on how the following passages also illustrate how Paul acted to Upend the Pyramid™: Acts 14:23, 18:18-26, 19:21-22; 1 Corinthians 16:10-11; 2 Cor. 8:16-24; Ephesians 4:11-13, 6:21-22; Philippians 2:19-30; Colossians 4:7-9; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-2, 6; 1 Timothy 1:3, Titus 1:5.

Until next time, yours on the journey,

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