

## Leadership Pictures

### Preface

This booklet consists of material adapted from the original broadcasts given by Adrian Reynolds on the radio programme “Serving Today”.

Adrian Reynolds is pastor of a church in the south of England. He also has experience of teaching in an overseas context as he has undertaken trips to the Delhi Bible Institute in India where he first taught the subject addressed in this booklet.

---

### Chapter 1: Introduction

The theme of this booklet is that of Christian Leadership. This is an important issue in whatever situation or context you are seeking to serve the Lord. As we serve God, in whatever way, people will look up to us trying to understand what it means to be a Christian. We must not only teach people by what we say, but also by our example, by the kind of people that we are. We will hopefully have a great impact on people, one that will last years and years. For this reason, when people see us they have to see Jesus. This really is a great responsibility. So we need to know how to be such examples and how to behave and live like Jesus.

As we study the subject of Christian leadership it will help us to understand in what ways we should and can become

more like Jesus, in the ways we relate to people and in how we conduct our ministries. In this booklet we will look at eight word pictures that the Bible uses to describe Christian workers or leaders. They are all pictures that appear in the Apostle Paul’s letters. He uses them to explain what a servant of Jesus is like. Some of them you will probably have already heard. Others may surprise you.

These pictures describe what a Christian leader or servant should be like. However, we must not fall into the error of thinking that each one describes a different type of leader. We must not think that we can choose which picture of servant hood we want to take as our example. Rather, we must be each of them; all of them. We must not say, I like this one but not that one. These pictures describe Jesus and give us a full picture of what he is like. If we want to be more like Jesus then we should seek to learn from each and every one of these pictures.

This booklet will explain each word picture in turn, bringing an understanding of their meaning. You will then need to think about these carefully. You see, I could tell you how to apply these pictures if you came from England but most readers will not. Those from Africa will need to think about how to apply this teaching in their own country, culture and situation. Those readers in India will need to do the same in their very different culture. That is very important and for this reason questions are provided at the end of each chapter that will help us to think through, personally, what each picture means for us. I trust that as

we consider these lessons together, we will grow and become more like Jesus.

Below the different word pictures are listed in the order that they appear in the Bible.

- 1) Shepherd (Acts 20.28).
- 2) Builder (1 Corinthians 3.10).
- 3) Scum/refuse/garbage (1 Corinthians 4.13).
- 4) Athlete (1 Corinthians 9.26).
- 5) Pilot (1 Corinthians 12.28).
- 6) Ambassador (2 Corinthians 5.20).
- 7) Fool (2 Corinthians 11.16).
- 8) Parent (1 Thessalonians 2.7 and 11).

---

## Chapter 2: Shepherd

The first of our pictures is that of the shepherd and comes from the book of Acts. Paul had spent over two years in Ephesus. He had started a church there and had taught the people. He then went to Macedonia and Greece, but on his way back he stopped off to see the leaders of the church in Ephesus again. However, he did not go all the way to Ephesus, it was too far from where he was. He stopped off in a place called Miletus where the leaders from Ephesus came to see him. The book of Acts records a summary of Paul's speech to these church leaders and we know that because the elders came a great distance, about 30 or 40 miles, Paul clearly had some important things to say to them. You can read his speech for yourself below:

*“You know how I lived the whole time I was with you, from the first day I came into the province of Asia. I served the Lord with great humility and with tears, although I was severely tested by the plots of the Jews. You know that I have not hesitated to preach anything that would be helpful to you but have taught you publicly and from house to house. I have declared to both Jews and Greeks that they must turn to God in repentance and have faith in our Lord Jesus and now, compelled by the Spirit, I am going to Jerusalem, not knowing what will happen to me there. I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me. However, I consider my life worth nothing to me, if only I may finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me: the task of testifying to the gospel of God's grace. Now I know that none of you among whom I have gone about preaching the kingdom will ever see me again. Therefore, I declare to you today that I am innocent of the blood of all men. For I have not hesitated to proclaim to you the whole will of God. Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the*

*flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard! Remember that for three years I never stopped warning each of you night and day with tears. Now I commit you to God and to the word of his grace, which can build you up and give you an inheritance among all those who are sanctified. I have not coveted anyone's silver or gold or clothing. You yourselves know that these hands of mine have supplied my own needs and the needs of my companions. In everything I did, I showed you that by this kind of hard work we must help the weak, remembering the words the Lord Jesus himself said: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.'"* (Acts 20: 17 – 35)

Paul spoke to the Ephesian elders about his ministry and all that he had done with them. However, we are particularly interested in verse 28, which says: *"Be shepherds of the church of God which he bought with his own blood."* Leaders in the church must be shepherds. In fact, this is where we get our word 'pastor'. It means the same thing. When we go out to speak to people about Jesus or to teach the Bible we must do it like a shepherd. That is the attitude we must have.

The shepherd is one of the most common pictures describing what it means to be a Christian worker. Sadly, many ignore it. I have heard people say to me: "It is good

to be a teacher, I like being a teacher, I enjoy having a crowd, it is great to have a following." Nevertheless, this is not what serving Jesus is about. I once saw a video of a meeting. There were tens of thousands of people present. The speaker turned up in a large car, like a government car. He had bodyguards to protect him. He went onto the stage and spoke and then he got back into his car and left. This is not what the apostle Paul would have done. He wanted to be a shepherd.

Paul wanted to be like a shepherd because that is what Jesus was like. In John's gospel chapter 10, verse 11, Jesus says: *"I am the good shepherd."* In fact, the whole of John 10 describes in what ways Jesus was a shepherd and we can learn a lot from it. John 10: 3 tells us that the sheep listen to the shepherd and that he knows each one by name. This is not about being a great leader, like a prime minister or a president. Being a shepherd means knowing the people you are leading. It is about knowing them very well indeed so that we can care for them, love them and lead them in exactly the way that they need. A shepherd knows his sheep so well that when he calls their name, they follow him. This is a picture of a very close relationship. In fact, in John 10 the relationship is portrayed as being so close that the shepherd is willing to die for his sheep. Jesus the shepherd was willing to die for us his sheep. That is what John says in verse 11. This is the mark of a true shepherd. The apostle Peter describes Jesus as the chief shepherd in 1 Peter 5, verse 4. He then describes Christian leaders as

“under-shepherds” or “assistant shepherds”. Read the passage in question:

*“Be shepherds of God’s flock that is under your care, serving as overseers - not because you must, but because you are willing, as God wants you to be; not greedy for money, but eager to serve; not lording it over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock and when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the crown of glory that will never fade away.” (1 Peter 5:2-4)*

Being a shepherd means then that we must not be greedy, that we should not be involved in Christian service for what we can get out of it. We are working for Christ. We must also be eager to serve, we must want to do it and be pleased to do it. Similarly, we must not ‘lord it over’ people, that means not being superior, proud, or arrogant. You must be an example; show them how to live by how you live.

These are very challenging ideas. In some ways, being a shepherd does not seem an important job. A shepherd is often someone with no education or standing. However, being a shepherd of God’s people is the best job there is. There is no better job, because it is being like Jesus Christ, the good shepherd. We shall think now about some of the things a shepherd needs to do for his sheep.

First, he needs to feed them and he does this by giving them the bread of life, that is the word of God. Sheep that are not fed get hungry and they become sick. They will eventually die if they do not receive enough nourishment. It is the shepherd’s job to keep them alive. If we are going to be good shepherds we must make sure that we give our sheep proper food. We must lead them to the food. This means we have to be looking after ourselves too. If a shepherd is weak and sick he cannot lead his sheep to the good grass and water and so the sheep will die too. It is similar for us, we have to take care of ourselves so that our sheep will be all right. We need to feed ourselves as well as feeding our sheep, that is why we need to keep reading our Bibles and keep praying. That is why you need to listen to good teaching wherever you can find it.

If the first job of a shepherd is to feed his sheep or teach his people, the second is that a shepherd cares for his sheep. He is very loving and tender towards them. Sheep can be stupid. This does not matter to the shepherd. He is patient with them, and after all, this is what God is like with us. Think about Isaiah 40.11. *“He tends his flock like a shepherd; he gathers the lambs in his arms, and carries them close to his heart. He gently leads those that have young.”*

There are also times however when a shepherd must be firm. Gentleness is not the same as being soft or compromising. Sheep sometimes need a firm hand. Think about this verse in Ezekiel 34.16: *“I will search for the lost*

*and bring back the strays. I will bind up the injured and strengthen the weak, but the sleek and the strong I will destroy. I will shepherd the flock with justice.”*

This does not mean we have to be brutal or unkind but sometimes we need to be tough. Here is an example: When someone is doing something they ought not to do, we need to tell them. It is for their own good and we need to do it carefully and gently, however, we must tell them. We cannot pretend that wrongdoing or serious misbehaviour does not matter. If we do, then we are not good shepherds. If a sheep strays from its path the shepherd would tap it on its side with a rod to make it go where it should. A shepherd would not just let a sheep wander off into danger. We need to be like this with the people God has entrusted into our care. It is not always easy and will require wisdom and courage but this is what being a shepherd is about.

Finally, good shepherds also go out looking for lost sheep, that is, good shepherds are evangelists. In the verse quoted from Ezekiel, God tells us that he will search for his sheep and he will do so through his assistant shepherds; that is us. Again, it is not an easy task but it is a great task.

### **Questions to think through:**

You need to look after the sheep God has entrusted to your care, and find lost sheep. How can you do both?

Why do you serve Jesus? What could some of the wrong reasons be? What should the right reasons be?

How can you care for the sheep God has given you?

---

### **Chapter 3: Builder**

There are many beautiful buildings throughout the world. In India you can think of the Taj Mahal. In many countries the Presidents have very beautiful palaces. However, there is a greater and a more beautiful building than any of these. It is the church, the body of Christ, God's people. To work for Jesus is to be a builder in this building. Read the following Bible text, from 1 Corinthians 3.10-17:

*“By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. For no one can lay a foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus-Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames. Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit lives in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will*

*destroy him, for God's temple is sacred, and you are that temple."*

There are at least five lessons in this passage that we can learn from the picture of the builder.

Firstly, we need to ask how does the builder build? The answer is found in verse 10. It is by God's grace, it is by God working in us and through us. We are never great builders because we are clever. We are never great builders because we have good gifts. We are great builders only to the extent that we allow God to work in us. This is important because we must never be proud of what we have built, because ultimately we have not built it. After all, God is the master builder. He built the world! He created you and me! Read Hebrews 3.4: *"For every house is built by someone but God is the builder of everything."* We are not then the master builder, rather just assistant builders. If the work we do turns out well, it is all down to God and he should get the glory rather than ourselves. Sadly, many people build for Jesus because they want to be seen and admired. This is wrong; we can only build for Jesus because he gives us grace.

Secondly, there are lots of different builders. Look at verse 10 again. Paul has laid a foundation but someone else is building on it. Does this worry Paul? Is he concerned that someone else might get the credit? No, of course not! There are many builders but we need to work together. We all do different things and have different ways. We all

have different gifts and abilities. Does that matter? No. I am laying one level of the house, you are contributing in a different way but we are all working with God towards the same end. As God is the master builder the house will get built. We need to understand what place God has given us in his vast building project and then we need to faithfully apply ourselves to that task. We should not look at others enviously and wish to be like them or do what they do but rather be satisfied with that which God has called us to do. Furthermore, God is not expecting you to do everything. No one can do everything. Can anyone, by himself, convert India? Or Africa? Can anyone evangelise and teach hundreds of millions of people? Can anyone even evangelise all the people living in their city or even their village? No! There are lots of builders and we all work together to build for Jesus. We all have somewhere where Jesus has placed us and we need each other, we must help each other whenever we can.

Thirdly, we have just seen that there are many builders but we also need to understand that there is only one foundation. Look at verse 11. There is only one foundation and that is Jesus. In Isaiah 28, God calls Jesus the *"chief cornerstone"*. He is the one who holds everything together. He is the only foundation that the church can be built on. If you are going to be a builder then you need to think about the foundation. Let us think now about some bad foundations that church leaders sometimes build upon:

Some builders build on pride. That is their foundation. They want people to see how great they are. They want people to see how important they are.

Some builders build on nothing, like building on sand. They do not really worry about foundations. So they do not really teach people the truth about Jesus.

Some builders build on greed. They want something from people; money or possessions. They hope people will give them what they want.

The trouble with all of these foundations is the same. Remember the parable that Jesus told. There were two men who built houses; one on the sand and the other on the rock. When the rains came, the house on the sand was washed away. That means his foundations were worthless and the whole building collapsed. The man had wasted his time and effort because he had not built on the right foundation. When we build for the wrong motives all will prove to be a waste and we will be judged for it. However, the house on the rock stood firm. The rock is the teaching of Jesus. Jesus is the foundation.

Fourthly, Paul teaches that builders need to use good materials. There are all sorts of materials you could use, but one day it will all be tested. God will know what you have built with. Let me tell you a story. I had to replace some pipes in my house. When we came to look at them something was wrong. The man who had put them in had done a very bad job indeed. He had used cheap materials

and he had not used the right materials. Things were worse than we thought and we had to start again.

When we build for Jesus, we must do the very best. This means using gold and silver rather than materials that will neither last nor be beautiful. This is all a picture, of course, and here is its meaning: when you build for Jesus, do it with all of your heart and do the very best you can. Hold nothing back; it is worth it. This is the best building that you could be involved in. If you were asked to play cricket or football for your country you would give it everything! You would not think to yourself: "I shall just give 50% so that I can play well for my village later." You want to do the best you can and that is what it should be like when we build for Jesus.

Fifthly, what are we building? We must be sure that we are not talking about building real buildings made of bricks or wood. Church buildings, chapels etc are, of course, important and can be very useful but what really matters the most is people. Look at verse 16; we ourselves are God's temple. The building I have been talking about is all about people. We must not get distracted. Buildings can be helpful. They keep us dry in winter or cool in summer, but people are more important. If we are going to be good builders for Jesus then we need to be building people. They are the living stones of the church. Building people is about teaching them and training them, encouraging them and advising them. Building people is about helping them to become more mature Christians and about helping

them to serve God in the church and beyond. Building people is about helping them to relate as Christians to other believers, helping them to love each other, be patient with each other, forgive each other.

### **Questions to think through:**

How will you be part of a team of builders in your situation?

What sorts of foundations do people build on in your country?

What does it mean to use the best materials?

Why do builders in the church sometimes forget about people?

---

## **Chapter 4: Scum**

This is one of the hardest pictures I want to share with you. I think you will find it will challenge you. It has certainly challenged me. Read 1 Corinthians 4.11-13.

*“To this very hour we go hungry and thirsty, we are in rags, we are brutally treated, we are homeless. We work hard with our own hands. When we are cursed, we bless, when we are persecuted, we endure it, when we are slandered, we answer kindly. Up to this moment we have become the scum of the earth, the refuse of the world.”*

The word I want to pick up on is found in verse 13. It is the word ‘scum’. It could be translated garbage or vegetable peelings! In the time of Paul it had come to mean people who were at the bottom of society. In fact, readers in India have just the right example. It would have been the word used for the untouchables. This is what Paul is saying. To be a minister of the Gospel is to be an untouchable. To be a servant of Jesus is to be an untouchable, rubbish and waste. What can he mean? Some people cannot believe that Paul is being serious. They think that he was just joking or using sarcasm to make a point, but I do not agree. The society of Paul’s time was built on honour. It was about knowing the right people and being in the right places. Honour and pride; the people at the bottom had none of that. They were the untouchables. Paul is saying that this is what we have to be prepared to be as ministers of the gospel.

We need to understand why Paul describes himself in this way in the particular context of him writing to the church in Corinth. The problem was that the Corinthian believers did not in any way consider themselves as scum! Instead they were very proud. They thought they were rich! They saw themselves as kings and rulers. They thought they were the best Christians. However, Paul refuses to play their game and prefers rather to challenge them. He challenges us to!

There are at least three ideas that come from this picture of what it means to be the scum of the earth:

First, it means being seen by the world as waste. If you serve Jesus, the world may think you are worthless. The world may think that you are scum! Here is an example of what can happen: when I decided to become a pastor, I told my father. He is not a Christian. Let me tell you what he said. "What a waste!" he told me. "That is a rubbish job! Why do you want to do that? You are much better than that! You can do much better than that!" He thought it was beneath me. He did not realise that it is the best job in the world! Do not expect others to understand what you are doing. They will not be able to understand why you are happy to work for Jesus. They will think that you are making yourself like scum. This should come as no surprise. In 1 Corinthians 1: 18 Paul writes: "*the message of the cross is foolish to those who are perishing...*" People who are not Christians cannot understand our message. They think it is foolish and stupid and they will think that we are too. Are you willing to be seen by the world as nothing? Are you willing to lose all standing amongst your friends, your family, your village, your town or your city? Are you willing to be seen as like an untouchable for the sake of Jesus? This is a hard calling, but it is the reality of being a church leader in today's world.

The second thing about the word scum is this: the word can mean a scapegoat. A scapegoat is someone who gets sacrificed on behalf of others or someone who takes the blame even when things are not their fault. In the ancient world, it was often the scum who were sacrificed. It was

the people who did not matter who were killed. No one worried if they were gone. All they were good for was to entertain others. This is what it means to be scum: to be willing to be a sacrifice if it helps others along. Paul talks a lot about living as though we were sacrifices. For example in Romans 12 he tells us to offer ourselves as living sacrifices. To the Philippians he wrote that he was being poured out like a drink offering. Other people counted him as dirt. He was expendable; he was no great loss. This is what his captors thought. When the Jews wanted to kill Paul it was because they thought he was the lowest of the low. It just did not matter. No one would miss him. Paul was willing to endure this for the sake of the Gospel. What sacrifices are you willing to make for the sake of the Gospel? Men have sometimes had to sacrifice their lives! That may happen to you. Are you prepared? But even if it does not, I guarantee you will have to make sacrifices. I guarantee you will have to be like the scum of the earth.

To be involved in Christian ministry means to accept that we will have to endure suffering for the name of Christ. This is my third point. What it means to be the scum of the earth is all about suffering. Paul says, "*up to this moment...*" Up to now, Paul has suffered. That is what he is speaking about in verses 11-13, and make no mistake, Paul has really suffered very badly. This is part of what it means to serve Christ as leaders, teachers, pastors and evangelists. We must expect to suffer for Jesus. Now we need to be clear. We must not go out looking for trouble or

suffering. Some people do that then when they suffer, they say, “Look at me. Look at what a great Christian I am.” No. We should not do that, but we must not be surprised when we do suffer when we stand up for Christ. It is part of working for Christ and being identified with him. Listen to what Paul says in Philippians 3: *“I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”*

Here is an illustration that will help us to understand the phrase: *“the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings.”* These days, when armies go to war the generals stay far back in safety and they direct the battles from a distance. They do not actually get involved in close quarters combat. In the past, things were very different, generals led from the front. They rode into battle on their horses, or elephants, right at the front. Generals suffered as much as the soldiers did. Everyone suffered together. There was no special protection for the generals. That is how it should be for us. Sadly, some workers for Jesus like to think of themselves like generals today. They direct the battle from a distance. They do not get involved and do not suffer. These are not real leaders. We are scum. That is, we are prepared to be in the front line. We are prepared to face the enemy. We are neither proud nor boastful and do not care if others think we are untouchables. Only what Jesus thinks of us really matters.

### **Questions to think through:**

What sorts of people will think you are a waste?

What might you have to sacrifice in order to serve Jesus?

What motivates people in Christian service? What do you get proud about?

Why, in the end, will it all be worth it?

---

### **Chapter 5: Athlete**

*“Do you not know that in a race all the runners run but only one gets a prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly, I do not fight like a man beating the air.”* (1 Corinthians 9: 24 – 26.)

If we are to serve God we have to be like athletes. Firstly, there is no room for laziness or for leaving all the work for others to do. We must put everything we can into it. That is why this is such a good picture. We have to ask ourselves a question. Am I, as a Christian, like an athlete? Before we can answer that question for ourselves, we need to understand what an athlete does and the text gives us a number of clues.

The first thing an athlete does is that he trains. If an athlete is going to win a race he must train. He cannot just turn up and expect to do well. If he is not fit, he will not finish the race. So, he trains every day. He gets up when everybody

else is in bed. He runs more miles than everybody else. He is more careful about what he eats. He does not eat or drink anything that will stop him running. He does all of this in order to race, in order to be a good athlete. This illustrates the discipline of being a Christian worker, and it is a discipline. An athlete trains even when he does not feel like it. Some mornings he wants to stay in bed and some days he wants to eat some different food, but he cannot. If he is going to win, he needs to be strict with himself. He needs to be disciplined and so do we. This is what Paul says in verse 25. He calls us to strict training. We need to be in continual strict training if we are to serve Jesus properly, but what does this mean? We have to be careful about what we do and careful about what we say. We have to make sure we eat the right food and that means feeding upon God's word, knowing our bibles really well. We cannot expect to be good leaders if we do not know our bibles. We need this daily food. It takes time and discipline to study the word of God.

We also need to pray, always, even when we do not feel like it, and perhaps especially when we do not feel like it! It takes time and discipline to pray, as we need. If we do not have that discipline we will fail. We need to make up our minds to give this work everything and to hold nothing back!

After training, an athlete competes. He takes part in the race. This is seen in verse 26. Competing is not easy. Paul says he has to beat his body. In this way he will not

be disqualified. This is about putting into practice what we have learnt from the Bible. As leaders we preach to others, but we must preach to ourselves as well. We must do what we ask others to do. Let me give you an example, we cannot tell people to give, but not give ourselves. Some preachers tell people they must give and then they have nice cars and big houses. No! Competing is hard work! It is a struggle! In Colossians 2.1, Paul talks about this. He says he is struggling for people he has not even met. This is a hard competition. So we must not expect it to be easy, nor that everything will necessarily go to plan. Another word the Bible uses is "battle". We are in a battle, a battle is about fighting; it is about struggling on. Sometimes it will feel like that in Christian ministry.

My next point is this: An athlete keeps going. Look at verse 24. You have to run for the prize. The man who gives up does not win the prize, it is impossible! If an athlete gives up half way around the track, he will never get a medal. If a cricket team gives up after its first innings, it will never win the test match! Keep going! This is one of the hardest things about being an athlete. Being a worker for Christ is not a short run. It is a marathon, a very long run indeed. That means keeping going through the good times and the bad times. In Hebrews 12.1 we read this: "*let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us.*" This is a good exhortation to keep in mind. When you run a long way you get tired. Your body wants to give up. You are not sure if you can keep going, but you will never get to the finish line if you

give up! You will never succeed in what you are doing, if you give up. So keep going!

### **What can help us to keep going?**

Our training will help us but we must also keep our eyes fixed on the prize. This is what Paul says in verse 24: *“run in such a way as to get the prize.”* And this brings me to my last point about being an athlete. A Christian athlete wins! In a race, there is only one winner, but in the Christian race, there can be more than one. This is not a competition between us. I am not trying to beat you, you are not trying to beat me. We are all trying to reach the finish line. There is a great prize awaiting us. Read Philippians 3.14. *“I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards.”* The prize is not on this earth. The prize is a place in heaven, the prize is eternal life. The prize is reigning with King Jesus.

So, it is worth running the race! Make sure then that you are good runners. Train like athletes. Compete like athletes. Run like athletes. Win like athletes. It is all worth it. One day, Jesus will say to us a great thing. If we have been athletes, he will say this to us. *“Well done good and faithful servant.”* Do you want Jesus to say that to you? I do. In that case, we need to be like athletes.

### **Questions to think through:**

What will keep you going when you do not feel like training?

What temptations will you face to give up the race? Why is it important to know the prize you will win?

---

### **Chapter 6: Pilot**

My next picture of leadership is a surprising one. It is that of a pilot. Read 1 Corinthians 12.28:

*“And in the church God has appointed first of all apostles, second prophets, third teachers, then workers of miracles, also those having gifts of healing, those able to help others, those with gifts of administration, and those speaking in different kinds of tongues.”*

The word pilot is very unusual. It only occurs a few times in the New Testament, and the one time it really matters is in 1 Corinthians 12.28. Unfortunately, it is often misunderstood. Now we do not actually see the word pilot in the verse that we have just read. This is because our Bible says that God has given gifts of administration. That makes you think of a clerk who works in an office, perhaps at the Railway Ministry. His job is to fill in pieces of paper. He then sends them to the next office. The next man fills in another part and sends it to another office and so on and so on. Leadership is not like that at all. For some people it does turn into that. Lots of paper! However, this is not what it should be.

The word translated administration in 1 Corinthians 12 is also used in Acts 27.11 where we read *“But the centurion, instead of listening to what Paul had said, followed the advice of the pilot and of the owner of the ship.”* Did you notice that the word is now translated pilot? The pilot is the person who steers the ship. Today he is more usually known as the person who flies a plane. This is what we are called to be. The pilot’s job is to steer the ship or the plane from one place to another. He has to do it safely. He has to do it carefully. He is responsible. He may have to deal with all sorts of obstacles along the way: storms, floods, waves, tides and bad weather. But the passengers trust him to get it right.

So how does the job of the pilot serve as an image to Christian workers and leaders? What are we to learn from this? First, we have to know our subject. Before a pilot can fly a plane, he has to know how it works. Before a pilot can guide a ship, he has to know the area he must navigate. There is no substitute for knowing your subject. We have an expression in England. We use it when leaders are terrible leaders; when they do not know what they are doing. We say: “it’s like the blind leading the blind.” Jesus used this Proverb as well. He sometimes described the religious leaders in Israel in this way. What we mean is this. How can someone be a leader who does not know how to lead or instruct. He needs to know where he has come from. He needs to know where he is going. He needs to know the best way to get there. We need to know the answers, the right answers, to questions that people will

ask us. It is not enough to tell people where to go. It is not enough to say to people “believe in Jesus.” We need to guide them to him. We need to lead them in difficult times. We need to answer their questions. We need to help them through trouble. Why? Because we are pilots. That is one good reason for reading this booklet, so that you can gain some of that knowledge. That knowledge will help make you good pilots.

Secondly, a pilot has to have some flexibility. Now, I do not mean flexibility about what you believe. That must be rock solid. That must never change. That must never be shaken. I mean flexibility about the route. Think of the pilot of an aeroplane. He is flying along and then suddenly he sees a storm ahead. He does not want to fly through it. It would be too dangerous. He needs to fly around it, or over it. He needs to adjust his plans in order to make them work. He needs to be thinking about this all the time. This is the mark of a good pilot. It is the same in Christian work. You may have all sorts of plans. Maybe you have your heart set on accomplishing different things. However, all that may change. You need to be prepared for that and be flexible about what might happen. The apostle Paul was flexible like this. He made plans to visit different places. However, he often had to change them at the last minute. He wanted to go to Spain, but he was arrested when he went to Jerusalem. That meant he could not go. However, he also wanted to visit Rome on his way to Spain. When he was arrested, he was able to visit Rome but now as a

prisoner! He was flexible. You will need to be too! Good pilots are flexible.

The next thing about good pilots is that they are good at working with others. A pilot has certain responsibilities that he cannot pass on to anyone else. He is answerable for them. It is the same with us. God holds us to account for what we do. However, he does not want us to do everything. Imagine a plane. The pilot can fly the plane, but he cannot load it up and he cannot maintain and repair the engines. Neither can he feed the passengers, nor collect the tickets. We all need people around us to support us. Some of you may be ministering alone in various places. Never mind! However, once people are saved, you need to use them. Do not try to do everything yourself. That is not what a good pilot does!

This is why the picture of the body is so good. Paul says the church is like a body. It has many parts but all the parts need to work together. That is how it should be in the church. Everyone is needed. All have a role to play and should work together harmoniously. The image of the pilot shows that Christian leaders help to make sure that each believer is involved in helping. He should make sure that people are working well together.

A final lesson about a Pilot is that he has authority; he is in charge of what happens on his plane. However, a pilot's authority does not come from himself. A pilot has authority because of whom he works for. The airline

company has given him responsibility; he cannot fly just where he likes. We work for God and our authority comes from him. Our authority comes from God's word. Never forget that! When we speak God's word we speak with God's authority. We cannot tell people what to do, unless the Bible tells them what to do. A pilot who abuses his authority is sacked. Imagine if a pilot ignored the air traffic controller! There would be a disaster. He has to obey those in authority over him, in order to be a good pilot. So must we. Being a Christian leader is like being a pilot. Are you prepared to be pilots?

### **Questions to think through:**

What will happen if a pilot is not very well trained?

What happens to a pilot who always works on his own?

What is a pilot's authority?

What is the main way a pilot guides people?

---

## **Chapter 7: Ambassador**

In 2 Corinthians 5, verse 20, Paul says, "*We are therefore Christ's ambassadors as though God were making his appeal through us.*" We are going to consider the idea of Christian leaders as ambassadors. The idea of being an ambassador can seem a long way away from our idea of Christian ministry. However, there are in fact many similarities and it is actually a good way of thinking about Christian work. Back in Paul's time things were a little different. An ambassador was someone who was prepared to go to another country. He would go to represent his own

country. It was not a career like it is today. So in what way can this picture help us to understand what it means to serve Jesus today?

The first thing to say about being an ambassador is this: someone sends an ambassador. In today's world, governments send ambassadors. The Indian ambassador to the U.K. is sent from Delhi. He is sent by the government. Now this is very important. It means he is not his own boss! He is answerable to someone. He has to give an account of his actions to his government. This reminds us that Christian leaders are accountable to God. We know that every Christian will have to answer to God for how they have lived. However, this is especially true for those who are sent by God. Consider Jesus' words in Luke 12.48: *"From everyone who has been given much, much will be demanded; and from the one who has been entrusted with much, much more will be asked."* To be sent by God to do a job is great! It is a wonderful privilege, but with the privilege comes responsibility. If you want to serve Christ, you have to remember that he is the one who has sent you and be prepared to be under his authority. That is what it means to be an ambassador.

My next point is this: If you are Christ's ambassador, you are also representing God. In what sense can a Christian represent God? Is there not the danger of falling back into the idea of a priest acting as a go between, between God and man? We are not priests in that way. The old fashioned idea of a priest was wrong. They thought it was

only the priests who had access to God. If anyone wanted to speak to God they had to go to the priest. That is wrong. You must not let yourself get into that situation. All Christians have the same access to the presence of God, through Jesus. What I mean by saying that as Ambassadors of Christ we represent God is this: when you first meet people what will they know about Jesus? Probably very little. Everything they will learn will come from you. What will they have heard about Jesus? Again, very little. Everything they hear will come from you. What will they know about what Jesus is like? Nothing; except what you show them. We have to be representatives of Jesus. It is up to us to show people what Jesus is like. This being true, we have a great responsibility. We must be very careful about the way in which we live and careful about what we say. In 2 Corinthians 3.2-3 Paul says that we are living letters. People will look at us and that will be their view of Jesus. An ambassador is very careful how he lives. He wants everybody to have a good opinion of his country. He is chosen carefully. It is the same for us. You represent God. People will get their view of God from you. People will get their view of Jesus from you. Make sure you live to honour him.

The next thing about a Christian ambassador is this. He works for God. Take the example of the Indian ambassador in London; he does not want to draw attention to himself. He does not want people to think that he is great. He does not want people to think he is a wonderful

man. He wants people to think that India is a wonderful place! He knows that he is working for India and he wants to promote the interests of his country.

Ambassadors for Christ are working for Christ. We want to draw attention to him. We do not want to draw attention to ourselves. We do not want people to follow us. We want people to follow him. We do not want to bring glory to ourselves. We want to bring glory to him. This says a lot about our motivation for service. We must be motivated by our love for God. We do everything for him! Paul writes this to the Christians in Colossae: *“Whatever you do work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for men.”* (Colossians 3.23.)

If you think you are going to be a Christian worker in order to make a name for yourself, do not do it! If you want to be famous, do not do it! If you want to be rich, again, do not do it! If you want to be comfortable and happy, do not do it! If you want to be comfortable and happy, do not do it! If you want to have a large church, do not do it! If you want people to call you sir, again, do not do it! Only do it if you want to serve Jesus! Only do it if you want to praise his name! Only do it if you want to lift him up! Any other motivation is wrong. We are working for Jesus. If that is not true for you, you cannot be an ambassador for Christ.

Now, I mentioned earlier that an ambassador works for his country, but what does he actually do and what can we learn from this? An ambassador speaks on behalf of the country he represents. When the government of one

country wants to get a message to the government of another country, they will often do it through their ambassador. Our job is to speak on Jesus’ behalf. That is what Paul is talking about in this passage. He is speaking on Christ’s behalf. In fact, he is not just speaking, he is imploring. He wants people to be reconciled to God. “Please do it,” he is saying; he is urging them. However, he is not speaking for himself. No, he is speaking on behalf of Christ. Never take this lightly. Never think that the calling you have received does not matter. It is of the highest importance. It is the greatest calling there is, because you are speaking for God. It is an awesome responsibility, but also a wonderful, beautiful privilege.

Paul rejoices when his people know this. Read 1 Thessalonians 2.13: *“When you received the word of God, which you heard from us, you accepted it not as the word of men, but as it actually is, the word of God.”* When we proclaim the Bible and its truths, it is not us speaking, but by the power of the Holy Spirit, it is God speaking. Our words are not mere words. They are living. They are active. They are alive. They are not like that because of us. They are like that because of God. We are bringing the words of the Lord of the Universe, the Ruler of all things, the King of Kings. What a responsibility! Never take it lightly, but rejoice that God has called you to be Christ’s ambassador, and fulfil that calling. Are you prepared to be ambassadors?

**Questions to think through:**

Why might you be tempted to draw attention to yourself rather than Jesus?

How can you do your duty for the one who has called you?

What view of Jesus do people get when they see you?

What motivates your work? Is it really doing it for Christ's sake?

---

## Chapter 8: Fool

Our next picture is one of the hardest we will look at. It is hard because it does not seem to be right! In 2 Corinthians 11:16 Paul describes himself as a fool. Surely Christian workers are not to be fools! What connection could there possibly be? Is Paul saying that he is stupid? Is Paul saying he is silly and making jokes? No! That is not what he means. The Bible talks a lot about fools. In Psalm 14: 1 we read: *"the fool says in his heart there is no God."*

A fool, then, according to the Bible is someone who does not believe in God. This, similarly, is not the sort of man Paul is talking about. It cannot be. In Matthew 7 Jesus tells a story about a fool. He builds his house upon the sand and when the storm comes the house falls down. Paul is not talking about that sort of fool either. He cannot be. There must be another meaning. We know that Paul is serious about this word. For he does not use it just once, rather, we find that he uses it several times. In 1 Corinthians 4: 10, he says: *"We are fools for Christ."* Then he spends all of 2 Corinthians chapters 9-11 talking about it. He feels strongly about it. Let us see if we can understand it.

He does not mean someone who is silly. He does not mean someone who makes faces. He is using it ironically. Think about a fool for a moment. A fool is someone who is simple. Things are never complicated for a fool. He cannot cope with complicated things, so he always sees things simply. That is a good quality in a Christian worker. People will want to make things complicated. They will want things to be complex. They will want sermons that have lots of points. They will think that you are very clever if you are very complicated. However, people who speak about Jesus need to be like a fool. That is, we need to speak simply. That is the heart of the Christian message.

Consider 1 Corinthians 1:21: *"God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe."* Now look at verse 27: *"God chose the foolish things of this world to shame the wise."*

And now chapter 2 and verse 4: *"My message and my preaching were not with wise and persuasive words, but with a demonstration of the Spirit's power."*

Do you see what I am saying? You need to speak in such a way that any fool can understand you. Be like a fool! Be simple. When people come to you, it must be the same. Do not let them be too clever, they need to see things simply. You need to help them see things simply. Often our problems are simpler than we think. Often our troubles are to do with what we think of God. Let me give you an example. When there is a disaster in our family or we get

worried, we get ourselves in a position that it is hard to get out of. Things can become very complicated. However, why do we worry in the first place? Often it is because we do not understand God's sovereignty. In one way, it is a very simple problem! Therefore, we need to be straightforward in the way we deal with God's word and his people.

Next, there is the idea that fools are often looked down upon and mistreated. Fools are outsiders and are counted as nothing. People think they are mad. We have thought about this already, when we considered the idea of the "scum of the earth", it is the same point again really. Remember, it does not matter if people think that way about us. What matters is what Jesus thinks about us.

Here are some examples from the Bible: first, the example of the prophet Isaiah. In Isaiah chapter 20 we learn that God told him to go around barefooted and almost naked for about three years. This would be a sign of what would happen to Judah. This is amazing. Look at what God asked Isaiah to do. What do you suppose people thought about him? People thought that Isaiah was a fool. People thought that his message was foolish. Of course, it was not. It was deadly serious. Isaiah was making an important point.

Consider the example of Hosea. In chapter 1 of his prophecy, we learn that Hosea was told by God to marry an adulterous woman. This was to show what the people of

Israel were like. What do you suppose people thought of Hosea? They must have thought that he was being really foolish.

These are extreme examples but reveal an important reality. People will often consider preachers of the gospel to be foolish. You need to be prepared for this. If you are not ready to be counted as a fool, you cannot preach the gospel. People may make fun of you. People may laugh behind your back. People may do worse things. Be ready to be considered a fool for Christ!

My next point is that people often think of fools as rather weak people. What can we learn from this? This is the very point that Paul is making in 2 Corinthians 9: 11. Paul is up against some false teachers. They were saying that they were great apostles. They were saying that they were better than Paul and that Paul should not be listened to. They were boasting that they were better than him and of all the things that they could do and that Paul could not. Now, how did Paul deal with this opposition? It is quite surprising what 2 Corinthians shows us. He does not try to beat them. He does not try to outdo them by saying: "I can do this better than you". He actually undermines them. He says that he is willing to be a fool and he boasts in his foolishness. He does not want to show them how strong he is. Rather, he wants to show them how weak he is!

Why is this the case? This is a surprising way of defending his ministry but he does this for a very good reason. This

is one of the most important things you will ever learn about being a Christian leader or worker. Paul does not want to be a Christian superstar. He wants everybody to look down on him. He wants to be seen to be nothing special. He does not want people to follow him because of who he is. That is why he is boasting in all these weaknesses. After all, who wants to follow a weak man or a fool? No one! Quite right too! Paul wants Christians to follow Christ. He wants them to be true disciples of Jesus. That is why he tells them he is a fool. In other words, Paul lets people see his weaknesses, so that they will not turn him into a Christian superstar. Jesus does not want you to be superstars. He wants to be the superstar. There is not room for more than one star. It will either be him or you. You must make yourselves fools. You must actually draw attention to your weaknesses. You must feel your weaknesses. You must not boast in your strengths, even though you do have strengths. You must boast in your weaknesses. This is so that people can see Jesus' strength. Being a fool is all about drawing attention away from yourself and drawing it towards Christ.

### **Questions to think through:**

To what extent are you prepared to be a fool for Christ?

Are you content with preaching the simple gospel or do you want to move onto something else?

How will you handle criticism?

---

## **Chapter 9: Parent**

Our last picture of leadership comes from 1 Thessalonians. It is probably one of the most important. I have called it parent; but it is actually two different pictures. First, that of a mother; second, that of a father.

*“We were not looking for praise from men, not from you or anyone else. As apostles of Christ we could have been a burden to you, but we were gentle among you, like a mother caring for her little children. We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the gospel of God to you. You are witnesses, and so is God, of how holy, righteous and blameless we were among you who believed. For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.” (1 Thessalonians 2: 7-12)*

Together, the pictures of father and mother capture the essence of Christian leadership. They are very challenging. Let me tell you why. You will find that you do some of the things we have mentioned in this booklet very well. They will come to you easily or naturally. However, other things

you will find very difficult. They will not be natural to you and you will have to work very hard at them. Nevertheless, we are called to be all of them. We cannot select the ones we like. We cannot say: "I like being a father, but not a mother." We cannot say: "I like being a teacher, but I don't like being gentle." Therefore, the great challenge for us is to be all of these things. This subject divides neatly into two. We shall deal with the illustration of the mother first, before moving on to that of a father.

Let us think first about the characteristics of a mother that Paul points out. These are a great challenge to us. First, a mother is loving (v8). Her love is very great. Paul says: "*we loved you so much.*" We must love all the people we go to. It is maybe easy to despise them, especially if they do not love us. It is easy to love people who love you! However, we need to love people who do not necessarily love us! This is much harder. This is what a mother does. When her children do not seem to care about her, she still loves them. She does not give up on them. That must be what we do. Let me tell you, you will meet some unlovely people. They are rejected by the world and by others; however, you will have to love them.

The second lesson is that we must make sacrifices. Think about verse 8. Paul says he shared his life with the Thessalonian Christians, he held nothing back. We have to make sacrifices in order to serve. We must be willing to put others before ourselves. We must love others more than we love ourselves. This is hard but this is what a

mother would do. If a mother had a choice of saving herself or her baby, which would she do? You know the answer! She would save the baby! Our very lives sometimes will have to be on the line. Some of you may face such hostility that your very life may be in danger. Mothers take that risk and will do anything if it means saving the child. You need to be mothers. You need to care more for the children God gives to you; believers and others that he entrusts into your care, than you do for yourself. This is a very searching quality. It is challenging to love in a generous, faithful and sacrificial way.

Thirdly, mothers are gentle. This is also in verse 7: "*we were gentle among you.*" Many of us find it very hard to be gentle. We can be firm. We can shout. We can be like men! But we must be like women too! We must be like mothers who are gentle with their children. What about false teaching? Should we not get very angry about that? No, even in this we must be gentle. 2 Timothy 2.24-26 says:

*"And the Lord's servant must not quarrel; instead, he must be kind to everyone, able to teach, not resentful. Those who oppose him he must gently instruct, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of the truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."*

Even when we oppose false teachers we must do so gently. What a challenge this is to us!

Fourthly, consider verse 9: *“we worked night and day.”* Mothers are hard working. My wife works very hard. She cleans, cooks and looks after our three children. She looks after me as well! She is always working hard. I do not know how she does it! However, we also must work just as hard in the ministry that God has entrusted to us. We must put our all into it, just like a mother does. Serving Christ is not an easy option.

My father is not a Christian. He thinks I work only one day a week. This, of course, is not true. It must never be true. Like mothers we must put everything into serving, because we want the best for our children. Let us move on now to the illustration of being like a father. There will be three lessons from this picture:

First, we must be concerned with individuals. We find this in verse 11: *“for we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children.”* We cannot treat everybody as one great group of people. Fathers are interested in individuals. Some people think all pastors have to do is speak from the front and that is their job done. This is not true. We have to know about individuals and watch out for them. We may have to give them individual help. This is what fathers do. They treat each of their children as individuals and look out for their particular needs and take into account their particular personalities. People are not

the same. Everyone is different and everyone needs to be valued as an individual and may have different needs that we need to address in different ways.

The second thing about fathers is that they have the responsibility for teaching. This is what verse 12 is all about: *“For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God.”* This is a very great responsibility. We have to instruct people and help them learn. Now, if we are to help people to learn we first have to learn ourselves. We have already mentioned that in another chapter but I must remind you again that we all remain Jesus’ disciples. We all need to keep on learning and we can never say that we know everything. Look also at the different types of teaching that Paul mentions. He speaks about encouraging, comforting and urging. Those three words sum up teaching, its purpose and how we go about it.

They are very interesting words. There is no place for shouting or anger! Equally, there is no place for being superior! This is what our ministry should be like. Encouraging, helping people along, comforting, showing that God loves them and cares for them, urging, that is the true work of the preacher. He urges people to do something. He does not tell them, he urges them. We want people to obey the Bible because they believe the Bible. We do not want people to obey us because they fear us! This would be wrong. This is not what a father wants.

A father wants respect, yes but not fear. He wants his children to grow up. He wants them to be mature. He wants them to be independent. He does not want them to be dependent on him forever. Our teaching should be helping believers to mature in their faith and knowledge of Jesus, helping them to grow up and be like adults taking responsibility for their lives and families, and responsibilities within the church. To do this we need to teach, but in a way that encourages and urges people on to do better.

The third lesson comes from a bit earlier on in this letter. Look at chapter 1 verse 6: "*you became imitators of us and of the Lord.*" Fathers are examples. They show their children how to live. You must show people how to live! That means being careful how you live! Children want to be like their parents, and many believers will see their pastor as an example or role model. They can begin to become like him in some respects. What sort of parent are you? Are you a good example or not? This is indeed a great responsibility. Whether we like it or not people will observe us, and our behaviour can influence others for good or for bad.

**Questions to think through:**

Are you prepared to be a mother? Are you prepared to be a father?

Which of these qualities do you find the hardest?

What temptations will you face to ignore being a parent?

How do you think gentleness and teaching fit together?

Do you want people to follow your example? What must you change?

---

---

**This book is supplied by Grace Baptist Mission and other titles are available in e-mail format at the address below:**

**Grace Baptist Mission  
12 Abbey Close  
Abingdon  
OXON  
OX14 3JD  
UK**

**e-mail: [radio@gbm.org.uk](mailto:radio@gbm.org.uk)**