

“GUIDED BY GRACE: SERVANT LEADERSHIP FOR THE LOCAL CHURCH”

By Dr. Paul Chappell

The foremost work of God in the world today is the building of His church, and the Devil is doing all he can to disrupt the church from its goal. Dr. Chappell’s primary thesis was to define the role of servant leadership and interpret its philosophies in order to facilitate leaders in the building of God’s local church. “Guided by Grace” is well-written and challenging, thought provoking, ministry helping, and encouraging to the pastor’s heart.

From the early pages of this text the author demonstrated that his ideas and principles are those of a seasoned pastor. Dr. Chappell began by defining what servant leaders are and where Christian leadership is located, namely the Bible. His overriding argument was that God’s leaders are to magnify Christ and not the externals of programs, buildings, and people. He clearly alleged that true servant leadership is never grasped, it is earned.

Dr. Chappell made swift work of discounting the modern church success model that equates growth with spiritual depth. The goal of leading a sizeable church is frequently the real motive of the preacher. Dr. Chappell, however, noted that, “Most men who become pastors of mega-churches have succeeded in the ministry because they inspire those around them to work in concert” (p. 57).

A servant leader builds his people and genuinely communicates with them. Throughout the book the author gave simple definitions to words that were thought provoking (for example: the word “principle - a Bible truth I must live by” (p. 110). It is

basic illustrations like this that help the pastor communicate the principles of Scripture to his congregation. Dr. Chappell also drew the essential point that church doctrine must be not only taught but related to the people and the times.

The servant leader relates the Scriptures to his current society and culture. The leader needs to have a relevant ministry in the culture with the Bible being applied in modern situations. Dr. Chappell did a masterful job of defining Biblical separation with its positive and negative aspects with the conclusion being a union with Christ and our freedom from sin. God's standards are often a target of public ridicule, but the spiritual leaders must maintain a Biblical foundation in principal and ministry. Dr. Chappell charged the spiritual leader to be steadfast on Biblical issues and to not overreact or be unkind in his actions toward others.

Dr. Chappell offered basic counsel to the pastor: do not allow the schedule to dominate and dictate, do not substitute the ministry for God Himself, and do not love the ministry more than God. It is the responsibility of the servant leader to keep his own life in constant pursuit of God; if the preacher is not growing, the church is not growing. Men who are personally growing in the Lord and are sensitive and passionate about their ministry and their Lord, are the true catalyst for church growth.

The author talked extensively about making personal adjustments as the leader. A servant leader is a spiritual leader who loosens his grip, yields to Christ, and allows other leaders to lead. The Bible lesson on David was an excellent example because it laid out the mistakes of David's leadership that resulted in his down fall and the public's scorn (pp. 51-52). Dr. Chappell's study on recognizing other spiritual leaders from Acts 6:3-5 drew tremendous principles in seeing and finding existing leaders. These two lessons

were powerful sermons sandwiched into the midst of his text.

The illustration of the banyan tree was another Biblical concept that is especially evident in a church with broad leadership. This illustration seemed to be the primary focal point Dr. Chappell was trying to make throughout the entire book. A way to determine if a church has this type of “banyan leadership” is whether church people become involved in the ministry.

Dr. Chappell wrote with depth, insight, and maturity as he related the inner-workings of the ministry. The “Harvesting the Fruit” chapter offered the most beneficial information for practical ministry. From this chapter I developed a plan to take on and personally train men that are already leading but do not have official ministry titles. Dr. Chappell’s book, “Guided by Grace” is a must read for the preacher even though it is not an easy plan to follow. It is however, the correct one.