

MAKE IT COUNT

A 10-week study for leadership teams by *Influence* magazine

When Leadership Isn't Easy

By STEPHEN BLANDINO



DISCUSSION GUIDE

MAKE IT COUNT

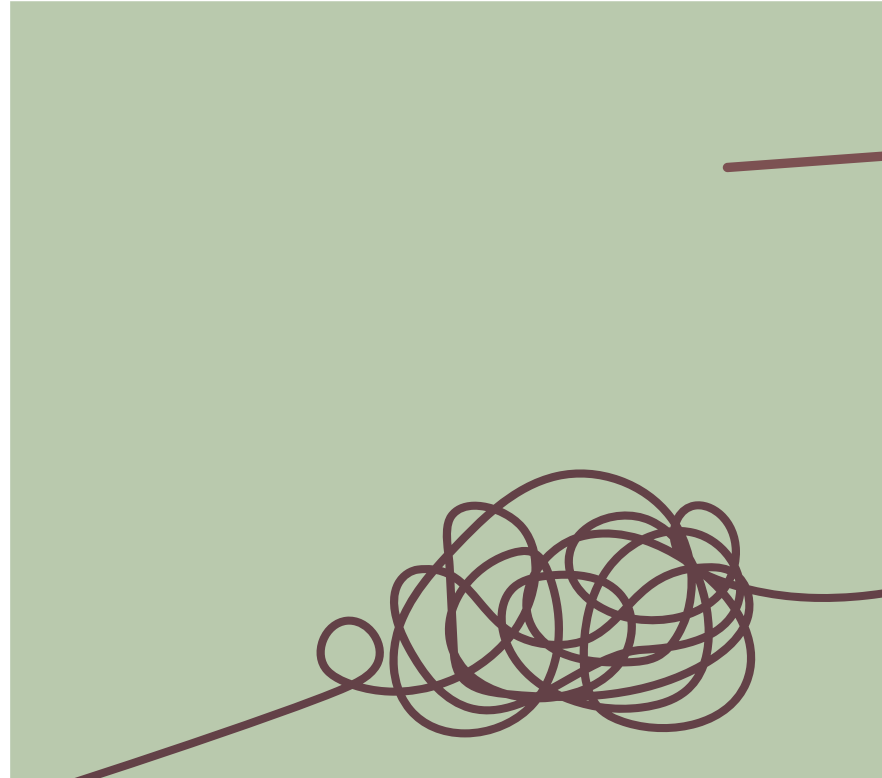
A 10-Week Study
For Leadership
Teams

What Is Make It Count?

Make It Count is a leadership development resource for use individually or with staff, volunteers, or board members.

Each installment is also available online as a downloadable PDF, along with interactive pages for group member use. The underlined words and phrases in the following text correspond to fill-in-the-blank sections on team member pages. Access these free resources at influencemagazine.com/Downloads.

These lessons are written by **STEPHEN BLANDINO**, lead pastor of 7 City Church in Fort Worth, Texas, and the author of several books, including *Stop Chasing Easy: Pursuing a Life That Counts Today ... and for Eternity*, available at stopchasingeasy.com.



When Leadership Isn't Easy

By **STEPHEN BLANDINO**

The apostle Paul faced countless hardships in his leadership journey. At different times, he was shipwrecked, imprisoned, beaten, hungry and sleepless. Yet Paul never veered from his calling.

Paul's unwavering commitment is evident in his letter to the church in Philippi, which he wrote from a Roman prison. Despite his incarceration, Paul talked about things like gratitude, joy, opportunity, love and contentment.

As we lead through difficult times, we can glean wisdom from Paul's perspective. This issue of Make It Count explores 10 ways to make our leadership count, regardless of the circumstances.

1. *Intentionally Grow.* Paul instructed the Philippians to “keep on



growing” (Philippians 1:9, NLT). For Paul, growth wasn’t a one-time event but rather a lifelong process. Leaders today must grow intentionally to make their greatest impact.

2. *Think Big Picture.* Paul looked beyond his circumstances and kept eternity in view. When leaders lose perspective, they risk making short-sighted decisions with long-term ramifications.
3. *See and Seize Opportunity.* Even in prison, Paul shared the gospel with others. His example compels pastors and leaders today to find opportunities for ministry even in the toughest circumstances.
4. *Patiently Persevere.* Even though Paul’s leadership journey was filled with hardship, he never quit. Leaders can persevere when they learn to maintain their pace and purpose.
5. *Love Unconditionally.* In Paul’s writings, he

makes it clear that we are bankrupt without love. Leading out of a spirit of love keeps our hearts and motives pure. It also makes a profound difference in the lives of those we lead.

6. *Serve Humbly.* Paul pointed to Jesus as the ultimate example of servant leadership. Not only did Jesus serve others, but He also humbly set aside the privileges of deity. Christ’s life is our template as we seek to become servant leaders today.
7. *Focus on Your Mission.* Paul’s goal was clear: to know Christ and make Him known. That mission remained Paul’s focus no matter what he personally encountered. As ministers, the mission of the gospel must consume and compel us as well.
8. *Build a Unified Team.* Paul challenged the church in Philippi to settle disagreements and seek unity. He understood team unity is the key to moving the mission forward.
9. *Model a Good Attitude.* Though he was chained to a Roman guard, Paul challenged the church to think positively. He understood the importance of having the right attitude, especially when leading through difficulties.
10. *Be Content.* Leadership can be full of discontent, particularly when we compare ourselves with others. But Paul admonishes us to be content in all circumstances — on the good days and when life is hard.

Leadership isn’t easy, but the most important things in life rarely are. Rather than pointing to an off-ramp, Paul equips us to make our leadership count today — and for eternity.

As you read, discuss and apply these lessons with your team, make a collective commitment to do hard things for the glory of God and the good of others. Paul shows us how, and his wisdom will inspire you to lead through difficulty.

These insights are adapted from my new book, *Stop Chasing Easy: Pursuing a Life That Counts Today ... and For Eternity.*

1 | WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Intentionally Grow

Assess

What intentional steps are you taking toward growth?

Insights and Ideas

The easy path rarely includes growth. After all, growth requires discipline, but a life of ease looks for shortcuts. However, if you want to make your leadership count, you must be willing to close the gap between you and your God-inspired dreams. That can only happen when you intentionally grow.

The apostle Paul understood the importance of intentional growth. In Philippians 1:9, he said, “And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight.” The *New Living Translation* says, “I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will *keep on growing* in knowledge and understanding” (emphasis added).

For Paul, growth was a lifelong journey, not a one-time event. To grow with intentionality in the face of challenging times, you need to do two things:

1. *Cultivate a growth mindset*. Growth begins with a mindset that is oriented toward learning and change. Some leaders are open to learn, but they’re hesitant to make the necessary changes. Others are open to change, but they rarely learn anything new.

Leaders need a mindset that includes a commitment to learn and a willingness to change. This will equip them to respond appropriately to hardship and suffering.

C.S. Lewis once said, “God allows us to experience the low points of life in order to teach us lessons we could not learn in any other way.”

The question is, do we have a growth mindset that will allow us to harvest those lessons?

2. *Create a growth plan*. Some of the most profound growth can happen when we create a plan. A solid growth plan will answer four questions:

- What are my growth goals?
- How will I reach my growth goals?
- Who will hold me accountable for my growth?
- When and how will I monitor my progress?

By answering each question in a specific and measurable way, you can lay out a plan that will lead to meaningful transformation.

Growth requires discipline, and discipline is its own form of difficulty. As the old saying goes, “You can live with the pain of discipline or the pain of regret.”

Reflect and Discuss

1. Why is a growth mindset so important in leadership?
2. How has a growth mindset helped you navigate hardship and suffering?
3. What should your personal growth plan include?

Apply

Carve out some time to create or update your own personal growth plan. To help guide the process, answer the four growth questions above in the key areas of your life: spiritual, relational, emotional, professional, physical and financial.

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The *New Living Translation* says, “I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will *keep on growing* in knowledge and understanding” (emphasis added).

Two keys to intentional growth:

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Apply

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2 | WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Think Big Picture

Team Review

What progress did you make on creating your personal growth plan?

Assess

What does it mean to have a big-picture perspective?

Insights and Ideas

A painting in an art museum may consist of hundreds or thousands of individual brushstrokes. Together, these small applications of paint form a cohesive image. Even though a painting comes together one stroke at a time, artists work with the big picture in mind.

The apostle Paul understood the importance of big-picture thinking. During his imprisonment, he discovered that others were preaching the gospel with impure motives. Rather than focusing on the reality of those painful brushstrokes, however, Paul adopted a big-picture mindset when he wrote, “But what does it matter? The important thing is that in every way, whether from false motives or true, Christ is preached. And because of this I rejoice” (Philippians 1:18).

It’s difficult to make sense of the big picture — much less rejoice in it — when a few brushstrokes of life seem completely out of place. We need to do two things to gain a big-picture perspective:

1. **View *problems* correctly.** When multiple problems arise in a leader’s life or ministry, it’s easy to view those problems as *limitless*. In other words, we let the pain in the painting of our ministries define the entire canvas.

Choose to see problems instead as momentary setbacks that mark a small part of your life and ministry. Don’t surrender to the difficulties. The painting is still in progress.

2. **See *possibilities* fully.** Big-picture thinking requires us to dream beyond the edges of what we currently see. Ask God to help you see new possibilities for ministry and impact.

God doesn’t waste a single brushstroke in a leader’s life. Even the ones that come about because of our bad decisions or painful problems can become something beautiful in His skillful hands.

The Lord is creating a masterpiece that will come into focus when you view it with a big-picture perspective.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Why is it so hard to keep your eye on the big picture when problems invade your ministry?
2. How do you need to shift your perspective of problems?
3. What possibilities can you imagine beyond the edges of what is visible right now?

Apply

Take some time to put your problems in perspective. One way to do this is by creating a gratitude list. By focusing on your blessings rather than your problems, you’ll gain fresh perspective. Then you’ll be in a better frame of mind to work toward solutions.

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3

WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

See and Seize Opportunity

Team Review

How did creating a gratitude list reshape the perspective on your problems?

Assess

How do you typically respond to new opportunities?

Insights and Ideas

Opportunity is everywhere ... even in prison. That was Paul's perspective when he was chained to a Roman guard.

In Philippians 1:12–14, Paul wrote, “Now I want you to know, brothers and sisters, that what has happened to me has actually served to advance the gospel. As a result, it has become clear throughout the whole palace guard and to everyone else that I am in chains for Christ. And because of my chains, most of the brothers and sisters have become confident in the Lord and dare all the more to proclaim the gospel without fear.”

Most people in Paul's situation would have focused on one thing: getting out of prison. Paul took a different approach. He made his leadership count by seeing and seizing the opportunity to share the gospel right where he was.

Author Hal Urban once wrote, “Once we accept the fact that life is hard, we begin to grow. We begin to understand that every problem is also an opportunity. It is then that we dig down and discover what we're made of. We begin to accept the challenges of life. Instead of letting our hardships defeat us, we welcome them as a test of character. We use them as a means of rising to the occasion.”

Here are two ways to see and seize opportunity:

1. *Search for the gold in every problem.* Look for ways to leverage your situation, turning problems into possibilities.

That's what Chick-fil-A founder Truett Cathy did.

“The history of Chick-fil-A, in fact, is a series of unexpected opportunities,” Cathy once said. “When we responded to them, we often found ourselves richly blessed. The Chick-fil-A Chicken Sandwich itself was born in the wake of an unexpected opportunity. When one of my first two restaurants burned to the ground, I found myself with time on my hands and the availability to develop a new recipe.”

Whatever circumstances you're facing, ask God to guide you toward new doors of opportunity.

2. *Act with courage in the face of fear.* When you're staring opportunity in the face — and experiencing the fear accompanying it — the need for courage becomes real. That's the time to act and lead. You can't just see the opportunity; you must also courageously seize it.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What opportunity have you seen in the past but failed to seize?
2. What opportunity is hidden in the problems or challenges you're facing right now?
3. What would it look like to seize that opportunity?

Apply

Pick any challenge you're facing right now. Work together as a team to search for the gold hidden within that problem. Then put together a plan to seize the opportunity to advance the work and ministry to which God has called you.

3

WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

See and Seize Opportunity**Assess**

How do you typically respond to new opportunities?

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Two ways to see and seize opportunity:

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4 | WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Patiently Persevere

Team Review

What progress have you made to act on a new opportunity?

Assess

When is it hardest for you to persevere?

Insights and Ideas

Patience and perseverance are not popular words. But leaders who make a lasting difference when things aren't easy understand the importance and power of endurance.

The apostle Paul highlighted this truth when he wrote, "Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you" (Philippians 1:27–28).

Paul encouraged these believers to keep going and to keep the faith. The journey was hard, and it might have been tempting for them to quit. Yet Paul reminded the Philippians of what matters most: serving Jesus and pointing others to His truth.

Persevering as leaders requires a combination of two ingredients:

1. **Pace.** In a marathon, it's not uncommon for runners to consider dropping out somewhere around the 21-mile mark. Pace is all about what you do before you hit that mental and physical wall. You have to focus on your should-do pace, not your could-do pace. Your could-do pace is how fast you can ultimately run. Your should-do pace is slightly slower and gives you the appropriate reserves to finish the race.

Similarly, ministry leaders have to embrace a healthy pace that allows them to keep going and finish strong.

2. **Purpose.** Purpose is the *why* behind the *what*. It's the reason you signed up for the marathon. It's your motivation for ministry. Focusing on your purpose inspires you to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

When leaders feel like quitting, they have to remind themselves of their why.

By practicing pace and purpose, you'll be prepared when you hit the metaphorical 21-mile mark. It inevitably happens when you're doing something worthwhile. Pace will give you the energy to keep going, and purpose will give you the reason to keep going.

Reflect and Discuss

1. When have you had to persevere as a leader, and what lessons did you learn during that season?
2. What is a healthy pace for a leader in ministry?
3. What is the purpose that keeps you going? When have you had to lean on that purpose?

Apply

Assess your current pace as a leader. What changes do you need to make to ensure you're able to finish the race? Create a plan to make these changes, and then share them with a friend who can hold you accountable. In addition, remind yourself of your purpose. You might even spend some time in prayer thanking God for entrusting you with His call.

4 | WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Patiently Persevere

Assess

When is it hardest for you to persevere?

“Whatever happens, conduct yourselves in a manner worthy of the gospel of Christ. Then, whether I come and see you or only hear about you in my absence, I will know that you stand firm in the one Spirit, striving together as one for the faith of the gospel without being frightened in any way by those who oppose you” (Philippians 1:27–28).

Two keys to patiently persevere:

1. _____.

You have to focus on your should-do pace, not your could-do pace. Your could-do pace is how fast you can ultimately run. Your should-do pace is slightly slower and gives you the appropriate reserves to finish the race.

2. _____.

Purpose is the *why* behind the *what*. It's the reason you signed up for the marathon. It's your motivation for ministry. Focusing on your purpose inspires you to keep putting one foot in front of the other.

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5 | WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Love Unconditionally

Team Review

What changes have you made to your pace so you can finish the ministry race strong?

Assess

How should love shape your leadership?

Insights and Ideas

Love is an essential part of the Christian life. The apostle Paul put love at the top of his character qualities when he wrote to the believers in Philippi: “Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind” (Philippians 2:1–2).

Paul understood that love is essential for ministry. And while loving people isn’t always easy, the leaders who make the greatest impact learn to love well. Perhaps that’s why Paul wedged the words of 1 Corinthians 13 between his introduction of spiritual gifts and their operation in the Church. He understood that without love, we are spiritually bankrupt, and our gifts will lose their purpose and power.

A closer look at 1 Corinthians 13 makes it clear that love matters in three scenarios:

1. *No matter what I say.* Paul said, “If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal” (verse 1). A leader may communicate skillfully or even speak in tongues. But unless a demonstration of Christ’s love accompanies the message, it is unlikely to change hearts and minds.
2. *No matter what I have.* Paul goes on to say, “If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (verse 2). Gifts are wonderful, but love for Jesus and others should always be the motive for ministry.
3. *No matter what I do.* Paul then says, “If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing” (verse 3). It’s unfortunate that some people perform loving acts without actual love. In other words, they do the right things in the wrong spirit.

All ministry and leadership should flow from our love for God and people. Both Jesus and Paul modeled and taught this truth.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Who is one of the most loving leaders you know?
2. How does love come through in his or her leadership?
3. Practically speaking, how should love shape what leaders say, have and do?

Apply

On a scale from 1 to 10, how loving are you as a leader? What are three things you can do (or change) to lead in a more loving manner?

5 | WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Love Unconditionally

Assess

How should love shape your leadership?

“Therefore if you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any common sharing in the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and of one mind” (Philippians 2:1–2).

Love matters ...

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“If I speak in the tongues of men or of angels, but do not have love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal” (1 Corinthians 13:1).

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“If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but do not have love, I am nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:2).

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“If I give all I possess to the poor and give over my body to hardship that I may boast, but do not have love, I gain nothing” (1 Corinthians 13:3).

It’s unfortunate that some people perform loving acts without actual love. In other words, they do the right things in the wrong spirit.

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Apply

On a scale from 1 to 10, how loving are you as a leader? What are three things you can do (or change) to lead in a more loving manner?

6 | WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Serve Humbly

Team Review

What are you doing to become a more loving leader?

Assess

How would you define a servant leader?

Insights and Ideas

Jesus was the ultimate example of a servant leader, and at the core of His leadership was a spirit of humility. We see this throughout the Gospels as He humbly served others.

Paul further highlights Jesus' humility — and challenges Christians to embrace it — in his letter to the church in Philippi. From Philippians 2:3–8, we discover three qualities of a leader who is a humble servant:

1. *Humble servants guard their motives.* Paul begins by saying, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit” (Philippians 2:3). He’s dealing with the motives that drive our attitudes and actions. Leaders can say and do all the right things, but if their motives are wrong, they’re doing nothing more than manipulating people for personal gain.
2. *Humble servants value others.* Next, Paul says, “Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Philippians 2:3–4). Paul makes it clear that humble servant leaders value others and add value to others. Servant leaders lead by serving, which means they focus on others.
3. *Humble servants leverage power for the good of others.* Some leaders abuse their power, but Jesus demonstrated a different way of leading.

Philippians 2:5–8 says, “In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!”

Jesus didn’t use His position or power for His own advantage. Instead, He leveraged it for the good of others.

Author John Dickson provides a powerful challenge to leaders when he describes humility as “the noble choice to forgo your status, deploy your resources or use your influence for the good of others before yourself.”

Dickson went on to say, “The humble person is marked by a willingness to hold power in service of others.”

Leading this way isn’t easy, but it’s how we make our leadership count.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Why do leaders often struggle to model humility?
2. What practical steps can you take to guard the motives of your heart?
3. How can you leverage your position, power and authority to serve others more effectively?

Apply

Pride is a serious issue of the heart. Ask God to show you how pride is impacting your life and leadership, and what is needed to practice a spirit of humility.

6

WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Serve Humbly

Assess

How would you define a servant leader?

Jesus was the ultimate example of a servant leader, and at the core of His leadership was a spirit of humility.

Three qualities of a humble servant:

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2. *Humble servants* _____ *others.*

“Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others” (Philippians 2:3–4).

3. *Humble servants leverage* _____ *for the good of others.*

“In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus: Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be used to his own advantage; rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death — even death on a cross!” (Philippians 2:5–8).

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— John Dickson

Apply

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7 | WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Focus on Your Mission

Team Review

How have you been challenged to lead humbly in the past week?

Assess

Why is it so easy for ministers to lose focus on our mission?

Insights and Ideas

Today's world is filled with distractions, from text messages to social media debates. In fact, it's hard for most people to go more than a few minutes without glancing at an electronic device. The never-ending stream of disruptions and interruptions can be exhausting, and it can quickly take our eyes off our God-given mission.

Rather than letting the distractions sidetrack us, we need to focus on what matters most.

The apostle Paul defined his mission in Philippians 3:12–14 when he said, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus.”

The mission of knowing Christ and making Him known was Paul's priority. Reading this passage in its full context, it becomes clear Paul wouldn't let anything eclipse this mission — not even his heritage, accomplishments or reputation. Paul understood his calling, and he made that his singular focus.

Here are three ways to stay focused on what matters most:

1. *Clarify your mission.* Focus begins with crystal clarity about your mission. If there is confusion, you'll slowly drift toward ambiguity and distraction. When you do the hard work of finding focus, you'll be better equipped to maintain it.
2. *Align your team.* Once your mission is clear, help prevent sideways energy by aligning your team members and their goals with the mission. It may require hard conversations and difficult decisions, but alignment is critical to forward momentum.
3. *Create your boundaries.* To remain focused, you need to take charge of your time. One key in effective time management is the establishment of healthy boundaries. Determine what is on-mission and what is not. Boundaries keep you from drifting into distractions and interruptions.

Reflect and Discuss

1. On a scale from 1 to 10, how clear is your ministry's mission?
2. What steps would help better align your team with your mission?
3. What are three practical things you could do to guard against distractions?

Apply

Do an assessment of how you're using your time. Identify the high-return priorities that align with your mission. Then create a list of things to stop and things to delegate. Make the necessary adjustments so you can allocate as much time as possible to your mission-aligned priorities.

7 | WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

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Assess

Why is it so easy for ministers to lose focus on our mission?

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Three ways to focus on the mission:

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Once your mission is clear, help prevent sideways energy by aligning your team members and their goals with the mission.

3. *Create your* _____.

Boundaries keep you from drifting into distractions and interruptions.

Apply

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8

WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Build a Unified Team

Team Review

What changes did you make to better align your time with your mission and priorities?

Assess

How would you describe a unified team?

Insights and Ideas

Within his letter to the Philippians, Paul addressed the issue of disunity in the congregation. In Philippians 4:2–3, Paul wrote, “I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life.”

Leaders who make a long-term difference understand the power of unity, especially in building an effective team. But gaining and maintaining unity isn’t easy. For unity to become fully embedded in a team’s culture, members must embrace its purpose, source and impact.

1. *The purpose of unity is mission.* Why would Paul address disunity from behind prison bars? Because Paul understood that when disunity takes root in our hearts (or our homes, churches or organizations), the mission suffers, and the collateral damage is always relationships.

Paul challenged Euodia and Syntyche to protect unity for the sake of the greater mission. He asked them to erase the territorial lines and settle their differences.

Jesus prayed for His followers to be united and connected our unity with His mission. In fact, Jesus said Christian unity demonstrates to the world the truth of the gospel’s claims (John 17:23).

2. *The source of unity is humility.* Pride causes disunity. Proud people believe they are always right and insist on always getting their way. But wise leaders know people are more important than opinions, and that *doing* right is more important than *being* right. Living this truth requires a posture of humility that puts others before ourselves.
3. *The impact of unity is multiplication.* The Early Church’s unity had a multiplying effect on its mission. Acts 4:32 says, “All the believers were one in heart and mind. No one claimed that any of their possessions was their own, but they shared everything they had.”

Unity wasn’t limited to a small group of people. *All* the believers were unified, which allowed them to serve others in the most extraordinary ways. In fact, they were so generous that there were “no needy persons among them” (verses 34–35).

Reflect and Discuss

1. Which of the three truths about unity most challenges you? Why?
2. How can our team become more united?
3. What can we do to cultivate unity within our congregation?

Apply

Unity doesn’t happen accidentally. Work together as a team to resolve any conflicts, and prayerfully commit to becoming more unified in heart, mind and mission.

8

WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Build a Unified Team

Assess

How would you describe a unified team?

“I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to be of the same mind in the Lord. Yes, and I ask you, my true companion, help these women since they have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my co-workers, whose names are in the book of life” (Philippians 4:2–3).

Understanding the value of unity:

1. *The purpose of unity is* _____.

Why would Paul address disunity from behind prison bars? Because Paul understood that when disunity takes root in our hearts (or our homes, churches or organizations), the mission suffers, and the collateral damage is always relationships.

2. *The source of unity is* _____.

Pride causes disunity. Prideful people believe they are always right and insist on always getting their way. But wise leaders know people are more important than opinions, and that *doing* right is more important than *being* right.

3. *The impact of unity is* _____.

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Apply

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9

WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Model a Good Attitude

Team Review

What progress have you made toward becoming a more unified team?

Assess

What difference does attitude make among leaders and team members?

Insights and Ideas

The apostle Paul had every reason to have a bad attitude. He was in prison. Others were preaching the gospel with impure motives. There was disunity in the church at Philippi. In spite of all these things, Paul modeled a good attitude and encouraged the Philippians to do the same.

Paul wrote, “Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable — if anything is excellent or praiseworthy — think about such things. Whatever you have learned or received or heard from me, or seen in me — put it into practice. And the God of peace will be with you” (Philippians 4:8–9).

Attitude isn’t a one-time moment of victory. It’s a daily pattern of thinking that translates into a daily pattern of living. The rest of your life starts with today’s thinking.

Author Chip Ingram compares our thinking to a train:

- The engine of the train is our thinking.
- The thinking engine pulls three cars behind it: our emotions, behaviors, and consequences.

In other words, thoughts influence our emotions, which in turn influence our behaviors, which in turn produce consequences (good or bad) in our lives.

What should we think about then? According to Paul, we should focus on those things that are true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent and praiseworthy.

Several years ago, I visited an art museum in San Diego. As I walked through the museum, I encountered stunning works of art, including depictions of Jesus and scenes from the Bible. I soon found myself whispering prayers of gratitude to God. I was focusing my thoughts on something lovely and admirable, and the attention of my heart turned to the Lord.

Our thoughts have a profound impact on the course of our life. As the old saying goes, “Sow a thought, reap an action. Sow an action, reap a habit. Sow a habit, reap a character. Sow a character, reap a destiny.”

Author Jon Gordon says, “Being positive won’t guarantee you’ll succeed. But being negative will guarantee you won’t.”

Reflect and Discuss

1. How have you found the thinking train to be true in your life?
2. What helps you maintain a positive attitude when life is hard?
3. Which quality from Paul’s thinking list most challenges you?

Apply

Attitude is a daily battle. Nevertheless, leaders must take responsibility for how we think and the attitude we display. Ultimately, attitude is a choice. Memorize Philippians 4:8–9, spend some time renewing your mind each day, and put together a growth plan to improve.

9

WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Model a Good Attitude**Assess**

What difference does attitude make among leaders and team members?

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10 | WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Be Content

Team Review

What steps have you taken to develop a more Christlike attitude?

Assess

Why is contentment such a challenge for leaders today?

Insights and Ideas

Discontentment is common in leadership. In fact, many leaders view contentment as nothing more than complacency. But healthy contentment actually helps us live in the tension between *satisfied* and *significant*.

Paul said, “I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:11–13).

Paul understood two realities about contentment that have great meaning for us today:

1. *Christ is enough*. The *Amplified Bible* captures this well: “Not that I speak from [any personal] need, for I have learned to be content [and self-sufficient through Christ, satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or uneasy] regardless of my circumstances” (verse 11).

Paul was not disturbed by his circumstances because true contentment brings peace regardless of circumstances. When times are bad, we need God. But we need God just as much when times are good. If we don’t need God in the good times, we’ve become sufficient in ourselves. Put another way, if we don’t need God when times are good, we’ve turned our good into a god.

2. *Christ’s enough is endless*. When you hear that “Christ is enough,” it’s easy to interpret “enough” as “just enough” or “just barely enough.” But that’s not the picture Paul paints of Christ. In Philippians 4:19, Paul says, “My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”

The Greek word translated “meet” means “to make full.” When you’re in a moment of uncertainty, you might feel deficient or lacking, but God is overflowing with glorious riches, and He is able and willing to fill you with His abundance.

Like Paul, you can be content, trusting that Christ is more than enough. This doesn’t mean God will grant every wish, but it does mean He will meet your needs and provide you with the resources to advance His mission.

Reflect and Discuss

1. In what area of leadership do you find it hardest to be content?
2. What does it mean to you for Christ to be enough?
3. How does knowing Christ has more than enough shape your view of contentment?

Apply

Spend some time praying together as a team. Focus on God’s blessings, thanking Him for who He is and all He has done. Take a few minutes to rest in God’s presence, letting your heart become content in Him.

10 | WHEN LEADERSHIP ISN'T EASY

Be Content

Assess

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“I have learned to be content whatever the circumstances. I know what it is to be in need, and I know what it is to have plenty. I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation, whether well fed or hungry, whether living in plenty or in want. I can do all this through him who gives me strength” (Philippians 4:11–13).

Two truths about contentment:

1. *Christ is* _____.

“Not that I speak from [any personal] need, for I have learned to be content [and self-sufficient through Christ, satisfied to the point where I am not disturbed or uneasy] regardless of my circumstances” (Philippians 4:11, AMP).

2. *Christ's enough is* _____.

“My God will meet all your needs according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:19).

The Greek word translated “meet” means “to make full.” When you’re in a moment of uncertainty, you might feel deficient or lacking, but God is overflowing with glorious riches, and He is able and willing to fill you with His abundance.

Apply

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