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Presentation Transcript
Leading by Empowering
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The title of this presentation is *Leading by Empowering*. It's the fourth one that we've done on leadership. Leadership is the third topic of eight on the series on Congregational Health.

Why would we be talking about congregational health? Well, Paul tells us that Jerusalem above is the mother of us all. So the concept of Jerusalem refers to being home with God. And it's also a reference to the church. And the church is our home then. It's where we're nurtured spiritually to maturity. All of us know that our salvation is in Jesus Christ and not in people. But God still has given us the church to be our place for spiritual development. It's where He nurtures us so that we can grow to spiritual maturity, as I said.

If the environment of your congregation is healthy, then it produces spiritual growth in us. And if it's not, then we don't grow. And it's even more true of children than it is of adults. I know we don't think like that. We think that kids are in the family. And the family is the main thing. Well, the family *is* the main thing, but children – because of their sensitivities – are also very much affected by what goes on in the congregation. Like adults, they see church as a place where the things of God take place. So the impression that they gain there have a lot to do with what they think about God and His people.

So that's why we've embarked on this massive series. We're laying down a body of work that we can refer people to in the future when we talk about these issues. So let's review a little bit what we've said so far about leadership.

The Natural Church Development literature say that leadership has a lot to do with the health of the congregation. Specifically, they learned in this study that they did that empowering leadership is the style that produces health in congregations. Now we believe that there are other factors also, so we've already talked about those. We've talked about leading by example – you know, the high moral ground. We've talked about leading by serving, because that's what Jesus said we were to do. So a leader has to lead by example, and the example they have to set is one of serving. But there's also this matter of empowering people. We're going to talk more about why that's important.

The question I want to ask to begin with, though, is: How do we empower people to take responsibility for their own spiritual growth and the health of the congregation? We've talked somewhat about this already. We're trying to help people move down the road to spiritual growth and development. So it's a matter of motivating people or encouraging them. (The way I'm using the word *encouragement* it also means to motivate.)

So we've already seen in this series that there are four areas in the brain that affect motivation or encouragement – encouragement to *do* something, to take some kind of action. We said that one of those is *autonomy* – the freedom, the permission, the space to take independent action on behalf of the congregation specifically. The second one is *mastery* – the freedom, the permission, the space to learn and practice spiritual skills. The third one was *purpose*. And that has to do with altruism and service – the freedom, the permission, the space to pursue a higher purpose – you know, the service, and the care of others, and the Godly love applied in our lives – outgoing toward other people. And the fourth one is *inclusion* – that invitation to join in with the purpose, and to use the skills, and to have the freedom to be included in all of those things. Those are the things that tend to motivate people to action.

I was thinking about the similarities between motivating a congregation and motivating families that come into my practice. It's really all about the same thing. You have a group of people. How do you get them to work together to accomplish something? Well, when people come into my office, they're usually suffering. And they're hoping I can fix their problem for them. My job is turn that dependent, helpless kind of a hope into motivation to do something for themselves. Because I can't really fix anything.

We had a family come in the other day and two brothers were upset with each other. There is no screw I can turn in the side of their heads to make them like one another. *They* have to do that. Realizing that, I have to find a way to motivate them or encourage them – to convince them – that if they start doing and thinking differently, then things are going to change for the better – also, to convince them that they *can* act and think differently. So I'm really trying to encourage them toward family health. So I need to know about those four areas in the brain, because I'm trying to activate those four things.

Let's take a look at that position and kind of examine the components in it. They come in the door in somewhat of a dependent state. And I tell them that they have the freedom to do what they need to do to change. Are people in congregations like that? Dependent? Ninety percent of the work gets done by ten percent of the people? Usually, in any group, there are ten people that are the doers, and the rest just sit around and take advantage of all the work of the others. They're the dependent ones. So, yeah. Congregations fit that, just like families do and just like any other group.

I have to start convincing them to *do* something. And I tell them that they have the freedom to do what they *need* to do to change – that I'm not going to make them do anything and that their input into this whole process is hugely important, because they know more about their situation than I do. I also asked them what the problem is. And I get *them* to explain it. And I try to have everybody in the family there to give their input, so that they all hear each other talk about what they think the problems are. And most of

the time, that's never happened. They've never had a family meeting where they sit down and everybody gets to talk.

After I ask them what the problem is, I ask them what outcomes they would like to see as a result. Then we sit down together and we make up a treatment plan – *together* – the kids' input is included, so is the adults'. Then they get to decide about the outcomes. And they get to decide about how the treatment is going to go, too – believe it or not. You know, I can do what *I* think works, but if I don't get them on board with me, it's not going to work. So I have to present them with options – talk about how different things work, different modalities and all that. So it's all up to *them*. So what is that? Well, that's *autonomy*, isn't it? Encouraging them to be *involved* in the process right from the beginning.

When we talk about the *goals*, what we're really talking about there is *purpose*, aren't we? You know, most parents that come in want it better for their kids. They have a very altruistic, loving approach to their children, even if they don't know how to get the right results. So I'm trying to activate that sense of higher purpose that they're working for.

Then next, we begin to unravel the problem, so we can see the relationships in the family – see where the problems lie. As we do that, it becomes apparent to the people in the family that they need to change the way they're relating to each other. But how? Well, see that's where the *skill* part comes in – you know, the *mastery*. Then you have to set about to learn what to do. Then exercise sometimes character and sometimes determination to make those skills a part of your everyday repertoire. And all this is done in an atmosphere of teamwork and *inclusiveness*. So we're all working on the problem. We all own the problem.

I had a mother and her seventeen-year-old son come in recently. His brother had pushed him off the trampoline. So he got upset and he went in the house and came out with a hunting bow and arrow and was going to shoot him – at least, that's what he said. Of course, that got everybody's attention *big time*. That's what brought him to the office. So, his unconscious self was very adept at drawing attention to the fact that he needed some help. What we found out in a few minutes of talking to him with his mom there: that he'd been cutting himself – this was all news to her. Under this really cool exterior, there was just a whole lot of anxiety. He managed to contradict his mother a number of times when she said that she'd tried to get him to talk. I remember that one of his statements was, "It helps if you listen to what I'm saying." There they were – struggling with it right from the beginning. She called me later to tell me that by the time they'd walked out the door – forty-five minutes into the first session – they both had learned some things and were already starting to relate to each other in a different way – a better way.

I always try to involve all four of those concepts into the therapy from the very beginning, because I know that God has designed us to need those things if we're going to go forward and do things – to do difficult things.

You might have seen *Faith Networks* this month. Jim O'Brien wrote the lead article. And he's talking about why planes fly – because this guy figured out how to create lift by the

way a plane's wing is shaped. It creates a vacuum on top and pulls the plane up into it. This guy who figured this out – what he was actually doing – was getting in line with the principles of nature – the design of nature. I see these four things – autonomy, mastery, purpose and inclusiveness – as the same kind of principles. If you want to move people to do something, you've got to activate those four areas in the mind. It's just a law of nature.

If you read the Bible with those four things in mind, and you look at the way the church was run, you look at the way God dealt with Israel, He's really just pounding away on those four areas. Let's take a look at each of these four attributes and see how we can apply them to the church – how we can empower people.

Let's look at *inclusion* first. We talked about that last, but I want to talk about that first. Another way to think about inclusion is the concept of turf. You know, we talk about turf wars – people become possessive of their responsibilities and they fight over them. And that attitude comes from not establishing healthy norms from the outset of a group. But there is another way to think about that concept of turf that is a positive way. What we're really trying to create in people – when we want to empower people – is the belief, the feeling, the understanding that this is *my* congregation. I'm a part of this congregation. That's inclusiveness, isn't it? When they feel that way, they feel like they've been included. So how can we help people with that? How can we help people to feel that way?

Probably the biggest single thing we can do – and this is what I do in my therapy – is I invite everybody into the decision making. When you're sitting there with a parent and a twelve-year-old girl who is being really rebellious and disrespectful, it's really important that she believes that you're on her side as well as her mother's, or she's just going to turn off. So the way I do that is to include her in the decisions about how the therapy is going to go. I get her involved in deciding, with her mother, what kind of rules they should have and things like that. That's what we want to do in our congregations. We want to include everybody in the group of decision makers, because what happens in the congregation affects everybody.

Do they do that in the Bible? They sure did, didn't they? Let's go to Acts 6, and verse 1.

Acts 6:1 – *In those days, it says, when the number of disciples were increasing, the Grecian Jews among them complained about the Hebraic Jews, because their widows were being overlooked in the daily distribution of food.* They're really kind of asking the question here, "How do we want our congregation to be? How is this church going to be?" See, this is in the very beginning of the church, so the norms haven't been established yet. So this is a critical issue, because what happens from here on out is going to become the way it's done. Will it be a church where the ones who are appointed to witness are distracted by matters of daily living? Or will it be a church where it becomes the way that some are neglected all the time? Or will it be a church where the ones on top order other people around? Or will it be a church *everybody's* considered important and cared for, and also invited to help figure out how to solve the problem together – that directly affect everybody's life? So it says in verse 2.

V-2 – *The twelve gathered all the disciples together and said, “It would not be right for us to neglect the ministry of the word of God in order to wait on tables.”* Everybody agreed with that. We know that, *but* somebody’s got to take care of this problem. *So they said, “Brothers, choose seven men from among you, who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom and we will turn this responsibility over to them.”* Look, you know who the people are that care about people in this group, so *you* pick out the ones that are going to do a good job for you, because they’re going to be taking care of you. *“And we will give our attention to prayer and the ministry of the word.”* *And the proposal pleased the whole group.* So everybody was on board, because they got to be involved in the decision. The problem was not solved behind closed doors. It was solved in front of everybody. *And they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit* and some other fellows with long Greek names. *And they presented these fellows to the apostles, who prayed and laid their hands on them. And so the word of God spread. The number of disciples in Jerusalem increased rapidly.* It sounds like it doesn’t really have to do with what just happened, but I think the point is that it *did*. The people *liked* to be treated that way. So, when you have an open group like that, where everybody’s included, then people hear about that and they see how happy everybody is, and how fair it is, and they want to join up. So, I think that can be pointed out as an example of how this inclusiveness works to cause churches to be healthy and to grow.

So, it’s *our* church. We all have a say in how it’s going to go. Now, you see, these people couldn’t change one of the commandments – the doctrines – because God already drove His stake in the ground about that stuff. But everybody got to say how things were going to be handled on a day-to-day basis in the things that affected them. They said, “It’s our job to help with those things. We get to be a part of that. That’s our turf.” That’s where the turf thing comes in. It’s our job to *all* make that decision. You know, when we were in the United Church of God here in Albuquerque for about ten years – nine years – we had a board. We had open meetings so that everybody could come to them. It was really interesting to me. I’d hear other people talking about – in their congregations – how nobody came to the board meetings. In our group, everybody came to all of them – pretty much. And the reason, I believe, they came was because our board, early on, adopted a policy of not deciding what *they* wanted to do, but polling the *group* to find out what *they* would like to see done. And then they voted the way the congregation wanted. So it was important to people to come because they knew that their input could make a difference. And that’s how we developed that sense of unity there. And you know, I didn’t plan that out. It just happened. I thought that we should have a board. That’s what they were talking about early on. So we did it. And it was just really interesting how it worked. One of the really hot-button issues for a lot of groups is how the money is spent. I don’t remember that group ever arguing about that – ever – one time. It’s really interesting how that happened.

Think about doctrine. You know, Jesus Christ is the one who is the head of the church. And He and the Father determine doctrine. But if you read about the dispute over circumcision in the fifteenth chapter of Acts – I’m not going to read the entire chapter – but you can see there it says that the apostles, and the elders, and the Jerusalem congregation were all involved. It was clear that the apostles had the most to say in the meeting, but the decision was talked out before the entire group. It wasn’t done off in

secret anywhere. Everybody that wanted to be included was included. It was *their* church. It was something that was really important to them. And when it came time to go to Antioch, and to Syria, and to Cilicia to tell the church of the decision that had been made, the church decided to send Paul and Barnabas, but also two *lay members* to witness to what had taken place in Jerusalem. So you see the development of the systems in the church to take care of people – even the decisions about how Jesus Christ changed the way they practiced their worship was on the turf of the congregation. They all got to be involved in it. There's a history that's told, you know, by Peter and then Paul. Everybody heard all of that. And then they heard the decision that was made. And that's how everybody became unified. They were all pulled into together.

So this inclusiveness creates the *my church* and *our church* feeling in people. And it motivates people to be a fully functioning part of it. You know, if the board is going to make a decision, and they're not going to listen to what you say, and they're just going to do what they want, there isn't any reason to come to the meeting. But if they really want to know what *you* think, and they're going to do what they can to please most of the people, then it suddenly becomes really important to be there.

Autonomy. We're not done with turf yet. I didn't forget about it. There's something else we want to say about that later. We're going to go on to *autonomy* now – responsibility with freedom to act. When we think about autonomy, we can also think turf, but perhaps in a different way. Let's read Acts 1. Luke says:

Acts 1:1 – *In my former book, Theophilus, I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day that He was taken up into heaven, after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles He had chosen. After His suffering He showed Himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that He was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the Kingdom of God. On one occasion, while He was eating with them, He gave them this command. "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift My Father promised, which you have heard me speak about. For John baptized with water, but in a few days, you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit." So when they met together, they asked Him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" And He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by His own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you, and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."*

So they kind of had this idea in their mind that He was going to get on His white charger, and they with Him, and they were going to take over the kingdom. There was going to be a big victory party after a successful war. And it says in verse 9:

V-9 – *After this He was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid Him from their sight. Oh, it isn't going to happen right now. Oh! And they were looking intently up into the sky as He was going – you know, there's lift off; He's floating up away – when suddenly two men, dressed in white, stood beside them. I never noticed those guys! Where did those guys come from? "Men of Galilee," they said, "why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will*

come back in the same way you have seen Him go into heaven.” Oh, He’s not going to do it now. He’s gone! *And they returned from Jerusalem from the hill, called the Mount of Olives, a Sabbath day’s walk from the city.* It’s interesting, isn’t it?

He told a story that could have clued them into what was going to happen. It’s in Luke 19:12. And I’m going to read it in the King James, because I love the punch line.

Lk. 19:12 – *He said therefore, “A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and return. And he called his ten servants and delivered them ten pounds, and said to them, ‘Occupy till I come.’”* Occupy till I come. So here’s this group of former fishermen standing around – I guess they weren’t *all* fishermen, but they were going to be. But they were standing around and they were wondering, “Well, what are we going to do now?” He’s gone. There were so many questions. “What are we supposed to do?” You know, you read on in Acts, and immediately they had to start making decisions – right away! Who’s going to replace Judas? They had to decide that. Christ did help them. He guided them. But I’ll bet you that they wished that He was a lot more involved than He actually was, because they were left to do a lot of the day-to-day... – and to figure out for themselves. “Occupy till I come. I’m not going to occupy it for you till I come. *You* are going to have to occupy it.”

So, responsibility without micromanagement. How does that apply in the church today? Well, when the board says we need someone to set up a system so we can play music at church, and burn audio files, and show DVDs on a screen, then when somebody volunteers to build the computer to do that, the board does *not* need to stand over their shoulder, saying, “You really should plug this wire into that socket.” That’s not how it’s supposed to work. The board should say, “What do you need?” And then they need to authorize the expenditure, and then they need to let him do his work. Right Kelly? That’s how it works. And then afterwards – after all the hard work is done on their behalf – they all need to *appreciate* what he’s done. You know, he took on a responsibility, and the group needs to give him the autonomy to do that work. That’s where autonomy comes in here. If somebody volunteers to do a job, then we need to assess whether they can do it successfully – and we need to support them so they can be successful – and we need to give them some guidelines. They need to ask for input and make sure they’re doing what the board wants, but after all that is said and done, then everybody needs to get out of the way and let the person use their skills, their talent and their creativity to accomplish the task.

When we do that, all that talent gets kicked in there, and there’s a feeling of accomplishment, and experience, and also contribution – investing in the organization and in the people – and a sense of ownership because of investing. So that’s what we’re trying for.

I was listening to Ronald Dart talk – probably about a year ago – about the responsibility of a board in a non-profit organization. Now that’s something I never used to have to think about. But now I do. He was pointing out that a board is in place to make sure that the officers of the corporation spend the money the way the organization’s documents say it is supposed to be spent, and to do the things the organization says it is trying to

accomplish. They are *not* to control the day-to-day operations, or even how the organization goes about doing what it said it would do. They're kind of like the watch dogs for the federal government, actually – to make sure that things are done according to the law.

That's the same thing in a congregation. The board is supposed to make sure that the congregation runs accordingly. But they're supposed to let the people in the congregation do their work. As long as they're doing what the congregation is trying to accomplish, they should just let them do it – just like Jesus Christ did with the church – “Occupy till I come. You guys figure it out.”

So, if we want to encourage people to be more fully a part of the church, we have to take the *occupy till I come* approach. At the Feast last year, I peeked into an elementary-aged Bible class. And there was Heather in there with this class – all little boys – all elementary-aged boys. She had them building diaramas of the Feast of Tabernacles. And they were all empowered to use their talents, their imaginations, their ingenuity to create something. Of course, to do it, they also had to learn about the Feast so they'd have something to build – something to teach by their diarama they were making. And you could just see, by the looks on their faces and the atmosphere in the room, that they were all fully engaged. At the end of the Feast, all the diaramas were put on display in the main auditorium so everybody could learn from the work that they'd done and appreciate all of their efforts. I was watching this whole process and thinking, “So much better than studying a lesson.” They created the lesson. So they learned it better. My part in it was to realize that when you have a professional teacher, she's going to know what to do and you don't have to micromanage her. Just let her do what she does. That's how it's supposed to work.

Okay, let's talk about *mastery* next. That has to do with not only just learning to do something, but it means to be equipped. We include people in the decision making of the greater group. Then we give them autonomy to operate independently *in* the group on their own turf for the good of the group.

Now what if you're the kind of person that just can't do that? What if you always have to micromanage and snatch back what you've given to people when it isn't done just the way that you want. Well, then empowering leadership probably isn't your gift. And that means that you're probably not the kind of leader that's going to produce congregational health. So leave that to other people. There's other things that you're good at.

But if you give people responsibility to do something, then they either need to *have* the skills to do it or they need to *learn* them. And so that brings us to talking about mastery. In Ephesians 4, verse 11, it says:

Eph. 4:11 – *He – that's Christ – gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers for the equipping of the saints for the work of service to the building up of the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God to a mature man, the measure and the stature which belongs to the fullness of Christ.*

To cause people to become spiritually mature – which is the outcome of a healthy congregation – people must be equipped to use their spiritual gifts, and they must be empowered to use them. They must have the space – the autonomy – to do that. And they have to have something that they're good at to do. One of the roles of leadership in the church – and this is what the NCD people bring out so well – is to equip the members to do the work. It's not for the ministry to do the work all by themselves. It's that *everybody* is to be involved in it. It's not that the leadership does all the work, but they empower and equip others. *To prepare God's people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up.*

So how does a congregation equip people? You should start, I think, when people are very young to teach to them how to serve in the congregation. We've had people here involved since they were a very young age, doing all kinds of things. And we should start – when people are very young – to teach them how to serve in the community and to make that a value that's deeply held by the group. We should focus on helping people of all ages find their gifts and talents – to put them to use. We can mentor those people who are younger. I find that they come to us rather than us offering to help them. But we have to have the time to do it, and we have to make it available, and we have to be willing.

Another thing I think congregations need to think about is allocating money to spend on *training* people in their talents. You know, if you've got a thirteen-year-old that shows promise on the piano, get that girl some lessons. Or, if it's a guy, get him some training so that, maybe when he's older, he can be playing hymns at church. Who knows?

I was thinking about how expensive it is to go to Camp Outreach and how important it is for young people to learn that. Not only are they building networks, but they're also learning church growth skills – how to reach out to the community. So, because it's so expensive to go, they need to be supported in that. Congregations need to step up to support so that the kids in their groups can attend those kinds of activities.

So, once people are trained in areas that they're already good at and interested in, they now have a way to be a productive part of a group. That further increases a further sense of contribution and belonging that they have.

Did you notice how all these four things are all intertwined? You're actually helping the other three when you do any one of them. And it doesn't matter where you start. If you focus on one first, the other three are going to grow with it. Then when you start focusing on them, you find you're almost half way home. That, in itself, is proof that we're dealing with an interrelated set here of things that all have to go together. It also is proof to me that we're on the right track, because God has given us gifts so that we *can* contribute. He knows what's going to draw us in. And He knows that those gifts are going to make us feel a sense of inclusion and a sense of mastery. All that needs to happen is for the congregation to provide the autonomy.

The fourth one that I want to talk about is *purpose*. And that's where we start visioning. What is the overriding thing that the congregation is working toward? When we sit down to have our meetings, and talk about money and time, and how we're going to allocate it,

what are we trying to accomplish? What is the one overriding thing that we're working on? We'll get to that more when we talk about functional structures. But what is our job as a congregation? Well, it's to build a healthy congregation so that God can call disciples into it. If we think about the previous three aspects – we see inclusion, autonomy and mastery – are all pointed at this goal. It's all what it's about. You know, there's a scripture where it says that God equips us for every good work. So, people have been given spiritual gifts by God and we need to help people – we need to train people – how to find them, how to hone them, and how to use them in the congregation. The *congregation* needs to teach people those things. Then we need to give them the *freedom* to use those skills for the benefit of the congregation. We've talked a lot about that in other series, so we're not going to keep pounding it.

But when this happens, people start to feel a part of the team, because they've been invited in, made a part of it, included, and they have something to contribute. So that feeds that sense of altruism and purpose and meaning. So that *purpose* is what drives the group forward – bound together by a common purpose. The purpose is the will of God in the congregation. That visioning piece is where everybody sees the goal – where they all see what needs to happen. I think it is the role of leadership to cast that vision of what we need to be doing.

We talked about what leadership is. That could be as informal as a few unordained people sitting around having coffee and deciding to go help the freshmen college students move into the dorm on opening day. Or it could be the whole congregation taking the youth group to pack food boxes for Thanksgiving at the Food Bank. When we say “the leadership,” I don't necessarily mean the people that everybody thinks of as the leaders. But remember the definition of leadership is knowing the right thing to do and doing it. Anybody can step into those roles.

For years I did all kinds of things with kids designed to produce group cohesiveness. Mostly they were fun things. And fun is something that is important. But recently we started going to Camp Outreach. And that had a work project at the core of it. But I saw that that produced plenty of fun, because kids together are just going to find a way to do that – to find a way to have fun – but it also produced so much more. Most of the people who participated, really got connected to the spiritual purpose of the church. And that connection causes all kinds of growth in people.

There is one last thing that I wanted to mention before I concluded. There's one other thing that I think is really important for leadership. I'm going to call that *vacuum*. You know, when Jesus Christ ascended up into heaven – you could probably almost hear the sucking sound – there was a huge hole left where He was standing. That pulled the disciples into it. It pulled them into more leadership than they were ready for.

A lot of people don't feel ready for leadership, but they step into those roles when there's nobody else to do it – and only then – some of them. Sometimes we can do all the things we mentioned, and we can make people feel included by reaching out to them, and we can offer them skills training, and we can give them autonomy, but some people are just so used to being spiritually sedentary, and so used to having things done for them, and so

used to letting everything happen around them, instead of causing it to happen, that you can empower them until the cows come home, and they're still not going to *do* anything.

I know a minister, and he's a really nice guy, and his wife is also a really nice person. We went to church with them some time ago, and we noticed that the two of them brought ninety percent of the food for the potluck that their group had there. They brought *way* more than anybody else. A lot of people didn't bring anything because they just knew these people were going to bring all the food. And they did the music. And they did the speaking. They did almost everything in the group. And the people in the group appeared not to even notice that they were doing *nothing* except showing up and warming a chair. It was just the way it was. Everybody was happy with that. Of course, my thought was, "He and his wife are getting older, and we're wondering what's going to happen to all these people, who are so used to being taken care of, when their leader needs to be taken care of himself." Well, they're probably going to step into it. But he might have lived a lot longer if he'd let them do a little bit of it sooner, huh? You know, those people are not empowered. They're enabled. Their inactivity is being enabled by this well-meaning man and his wife. So they don't get to grow. They just get to sit.

It says that the ministry of the Church of God is to *equip* the saints for works of service – not to sit in a chair and let somebody else do it. Let's read 2 Timothy 2:19.

2 Tim. 2:19 – *Nevertheless, the firm foundation of God stands having this seal. The Lord knows those who are His, and let everyone who names the name of the Lord abstain from wickedness. Where are we going with this? Well, let's just keep reading. Now in a large house, there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and of earthenware – some to honor and some to dishonor. Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel of honor – sanctified, useful to the master, prepared for every good work. Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace with those who call on the Lord from a pure heart. But refuse foolish and ignorant speculations, knowing that they produce quarrels. And the Lord's bondservant must not be quarrelsome, but be kind to all, able to teach, patient when wronged, with gentleness correcting those who are in opposition, if perhaps God may grant them repentance, leading to the knowledge of the truth – and they may come to their senses and escape from the snare of the devil, having been held captive by him to do his will.*

So you see, Paul sees this vision of what the church can be. And he knows all about the fruits of the Spirit and how to use them. And he himself was a master at all four of these encouraging, motivating, empowering elements. But he also realistically knows that there are many ways to become sidetracked, or derailed, from the plan and the purpose of God. There's lots of talent in the Church of God and a lot of it is just sitting still because of distraction, or because of personal problems, or because of deep sins. Sometimes our own sins sideline us from these things. And sometimes our arrogant needs to be right send us off on doctrinal tangents. And sometimes we're so asleep at the switch that to talk about leading by serving seems unimportant, when it really is one of the most sacred values of God.