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PAUL AND HIS TEAM: WHAT THE EARLY CHURCH CAN TEACH US ABOUT LEADERSHIP AND INFLUENCE

*By Ryan Lokkesmoe
Chicago, IL: Moody Publishers (2017)
Kindle edition, 209 pages*

Reviewed by KELLY KESSINGER

Ryan Lokkesmoe brings a fresh voice to the well-covered topic of Christian leadership. Packed with Biblical references, this work helps the reader to understand leadership principles from the New Testament that may often seem “obscured by the historical gap between their world and ours” (loc. 18). With a Ph.D. in the New Testament but writing from the perspective of a pastor and church planter, Lokkesmoe investigates the apostle Paul’s influence in the first-century Christian church and makes applications to today’s leaders and influencers, those in official ministry positions as well as lay leaders. In addition to examining Paul’s influence, Lokkesmoe takes a look at the lesser-known influencers of the early church, the behind the scenes members of Paul’s ministry team such as Erastus, Priscilla, Aquila, Phoebe, Apphia, Archippus, and others.

Paul and his ministry team faced challenges similar to those faced by Christian influencers today. It is *how* Paul addressed those challenges that are the focus of this book. Lokkesmoe examines such issues as leading when the message does not seem to be received, empowering behind the scenes leaders, conflict management and reconciliation, speaking truth to power in addressing social injustice, relationality, and mentoring. One of

the basic tenets of Paul’s ministry and what made him so successful was his ability to seek and find common ground as he traveled and spoke with people from various backgrounds and cultures. His pastoral heart was effective not only in evangelism but also in his ability to influence converts who would soon become his team of Christian workers. It is the emphasis on this radical grace that gives impact to Lokkesmoe’s work. It is grace that, though modeled by Christ, seems to be hard for church leaders to grasp today, a barrier the author seeks to break in this volume.

Another key concept addressed in this book is striving for and restoring peace in a ministerial context. In the New Testament epistles, Paul writes extensively to the churches about relationships within the church, the threat of schisms, and the importance of Christian unity. Paul even goes so far as to attempt reconciliation between an escaped slave and his owner, ultimately suggesting to the slave owner (Philemon) that he should no longer view Onesimus as a slave, but as his brother in Christ (loc. 126). In America today, there is no shortage of social rifts for the Christian influencer to address. Lokkesmoe suggests that Christian leaders “collectively apply our influence to the arduous task of smashing cultural barriers and building bridges of reconciliation” (loc. 130). Though it can often be uncomfortable, removing cultural barriers and upsetting the status quo were hallmarks of Jesus’ ministry on earth, and are features of Christian influence that should not be ignored.

A characteristic of Paul’s ministry, arguably as important as his ability to find common ground, was his skill in “relational stewardship” (loc. 133). Lokkesmoe points out that we easily skim over the parts in Paul’s letters in

which he mentions his partners in ministry because to us they are just names that carry very little meaning in the twenty-first century. He draws the reader's attention to instances in which members of Paul's ministry team are mentioned by name along with the positions they filled in the early church. We see from the sheer volume of Paul's "bragging" on his team and his appreciation for their ministry that he had a gift in making people feel "visible and valued" (loc. 133). The ability to maintain and nurture relationships is vital in leadership. Lokkesmoe asserts that this can be done through simply letting your team know that they are special by publically recognizing their accomplishments, telling their ministry success stories in "church services, on blogs, on social media, and in newsletters" (loc. 145).

In each chapter, the author presents the Biblical background of the leadership principle being addressed, follows that with a section entitled, "What this means for us today," and wraps up with questions for discussion and reflection. The format of this book works well for group study, as team members can come together regularly to discuss insights relevant to their particular leadership setting. I would recommend this book for leadership teams as well as individuals. Lokkesmoe does the background work of uncovering the context and significance of Paul and his ministry team's Christian influence, makes applications to our modern context, and presents the reader with questions for further contemplation. This book provides valuable insights into the influence of the apostle Paul and his team, and shows today's Christian influencer what "humility, self-sacrifice and radical grace" can do (loc. 19).

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DARE TO SERVE: HOW TO DRIVE SUPERIOR RESULTS BY SERVING OTHERS

*By Cheryl Bachelder
Oakland, CA: Berret-Koehler
Publisher, (2015)
Paperback, 216 pages*

Reviewed by LLOYD JACOTT

Cheryl Bachelder introduces the message of this book with a simple, yet unconventional line: "If you move yourself out of the spotlight and dare to serve others, you will deliver superior performance results." The two parts of this work chronicle the gripping narrative of an unprecedented turnaround engineered by Cheryl Bachelder, who attests to the astounding results that come with a bold ambition to serve. She joined Popeyes Louisiana Kitchen as CEO in 2007 at a time when the organization was experiencing multiple symptoms of decline in the midst of the fried-chicken restaurant chain's business nosedive. Relations between corporate leaders and franchise owners were strained; the brand was stagnant, sales were declining, and the company stock value had plummeted from 34 in 2002 to 13.

After careful assessment of their struggling enterprise, Bachelder and her executive team unanimously embraced servant leadership in an unconventional effort to restore profitability. They made an intentional decision to lead differently, which meant prioritizing service to franchisees, focusing on game-changing problems, investing their resources, and measuring progress. They placed a high premium on valuing the people they served, both internally as well as customers of the organization. Consequently, by 2015, profits