

JOHN  
MACARTHUR  
CALLED TO  
LEAD

[ 2 6 ] LEADERSHIP  
LESSONS FROM THE LIFE OF  
THE APOSTLE PAUL



A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

JOHN MACARTHUR

Unleashing God's Truth, One Verse at a Time®

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## Chapter Two

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# TAKING THE INITIATIVE



## Appendix

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# TWENTY-SIX CHARACTERISTICS OF A TRUE LEADER

1. A LEADER IS TRUSTWORTHY.
2. A LEADER TAKES THE INITIATIVE.
3. A LEADER USES GOOD JUDGMENT.
4. A LEADER SPEAKS WITH AUTHORITY.
5. A LEADER STRENGTHENS OTHERS.
6. A LEADER IS OPTIMISTIC AND ENTHUSIASTIC.
7. A LEADER NEVER COMPROMISES THE ABSOLUTES.
8. A LEADER FOCUSES ON OBJECTIVES, NOT OBSTACLES.
9. A LEADER EMPOWERS BY EXAMPLE.
10. A LEADER CULTIVATES LOYALTY.
11. A LEADER HAS EMPATHY FOR OTHERS.
12. A LEADER KEEPS A CLEAR CONSCIENCE.
13. A LEADER IS DEFINITE AND DECISIVE.
14. A LEADER KNOWS WHEN TO CHANGE HIS MIND.
15. A LEADER DOES NOT ABUSE HIS AUTHORITY.
16. A LEADER DOESN'T ABDICATE HIS ROLE IN THE FACE OF OPPOSITION.
17. A LEADER IS SURE OF HIS CALLING.
18. A LEADER KNOWS HIS OWN LIMITATIONS.
19. A LEADER IS RESILIENT.
20. A LEADER IS PASSIONATE.
21. A LEADER IS COURAGEOUS.
22. A LEADER IS DISCERNING.
23. A LEADER IS DISCIPLINED.
24. A LEADER IS ENERGETIC.
25. A LEADER KNOWS HOW TO DELEGATE.
26. A LEADER IS CHRISTLIKE.

# STUDY GUIDE

## CHAPTER 1: EARNING TRUST

“How does a leader build trust? When people are convinced you will do everything in your power for their good and nothing for their harm, they’ll trust you.”

1. Though a prisoner aboard ship, Paul’s natural gift of leadership served to influence those around him. Though enemies, they trusted him. Paul proved himself worthy of their trust. How does 1 Peter 2:11–12 say Christians should act in the midst of a “hostile crew”?
2. Paul is a model of leadership—a natural leader holding great influence over those who surrounded him. But leadership isn’t about natural ability. It’s about character. What does Romans 5:3–5 tell us about building character?
3. Integrity and reputation go hand in hand. What value does Solomon place on a good reputation, according to Proverbs 22:1 and Ecclesiastes 7:1?
4. In order to earn trust, leaders must show themselves to be people of integrity—respectable, intelligent, and virtuous. When your own life and ministry are marked by these characteristics, what words are assigned to you in Psalm 11:7 and Psalm 32:11?
5. What are the promises you can claim as your own when you live an upright life, according to Psalm 37:18, Psalm 37:37, Psalm 112:2, Psalm 125:4, and Psalm 140:13?

## CHAPTER 2: TAKING THE INITIATIVE

“Give me one great, careful, thoughtful, analytical, wise leader over the majority anytime.”

1. An effective leader needs more than charisma and clever words. Solomon knew this more than any other leader. What was his heart’s desire, according to 1 Kings 3:5–9? In what ways do his desires mirror your own as you lead?
2. What was the psalmist’s prayer in Psalm 119:66? For what specific situations do you need to pray these same words?
3. John MacArthur writes, “[Nehemiah] was sincere and believable. His enthusiasm was infectious. His optimism was contagious. They caught the vision.” How can you emulate Nehemiah and inspire enthusiasm in the hearts of those you lead?
4. Good leaders have foresight—they chart a path and plan ahead. What do Proverbs 15:22, 19:21, 20:18, and 21:5 have to say about the plans that come naturally to you?
5. As we seek wisdom in taking the initiative to lead, what truth does Proverbs 16:9 remind us to consider?

## CHAPTER 3: TAKING COURAGE

“As a true leader, Paul saw beyond the temporary circumstances and fixed his hope on the promise of triumph. And he drew courage and confidence from that. Such optimism was contagious.”

1. Leaders inspire confidence, but confidence can be misplaced. What kind of person is unworthy of confidence, according to Proverbs 25:19? What can we safely place our confidence in, according to 1 John 2:28 and 5:14?
2. As a leader, Paul exuded authority. His commanding air spoke of boldness and conviction. What was his prayer, according to Philippians 1:20? According to 2 Corinthians 3:12, what is our source of boldness?
3. When Paul confronted the Corinthian church, his purpose was not to chide, but to cheer up. “A real leader’s aim is to make everyone around him better. He makes them stronger, more effective, and more motivated.” How does Paul describe the two-fold ministry of Timothy in 1 Thessalonians 3:2? What is the balance between these two aspects in your own leading?
4. When Jesus walked the earth, He amazed the masses because He spoke with such authority. Where does all true authority come from, according to Romans 13:1?
5. John MacArthur writes, “The amazing authority with which Paul spoke was an unshakable authority derived from his absolute certainty that God’s Word was true and His promises were trustworthy.” What happens when you, in your position of authority, lead with courage and integrity, according to Proverbs 29:2?

## CHAPTER 4: TAKING CHARGE

“The real leader is the one who can handle the stress. He is the one who can solve the problems, bear the burdens, find the solutions, and win the victories when everyone else is merely flustered, confounded, and perplexed.”

1. Paul’s composure in the face of an imminent shipwreck was a mark of his ability to lead. In the midst of a crisis, he was the only one with a clue what to do. What does Paul invite us to do, according to Philippians 3:17, effectively making himself a mentor for generations of leaders to come?
2. Paul took charge and became an example to all those who are called to be leaders. What does he tell us about the pattern he set in 1 Timothy 1:16, 2 Timothy 1:13, and Titus 2:7?
3. Leaders set an example for those who follow after them. In what areas does Paul encourage you to shine as an example for others, according to 1 Timothy 4:12?
4. Even before Paul and Timothy rose up as leaders, the Lord set an example for all those who would follow after. What do John 13:15 and 1 Peter 2:21 urge you to do?
5. A leader focuses on objectives, not obstacles. What does Philippians 3:12–14 have to teach us about keeping our eyes clearly fixed forward? How can this perspective help you to overcome the obstacles in your own path?



## CHAPTER 5: A LEADER'S DEVOTION TO HIS PEOPLE

“The wise leader cultivates loyalty by being loyal—loyal to the Lord, loyal to the truth, and loyal to the people he leads.”

1. “What do we mean by loyalty? Authentic loyalty is not blind devotion to a mere man. It is, first of all, an allegiance to truth and duty.” God Himself sets the standard for true loyalty and faithfulness. What do 2 Timothy 2:13, 1 Thessalonians 5:24, and 2 Thessalonians 3:3 tell us about our Heavenly Father?
2. “Leadership is all about motivating people to follow. Therefore everything in leadership hinges on the leader’s relationship to his people.” Scripture often compares the relationship of a leader and his people to that of a shepherd with his flock. What are the sure signs that your own shepherding is of the “good” variety, according to Isaiah 40:11, Ezekiel 34:12, and John 10:11?
3. “Leadership hinges on trust, and trust is cultivated by loyalty.” How can you inspire loyalty in those who follow you, according to John 10:14 and 1 Peter 5:2–4?
4. When you consider the call to leaders given in Acts 20:28, how does that change your perspective and encourage you to lead differently?
5. Leadership is ultimately about people, not just sterile objectives and strategies that can be written on paper. That means caring—loving. Who are the people that come to mind when love and leadership are described so practically in Romans 12:10–15?

## CHAPTER 6: PAUL DEFENDS HIS SINCERITY

“Good leaders must be able to make decisions in a way that is clear-headed, proactive, and conclusive. They must also be able to communicate objectives in a way that is articulate, emphatic, and distinct. After all, a leader is someone who leads.”

1. Paul’s leadership was marked by clear convictions. There was no vacillating in his life. How does Paul describe his surety in 2 Timothy 1:12?
2. Those who vacillate cannot be relied upon by others. How is such a life described in James 1:6–8? In what areas of your life do you crave greater consistency?
3. Far better is the steadfast life—consistent, straightforward, sincere. How do 1 Corinthians 15:58, Colossians 1:21–23, and Hebrews 3:14 urge you on to a steadfast life?
4. Paul backed up his words with a life that was dependable and wholly in harmony with what he taught. What is the clear message of Romans 2:13 and James 1:22 in this regard?
5. Paul’s words were always plain, honest, forthright, unflinching, and nonevasive—just like the apostle himself. That inspired confidence in those he taught. We too must walk worthy of the message we bring. What do Ephesians 4:1–2, Colossians 1:10, and 1 Thessalonians 2:12 have to say on this score?

## CHAPTER 7: “WHO IS SUFFICIENT FOR THESE THINGS?”

“Such confidence is a great and necessary strength in leadership—to be so secure in your giftedness, so emphatic about your calling that no trial, however severe, could ever make you question your life’s work. Effective leadership depends on that kind of resoluteness, courage, boldness, and determination.”

1. Paul was being attacked on several fronts: his character, his influence, his calling, and his humility. But Paul was sure of his calling. He knew He’d been chosen by God despite his limitations. What do 1 Corinthians 1:27–28 and James 2:5 teach us about those God chooses?
2. “Paul was certain of his calling. That is why he refused to abdicate his leadership to the false teachers. His calling was a stewardship received from God.” What can you be assured of in your own calling to lead, according to Romans 11:29 and 2 Timothy 1:9?
3. Although Paul was supremely confident of his calling and quite sure of his own giftedness, he also remembered where those gifts had come from, and he knew they were not from within himself. The source of his adequacy was God. What is Paul’s prayer for the called in 2 Thessalonians 1:11?
4. “Paul was a flesh-and-blood, living, walking testimony. His credentials as a leader were written in the lives of the Corinthians themselves. The influence of his ministry on their lives was ample proof of the legitimacy and the effectiveness of his leadership.” Chosen, called, and appointed to the task of leading. What does Paul share about his appointed place in the Corinthians’ lives in 2 Corinthians 10:13? What is your place in the lives of those you lead?
5. In Revelation 17:14, what three terms are used to describe those who are with Jesus? Does knowing this affect your own goals and aspirations for living and leading?

## CHAPTER 8: A LEADER MADE OF CLAY

“No true leader can boast of having attained his position merely because of superior talents, physical attributes, communication skills, or whatever. If God did not use homely, ordinary clay pots, there wouldn’t be any spiritual leaders at all, because there aren’t any people who aren’t beset with blemishes and human weaknesses.”

1. Paul’s detractors worked to undermine his reputation, forcing him to refute false accusations and “boast” of his position as an apostle. But Paul’s words were not true boasting. It was, quite frankly, a matter of constant amazement to Paul himself that he was ever called to leadership to begin with. How does 1 Timothy 1:12–13 explain this astonishment?
2. Paul’s attitude echoed that of the psalmist: “My soul shall make its boast in the Lord” (Ps. 34:2 NKJV). What were the things Paul deemed worthy of boasting, according to 2 Corinthians 12:9 and Galatians 6:14?
3. We are vessels—just clay pots. How does the Lord refer to Paul in Acts 9:15?
4. Paul was well aware of all the imperfections in his life, but his weaknesses were not an obstacle to leading. He said they equipped him. By using common, ordinary clay pots, God puts His glory on display in bold relief. How can this be true in your own leading, according to 2 Corinthians 12:9–10?
5. Our weakness doesn’t prove fatal to the cause of truth. In fact, it is advantageous, because it gets us out of the way and lets the power of God do the work. How does 2 Corinthians 4:7 shift your mindset concerning any obstacles and weaknesses you are currently struggling with?

## CHAPTER 9: THE LEADER'S WARFARE

“Spiritual warfare is all about demolishing evil lies with the truth. Use the authority of God’s Word and the power of the gospel to give people the truth. That is what will pull down the fortresses of falsehood. That is the real nature of spiritual warfare.”

1. Leaders must harness their passions rather than be harnessed by them. Zeal must be focused, carefully governed, and used for godly purpose. What does Paul say must be done with these passions in Galatians 5:24?
2. How is this idea further explained in Colossians 3:5?
3. Solomon knew the wisdom of self-control. How do Proverbs 16:32 and Proverbs 25:28 describe people who have learned not to be ruled by their appetites?
4. Being misrepresented, slandered, reviled, persecuted, and wrongfully accused is an inevitable part of being a Christian. We must expect to suffer unjustly, for it is a part of the spiritual battle we are in. Paul uses the language of warfare in his letters. What terms do we find in 1 Timothy 1:18, 1 Thessalonians 5:8, and 2 Timothy 2:3? Does knowing you’re in a battle change your attitude toward living and leading?
5. Paul knew the real battle was not merely against the human false teachers who had confused the Corinthians. It was nothing less than full-scale war against the kingdom of darkness. How is our fight described in 2 Corinthians 10:3?

## CHAPTER 10: HOW NOT TO BE DISQUALIFIED

“Self-control is absolutely vital to lasting success in any endeavor of life. Many people do attain a degree of prominence on the strength of sheer natural talent alone. But the real, influential leaders are the ones who devote themselves to personal discipline and make the most of their gifts.”

1. Perhaps the greatest pitfall for those in positions of leadership comes in the form of personal discipline. To explain this idea, Paul compares believers to athletes and our Christian life to a race. What imagery does Paul use in Philippians 2:16 and 2 Timothy 2:5?
2. The price of victory is discipline. That means self-control, sacrifice, and hard work. It's a lifelong commitment for all who would lead. What does Paul say about his own “race” in Philippians 3:12?
3. Discipline has to become a passion. It isn't merely a question of doing whatever is mandatory and avoiding whatever is prohibited. It involves voluntary self-denial. What have you willingly laid aside in order to better lead? How does Paul describe those who compete for an imperishable crown in 1 Corinthians 9:25?
4. What is another analogy Paul uses in describing our struggle against our own sinfulness, as found in Romans 6:19?
5. If we want to finish the race set before us, careful, relentless self-discipline is required. What does Paul urge us to do in 1 Timothy 4:7? And what should we be willing to sacrifice to reach the finish line, according to Acts 20:24?

## CHAPTER 11: WHO IS FIT TO LEAD?

“A person whose Christian testimony is free from the taint of scandal—someone who is upright, sound in character, and without any serious moral blemish. Simply put, it means leaders must have a reputation for unimpeachable integrity.”

1. When it comes to fitness for leadership, purity, not personality, is the key issue. Those who wish to lead must be found blameless. What do Philippians 2:15 and 1 Thessalonians 5:23 have to say on this subject?
2. What are we urged to do in 2 Peter 3:14?
3. In the New Testament church, team leadership was the norm. Invariably, there would be those, like Paul, who would have more influence in their role. This is just the natural expression of his God-given gifts and abilities. What do we learn about the diversity of spiritual gifts in Romans 12:6, 1 Corinthians 12:4, and 1 Corinthians 14:12? How is this diversity expressed in your own leadership team?
4. All people are differently equipped, but from this diversity God crafts the unity that is the Church. How does Paul describe our place in the Body of Christ in Romans 12:4 and 1 Corinthians 12:18?
5. It is God’s plan that those who lead and those who follow be found working together. How does Ephesians 4:16 describe this unique unity? How can you help foster this kind of unity with those who lead with you and those who follow your lead?

## CHAPTER 12: THE MEASURE OF A LEADER'S SUCCESS

“Paul measured his own success as a leader, as an apostle, and as a Christian by a single criterion: He had ‘kept the faith’—meaning both that he had remained faithful to Christ and that he had kept the message of Christ’s gospel intact, just as he had received it.”

1. Paul’s legacy in leadership is one of faithfulness. What did he thank God for in 1 Timothy 1:12?
2. The measure of success we seek is very different from that of the world. Like Paul, we must seek to be counted faithful by the Lord. Where does this legacy of faithfulness often find its start, according to Luke 16:10?
3. How is your legacy of faithfulness extended, according to 2 Timothy 2:2?
4. Paul was able to lead with confidence because he kept his eyes clearly fixed on the goal. The end was always in his sights. What do Romans 6:22 and 1 Peter 1:9 say is waiting for us at the end? And what do Matthew 24:13, Hebrews 3:6, and Hebrews 6:11 encourage us to do as we move toward that end?
5. Was Paul a failure as a leader? Not in the least. He had kept the faith. He had fought a good fight. He had finished his course with joy. That was his legacy in this life, and through eternity. What words can we be sure he’ll be hearing from the mouth of his Lord, as found in Matthew 25:21?