

International Journal of Culture and Religious Studies

(IJCRS)

Paul's Church Leadership Style a Road Map for
Christian Leaders in Nigeria



Paul's Church Leadership Style a Road Map for Christian Leaders in Nigeria

 Faith Nkem Okobia Ph.D.

Lecturer, Department of Religion and Human Relations, University of Delta, Nigeria

<https://orcid.org/0009-0000-3167-7389>

Abstract

Purpose: This study examined Paul's Church Leadership style a road map for Christian leaders in Nigeria, and a careful study on how Christian leaders in Nigeria lead in order to point out their weaknesses and guide them to make the future better by avoiding their mistakes by imitating Paul and Jesus Christ.

Methodology: Historical method was used which enabled the researcher to trace the genesis of bad leadership to when emphasis was shifted from holiness to materialism and lack of fear of God. Primary and Secondary data collections were used such as observation, interview, books and journals.

Findings: The book of Acts and the 13 books written by Paul in the New Testament provided an outstanding example of a leader with great faith, zeal, and perseverance in the face of opposition. Paul demonstrated the qualities of a good leader by fulfilling his ministry, evangelizing the Gentile world, and preaching sound doctrine. He developed by mentoring his successors and delegated responsibility to them for them to develop their potentials

Unique Contribution to Theory, Practice and Policy: Christian leaders should lead like Paul by constantly imitating Christ, and they should allow the Holy Spirit to guide them to avoid mistakes. They should also train their successors and ensure they are called by God before taking leadership positions. This study had also exposed the weaknesses of bad leaders for them to change to avoid conflict in the church and for their members not to go astray.

Keywords: *Paul, Church leadership, Christian leaders*

Introduction

Church leadership is leading under a leader Jesus Christ and a call to serve others under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Every Christian leader should act like Paul and let the Holy Spirit lead them to do the right thing. Paul was a great leader, faithful to God and dedicated to God's work. Paul followed in the footsteps of Jesus and asked his disciples to follow him as he had followed Christ, while some church leaders took the lead for their own benefit. Paul preached to people, converted them with the help of the Holy Spirit, and taught them to fear God, devote themselves to his work, and live faithfully. Okwuolise (2018) states that leadership is characterized by a willingness to sacrifice in difficult times. Paul made many sacrifices to further God's work that some pastors did not. Bad leadership is the church's greatest challenge, bringing pain, distrust and stagnation to the church. Therefore, Nigerian church leaders should emulate and improve on Paul's leadership style.

Statement of the Problem

Bad governance caused by not following the footsteps of Jesus and Paul has brought anarchy, lack of good human relations and division in some churches in Nigeria. This study intends to curb these challenges by checking the excesses of the Christian leaders to avoid further damages to the churches and the body of Christ in general.

Methodology

Historical method was used because historical method usually identify past events to explain current events and predict the future. The historical approach allowed the researcher to trace the causes of internal church conflict and poor church management that have led to various upheavals. Using leadership theory, this work addresses two areas of data collection: primary and secondary sources. Primary sources included observations and interviews, and secondary sources included books, periodicals, and the Bible. The sources above were used because they inform the populace of this type of work.

The Conceptual Framework

Paul

Okwuolise (2018) states that Paul was also known as Saul. Both names mean "asked from God". The name Saul was of Hebrew origin, whereas the name Paul was of Roman Hellenistic origin. Paul was born in Tarsus, the capital of Cilicia. His parents were Pharisees and he was proud of his country (Acts 21:39; 23:6). He was from the tribe of Benjamin. And was named after the first king of Israel Saul, the first hero of their tribe. (1 Samuel 11:15; Acts 13:12). This religious background led to his knowledge of the Torah, the prophets, Aramaic and Hebrew. Okwuolise (2018) states that Paul knew Greek, the mother tongue of the Tarsians. He went to school in Jerusalem under a Pharisee rabbi named Gamaliel. Paul was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). He was true to his Palestinian blood and a true Jew at heart. The knowledge acquired by Paul made him to be a good preacher and a good Christian leader who did exploit for God. Paul was a tent maker and a weaver. His mastery of the famous art of goat's hair cloth weaving called cilicum and of

making tents in the prosperous city of Tarsus gave him financial independence which made to preach the gospel without fear or favour to people in power and others.

Church

Okobia (2021) defines the church as a community of followers of the Lord Jesus Christ. It represents a larger part of the society to which it is called to show the love of God, as evidenced by the death of Jesus. The church is a body of Christian believers that originated in the Old Testament and was consummated in the New Testament on the day of Pentecost.

Leader

Hornby (2020) defines a leader as someone who leads a group of people, particularly the president of a country or organization, both politically and spiritually. Leaders have certain desirable qualities, such as intelligence, strength, and a sense of purpose. Leaders are always at the forefront, making decisions and taking responsibility. Musanzi(2019) pointed out that leadership is the process of influencing the activities and behaviors of individuals or groups in a specific situation to achieve a set goal.

Leadership

Nimitz (2020) defines leadership as the quality of a leader that gives subordinates enough trust to accept his opinion and follow his order. It is the art of influencing and leading others in order to gain their trust, support, respect and cooperation in achieving a goal. Norish(2019) defines leadership as an individual's ability to influence others. It is the ability to bring men and women together to achieve a common goal. Egwuyenga (2019) argues that leadership is the process of coordinating the activities of individuals in a social system, often aimed at achieving these organizational goals. Leadership is the interaction between people and things to achieve a set goal.

According to Udechukwu (2019), leadership is the initiation and maintenance of a structure that includes an individual's ability to lead, plan, and organize action in a situation. Leadership is a dynamic interaction between the leader's goals and the followers' needs. He also noted that leadership can have a positive or negative impact on followers in all areas of life, such as behavior, satisfaction, emotions and team productivity.

Christian

Adeloye(2020) defines a Christian as a follower of Christ who believes and practices His teachings. They were first called Christians in Antioch because they acted like Christ (Acts 11:26). A Christian means little Christ, because the viewer sees in him the attitude of Christ Jesus, the founder of Christianity. Christians today must walk like Christ.

Christian Leaders

According to Adeloye (2020), Christian leaders are those called and trained by God to proclaim the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ: apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, and teachers (Ephesians 4:11). These leaders have the power to influence people to believe in Christ and

accept His teachings. These are honest people who can change people's lives for the better through their preaching and action.

Church Leadership

Derek (2019) The job of church leadership is the process of managing church affairs to achieve church stated goals. Church leaders learn to follow Jesus who leads leaders. In Mark 10:42-45, Jesus told his disciples that the rulers of the Gentiles govern the people, and whoever wants to be great among his disciples must serve, just as he served his disciples well and gave his life as a ransom for many. Thus, church leadership is a call to serve others under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

Theories of Leadership

Therefore, the theories of leadership according to Okokoyo (2009) are: Trait Theory, Situational Approach and Behavioral Theory.

Trait Theory

Thomas Carlyle initiated this theory in the mid 1800s and stated that leaders are born with key characteristics which refer to the fact that leadership qualities such as high level of intelligence, fitness, creativity, and eloquence are hereditary. Thus, some people are born leaders, while others acquire leadership traits through training and experience. Trait theory is also known as Great man theory of leadership which suggests that some natural behaviors give someone an advantage in a position of leadership. Traits influence our behaviours, a Christian leader born with leadership traits will lead well by yielding to the Holy Spirit direction and carry his members along.

Situational Approach

Okokoyo (2019) states that someone's response in a given situation determines their status as a leader, and a leader must have certain characteristics similar to those of the people to stand out. Dr. Paul Hersey and Dr. Ken Blanchard founded this theory in 1969 as life cycle theory of leadership. The situational leadership is a way to guide leaders to more effective leadership, based on situations and people.

Behavioral Theories

Peretomode (2018) asserts that the behavioural theory of leadership is that warm relationships between leaders and their subordinates improve their performance by participating in policy making and decision making. John B. Watson was the founder of the behavioral theory; he was an influential American psychologist whose work occurred during the early 20th century at John Hopkins University. He categorized leadership behaviours into different styles based on two dimensions such as concern for people and concern for production. It shows the connection between behaviour, reward and punishment. It also evaluates leaders according to the actions they display in the work place.

Leadership Styles

Leaders use different leadership styles in different situations, and the styles affect the achievement of goals. Leadership styles according to Okokoyo (2019) include:

Authoritarian Leadership: This leadership style forces subordinates to adopt the autocratic leader's policies and programs. He exercises complete control over all matters of management. Workers are not consulted on matters affecting their welfare and the working environment is not conducive to them. This style has caused conflict and division in the church. **Democratic Leadership:** Democratic leadership is the rule of the people through elected representatives. It combines power and organization and is the government of the people, by the people because everyone participates in the management of the organization, respecting individual human rights and promoting self-realization, so that people can be the best they can be and everyone will be happy. This style enhances growth in the church. **Laissez Faire Leadership:** Peretomode (2018) states that the leader lacks initiative and self-confidence because he does not control his subordinates, they do what they want. They come and go as they please, without rules or regulations and without controls affecting the quantity and quality of production. **Charismatic Leadership:** Egwugenga (2019) states that a charismatic leader has the potential for eloquent speech, good personality traits that help to seek the welfare of the group and wields great influence over his followers. He was born to govern because leadership is innate. Therefore, leaders get different results when they lead their subordinates in different ways.

Paul's Conversion and Call

Carienton (2019) avails that Christians generally believe that only a divine call can bring people into ministry, because sometimes only divine grace can help a minister last in ministry. God's call comes in three ways. A direct call from God can be heard, through a trance, a dream or a revelation; a congregational calling, in which case a person's gifts and talents are recognized and such a person is encouraged to accept divine responsibilities in the church; there is a talent for self-realization that leads to ministry.

Robert (2021) notes that after Stephen's death, many Jewish Christians fled to Damascus, 140 miles from Jerusalem, because of persecution. Since Paul knew that the fugitive Christians were fleeing to Damascus, he received a letter from the high priest which allowed him to arrest the Christians there and bring them back to Jerusalem. As Saul approached Damascus on his journey, suddenly a light from heaven flashed around him. He fell to the ground and heard a voice say to him: Why do you persecute me? Saul asked, "Who are you lord?" The voice answered: I am Jesus whom you are persecuting; it is hard for you to kick against the stone. Get up and enter the city. I will tell you what to do (Acts 9:4-6). Those who were with him stood in a daze, hearing a voice but not seeing anyone. Saul got up from the ground and opened his eyes, but he saw nothing. So they led him by the hand.

Ejenobo (2018) avails that when Paul was converted, he found peace and began to do God's will. Jews regarded him as a traitor, and Christians initially rejected him because of his past actions.

He also claims that Paul's conversion led him to accept Jesus as the Messiah and to understand that God included the Gentiles in his plan of redemption through Jesus' death and resurrection.

Lightfoot (2017) posits that the Lord sent Ananias to pray for Saul to see again. He prayed for him and he regained his sight. He got up and was baptized and after eating, his power was restored. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus and began to preach in the synagogue that Jesus is the Son of God. (Acts 9:10-22) Paul immediately knew that the Lord Jesus had called him to serve and to do his work. He became an evangelist from a persecutor. Paul's long inner struggle came to an end and he had peace. Paul never again did what he thought was right, but set out to do the will of the Lord Jesus Christ. Paul became a traitor to the Jews and he was not recognized by believers at first. Paul's conversion solved two problems that plagued him. Firstly, the acceptance of Jesus as the Messiah and Lord. Secondly, it showed him the Gentiles place in the plan of salvation. (Ejenobo 2018)

Qualities of a Leader

According to Derek (2019), the four main qualities of a leader are:

1. Intelligence And Strength.

There are times when only a leader can make the right decisions and take action, but a leader should try to offload day-to-day administrative tasks from his own shoulder to others whenever possible. Fear of criticism should not prevent leaders from making the right decisions.

2. Elements of Vitality And Zeal:

Paul's teaching (Romans 12:11) to remain zealous and to maintain a spiritual zeal for serving the Lord is important to all Christians, especially leaders. They have to carry people along and don't do everything themselves but rely on the involvement and help of others to get things done.

3. Willingness To Take Responsibility For Leading Others.

Many leaders avoid this responsibility because they do not want to take full responsibility.

4. The Ability To Communicate Your Vision To Others And Work With Them To Achieve It.

Leaders will discover a willingness to collaborate and develop steadily by realizing that they must work with clear goals to achieve and communicate them to the people they work with. People are always happy to be on board and inspire others.

Kenneth (2018) argues that a leader's conscience should be nurtured by truth and honesty, discipline, stewardship and accountability. These are the basic qualities of a leader. Leaders must be transparent. He set an example by instilling courtesy and discipline in his followers, because people with good behavior earn the respect of their followers. Leaders must be honest and foresighted. He must plan well, lead his followers, and use a variety of leadership styles. Therefore, he should be democratic, not authoritarian. He must be resourceful and kind, and lead by

persuasion, not force. He should be approachable and receptive to advice. He must be witty and wise.

According to Erivwo (2018), leaders need to know more than the people they lead for their leadership to be effective and respected. A good leader never says "go and do it". He always say let's go and do it. He must be kind and able to make decisions. He should be responsible and encouraging, lead by example and not wait for others to do things. A good leader must have common sense. He may make mistakes, but he must not allow them to be repeated. A good leader is as loyal as his followers are to him. Leaders must say and do the right thing at the right time.

Spiritual leadership does not depend on these basic qualities only because everyone needs them. Decisions regarding the selection of a spiritual leader are ultimately determined by several factors. In addition to the qualities discussed above, a Christian or church leader should have the following qualities according to John (2018).

- i. He must be filled with the Holy Spirit to live a holy life and lead his followers in a way pleasing to God.
- ii. Leaders must be called by God to be prepared to fulfill their leadership duties.
- iii. A Christian leader must consider himself to be in subsection of God, acting in a way that pleases him and doing what he directs. In other words, Christian leaders see themselves as conscious followers of another leader, the Lord Jesus Christ.
- iv. He should allow the Holy Spirit to use him for the good of the church.

Paul was a good leader and he told Timothy to follow him because he knew he was doing the right thing (Philippians 4:9).

Garvie (2018) avails that Paul considered himself as a servant. Christian leaders must be servants. No one will deny that the Lord Jesus Christ is the ideal and perfect leader. However, his spirit and attitude were very different from what we usually think of as a leader. He took on the nature of a servant, and we are commanded to do the same (Philippians 2:6-7). He washed the feet of his disciples and said that by doing this to these leaders under training, he had set an example of leadership (John 13:15). A Christian leader should always be a teacher. As seen in his letters to Timothy and Titus, Paul spent much of his time teaching his people. "Entrust to someone you trust who can teach you what you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses " (1 Timothy 2:2).

Stalker (2019) states that Paul was a sympathetic, warm and gentle man with whom he developed great friendships. He was a very effective preacher and people always listened to him. He was a theologian who formulated the doctrines of the Church under the guidance of the Holy Spirit. He had a rare tact in dealing with men. He was a born leader, ready to take responsibility and made decisions quickly. He was a tireless worker and fearless in the face of difficulties. Paul solved many problems. One of the main areas of his ministry was problem solving. Most of his

prison correspondence was directed to the churches. In his letter to the Galatians, Paul had to deal with important issues of law and liberty and defend his apostleship against Jewish Christians. In his letter to the Corinthians, Paul addressed the problem of factionalism because there were divisions in the church (1 Corinthians 1:10-13; 3:4-5). Various political parties were formed among the church members. So he wrote to them and urged them not to quarrel, to avoid division and to unite. He also answered questions asked by the Corinthians, about marriage (1 Corinthians 7), food sacrificed to idols (1 Cor. 8:1-13), and women covering themselves in public worship (1 Cor. 11:1-6). Paul wrote a letter to the Colossians to defend the church, warning them against heresy.

Hosteller (2019) argues that Paul solved the problem by uniting Onesimus and Philemon as brothers rather than slave and master. He counseled Timothy about his strengths and weaknesses. After Timothy was ordained (1 Tim. 4:14; 2 Tim. 1:6), he remained under Paul's leadership. Paul especially treated Timothy as father treats his son, through Paul's advice, courage, and admonition, Timothy overcame his weakness and became a successful pastor. Paul taught and advised Titus, training him to be a good preacher. Titus rose to the highest position under the guidance of Paul and the Holy Spirit working through him. His success as a pastor depended entirely on the foundation, Paul laid for him as Paul became his father, teacher, and counselor (Galatians 2:1).

Greeson (2018) posits that Paul was a loyal leader. In spite of illness, adversity, torture, imprisonment, and all sorts of criticism, he remained firm in his faith and faithful to the end. He also exhorted Christians to be faithful in all things (2 Timothy 1:11-12; 4:7-8). One of the greatest Christian virtues Paul had was patience. He endured everything under any circumstance because he felt God's grace was sufficient for him (2 Cor. 12:7-9; 2 Cor. 11:24-28). Hosteller (2019) claims that Paul did not see Jesus himself, but the numerous allusions he made to Jesus indicated that he did read about Jesus' presence on earth. He told the audience the meaning of Jesus' death, that God offered Jesus as a sacrifice for sins (Romans 3:25), and that His shed blood brought forgiveness, justification, and reconciliation (Ephesians 2:13).

Gerard (2018) posits that Paul's letters clearly showed his pastoral concern. He had a pastoral ministry in churches different from those he established. Paul was a missionary with two goals: to lead people to Christ and to maintain a good relationship with them.

Campbell (2020) called him a theologian, entrepreneur, visionary, evangelist of the highest level, scholar, missionary, church planter, soul winner, and saint. He was a bold man who preached the gospel to those in power in his time.

Kenneth (2018) states that he was a man of great faith, a man of prayer, and full of the Word of God. He was kind to people like Barnabas, Silas, Timothy, Luke, Titus, and his new converts. He was not afraid to stand up for the truth before friends like Peter and Barnabas (Galatians 2:11-15 and Acts 15:36-40).

Jones (2017) avails that Paul was a spiritual genius who wrote 13 letters, planted 12 churches, and evangelized the Gentile world. Without Paul, Christianity would have become a set in Judaism. Despite the opposition and persecution of the Jews, he still did not admit defeat and persistently pursued his goal. He lived a life pleasing to God and suffered a lot for the sake of the gospel.

Leadership in the Nigerian Church

Leaders must be called by God to be qualified to carry out the duties of a leader.

Ideal Church Leadership

According to M. Asiwe (personal communication March 27, 2022), ideal leadership was a gathering of pastors, elders, deacons, boards of directors, church secretaries, and Sunday school teachers. They meet monthly to discuss how the church will operate in the future and the general welfare of the parishioners. The church held monthly or quarterly business meetings to update members on the progress of the church. The priest gave everyone a chance to voice their opinions, and the house decided what to do. But sometimes he had to make decisions about important things.

E. Alike (personal communication October 6, 2022) said that leadership in the church was carried out by the pastor, board of directors, council of ministers, elders, deacons, and departmental heads (e.g., Sunday school director and prayer leader). Once in a month to discuss some important issues affecting the church. The church hold quarterly family meetings with all the members to discuss the progress of the church and keep them informed of the progress of the church. Branch pastors and departmental heads reported problems and progress to the senior pastor and elders of the session's executive committee. They discussed these matters and made final decisions, which were communicated to the church at church family meetings. The senior Pastor sometimes took important decisions even if the church members were not in support. They also conducted workers training to develop their potential and talents.

He further said that some priests were autocratic leaders who do not carry their members along but expect them to obey them regardless of their feelings and opinions. In most cases, they told their members that if they were not ready to obey, they should leave the churches, because they were not there when God called them to open the church. Thus, they led as they liked without allowing the Holy Spirit to control and check their excesses. They extort money from their members, teach false doctrines and preach messages that served their own interests and lead their members away from the path of righteousness.

Conclusion

The book of Acts and the 13 books written by Paul in the New Testament provided an outstanding example of a leader with great faith, zeal, and perseverance in the face of opposition. Paul demonstrated the qualities of a good leader by fulfilling his ministry, evangelizing the Gentile world, and preaching sound doctrine. He developed by mentoring his successors and delegated responsibility to them for them to develop their potentials

Recommendation

Christian leaders should develop and lead people like Paul without compromise. They should set good goals for their subordinates and colleagues. They should be passionate about their ministry, mobilize and motivate people to lighten their work and cover enough grounds. They should delegate responsibilities to people according to their skills and talents. They should live according to the Word of God and always do what is right. They should avoid extortion of money from their members and work with their hands as Paul worked with his hands by making tents. They should allow the Holy Spirit to guide them in whatever they do to avoid making mistakes. They should make sacrifices when necessary. They should allow the Holy Spirit to restrain their excesses. They must train up their successors to avoid wrong people taking up leadership positions in their churches after their demise.

The contribution of this study to knowledge is that, the weaknesses of some Christian leaders in Nigeria have been exposed for upcoming Christian leaders to avoid them and follow the footsteps of Jesus, Paul and the leading of the Holy Spirit. Also, it will encourage Christians not to be discouraged or backslide because of their leader's behaviour because everyone shall be judged according to his or her deeds.

References

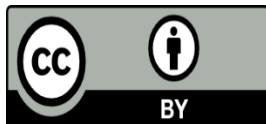
- Adeloe A.B. (2020). *The Rival fire*. Ibadan: Major.
- Derek, P. (2019). *A Christian Guide to Leadership for the Whole Church*. New York: Webster.
- Egwunyenga E. J (2019). *Essentials of School Administration*. Benin City, Justice Jeco.
- Garvie, H. G. (2018). *The Studies of Paul and His Gospel*. London: Hawthorne.
- Greeson, J. (2018). *The Pastor and the Preacher*. Great Britain: Highland Books.
- Hornby A.S. (2020). *Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary Oxford*. Oxford University
- Hosteller M. (2017). *We Knew Paul*. Ontario: Herald.
- John, H. A. (2021). *Reforming Pastoral Ministry*. England: Crossway Books.
- Lightfoot J.B. (2019). *The Apostolic Fathers*. London: Wania.
- Nimitz .C.T. (2020). *Leadership model for organization*. Lagos: Blossom
- Norish B.C. (2019). *Leaders Challenge*. Ikeja: Book house
- Okobia, F. N. (2021). The Role of the Church in Stamping out Indecent Dressing in Nigeria. In the Journal of Religious and Cultural Practice: 6 (1) p. 1.

Okokoyo I. E (2019). *Essentials of Educational Administration, Planning and Supervision*. Agbor: Krisbec.

Robert, S.N. (2021). *Epochs in the Life of Paul*. Michigan: Zondervan.

Stalker A. (2019). *The Life of Paul*. London: Lion.

Udechukwu B.C. (2019). *The Good Leadership Styles*. Nairobi: Book Store



©2024 by the Authors. This Article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>)