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THE EPISTLE TO THE EPHESIANS: INSTILLING VALUES USING SITUATIONAL LEADERSHIP

GORDON R. MIDDLETON

Values lie at the heart of leadership, and the infusion of values to followers remains an important, and sometimes, difficult challenge. The apostle Paul wrote the Epistle to the Ephesians to instill particular values within the recipient Christian fellowships. In so doing, his letter exhibits insightful assessment of his audience and demonstrates the use of situational leadership in attempting to instill the values he felt were important. Paul adapted his approaches to leading followers according to the readiness level of the followers. He tailored his communication style to the characteristics of his audiences in a way very consistent with the Situational Leadership Model of Hersey and Blanchard.¹ Ephesians provides an excellent example from the first century of a leader assessing his followers and adjusting his leadership style to fit their readiness as followers. These results provide encouragement to religious and secular leaders today to follow his approach in achieving effective communications.

I: Approach

Values lie at the heart of leadership² and the infusion of values to followers remains an important, and sometimes, difficult challenge. Situational leadership, as

¹ Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996).

² Bruce Winston, *Be a Leader for God's Sake* (Virginia Beach, VA: School of Leadership Studies, 2002). The Beatitudes are examined in detail to illustrate effective values in leadership.

originated by Fiedler³ and developed by Hersey and Blanchard,⁴ emphasizes the necessity of matching leadership behaviors, including communications, to the readiness level of followers to perform task behaviors.⁵ Thus, matching leadership behaviors and follower readiness was formulated as a leadership approach with the objective of achieving more effective influence over others toward the accomplishment of shared objectives.

This paper analyzes the text of Ephesians as the basis for identifying the consistency of his approach with situational leadership concepts. This analysis begins with an introduction to the developmental background and concept of situational leadership. This is followed by an analysis of the major arguments in Ephesians, as identified in the *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. The analysis identifies perceptions of the readiness of the recipients to implement Paul's values through analysis of the epistle's linguistic structure and content. The analysis also identifies Paul's leadership style in attempting to influence their behaviors toward these values and compares them to the inferred follower readiness levels. The working hypothesis is that the apostle tailored his leadership style to suit the follower readiness level of his audience.

Authorship of the Epistle and its Audience

This analysis takes the majority position that Paul authored the Epistle to the Ephesians. Most present-day writers align with Ussher's proposition that the epistle was a circular letter to the churches in Asia or Phrygia, including the church in Ephesus.⁶ This rests on the absence of the *en Epheso* in the *Codex Sinaiticus*, *Codex Vaticanus*, and other early copies of the epistle.⁷ That the epistle may have initially been sent to Ephesus is one explanation for its current title.

Ephesians is historically rooted in the apostle's imprisonment in Rome. His objective was to instill particular values—enduring beliefs about ends and means⁸—within the recipient Christian fellowships. Although Paul wrote the Epistle from a prison cell, his letters exhibit insightful assessment of his audiences and reflects his intimate knowledge of the church in Ephesus. He had visited the region on his second missionary journey⁹ and spent two years preaching and teaching in Ephesus on his third missionary journey.¹⁰

³ Fred E. Fiedler, *A Theory of Leadership Effectiveness* (New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1967).

⁴ Michael Hackman and Craig Johnson, *Leadership—A Communication Perspective* (Long Grove, IL: Waveland Press, 2004), 74-76.

⁵ *Situational Leadership Model* (Escondido, CA: Center for Leadership Studies, 2005).

⁶ International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia 1996, www.biblesoft.com/ (accessed December 1, 2006).

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Milton Rokeach, *Understanding Human Values: Individual and Societal* (New York: Macmillan Publishing, Co., 1979), 15-17.

⁹ Acts 18:19-21.

¹⁰ Acts 19:8-10; 20:31.

Situational Leadership

In the latter 1800s and early 1900s, the traits approach that had been dominant to that time became less accepted as an explanation of leadership behavior. As a result, many researchers began to pursue other lines of study. One of those is the so-called “situational approach” to leadership, sometimes referred to as the contingency theory of leadership.

Fiedler led initial development of the notion that the effectiveness of alternative leadership styles might depend on significant elements of the situation.¹¹ These situational elements may include the task, the followers, other organizational and environmental factors, as well as the leader.¹² Yukl has characterized nine different contingency theories and the many situational factors addressed by the variety of theories.¹³

For example, the situational approach would highlight distinctions between an effective leadership style for a metropolitan hospital versus that for a high-tech software development team. The varying circumstances between the two situations, including task and relational structure, superior-subordinate interactions, the motivation of followers, or numerous other factors, would be indicators for distinctive leadership approaches.¹⁴

Blanchard and Hersey popularized four characteristic situational leadership styles (see Figure 1). Various combinations of supportive relational and directive task behavior yield the directing style (Telling or S1), coaching style (Selling or S2), supporting style (Participating or S3), and follower-led style (Delegating or S4).

- S1. Telling leaders define the roles and tasks of the “follower” and supervise, guide, and direct them closely. The leader makes the decisions and communication is almost entirely from the leader to the followers.
- S2. Selling leaders still define, explain, and persuade followers of their roles and tasks, but seek ideas and suggestions from the follower. Decisions remain the leader’s prerogative, but communication is much more two-way than in S1.
- S3. Participating leaders pass day-to-day decisions, such as task allocation and processes, to the follower. The leader encourages, facilitates, and takes part in problem solving and decisions, but control is with the follower.
- S4. Delegating leaders are still involved in decisions and problem solving, but control of individual tasks is with the follower. The leader is focused on monitoring and observing. Followers influence when and how the leader will be involved.¹⁵

¹¹ Daniel A. Wren, *The Evolution of Management Thought* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1994), 385-386.

¹² Hackman and Johnson, *Leadership—A Communication Perspective*, 63-74.

¹³ Gary Yukl, “Managerial Leadership: A Review of Theory and Research,” *Journal of Management* 15, no. 2 (1989): 251-289.

¹⁴ Paul Hersey and Kenneth H. Blanchard, *Management of Organizational Behavior: Utilizing Human Resources* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1996), 171.

¹⁵ Chimaera Consulting, *Famous Models: Situational Leadership* 1999, www.chimaeraconsulting.com/sitleader.htm (accessed March 26, 2005), 2.

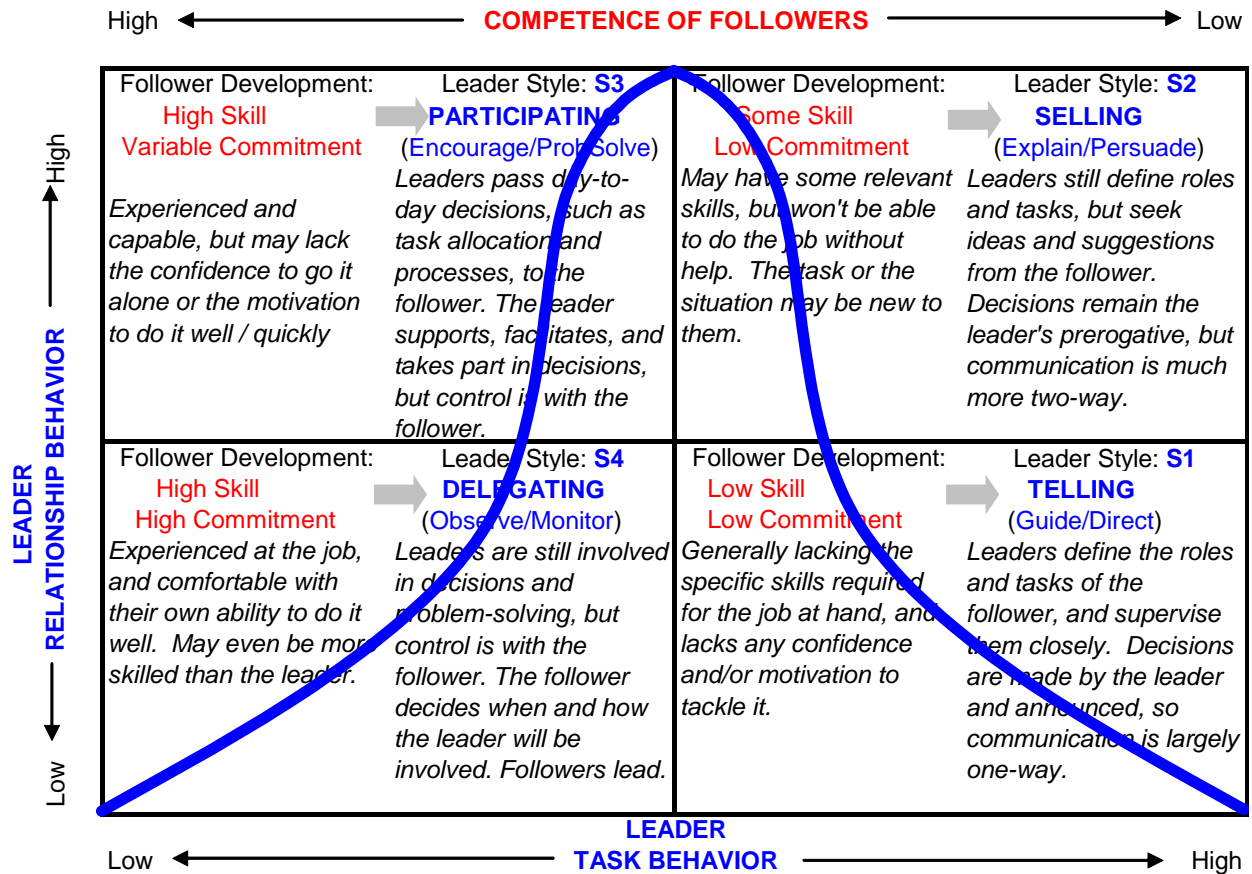


Figure 1. Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory (adapted from Hackman and Johnson; Chimaera).

Readiness of Followers

Simmons developed an interrogatory approach to identify the readiness of followers to exhibit task behavior.¹⁶ Figure 2 contains an adaptation of Simmons' approach for purposes of this analysis, which links the output of his interrogative criteria of follower readiness to the directive-supportive framework of Blanchard and Hersey. Simmons' interrogatory approach progresses through a series of four questions, focused on determining the ability and commitment of followers. This includes whether the follower has the necessary skills (readiness level R1), depth of experience with those skills (R2), confidence in implementing those advanced skills (R3), and willingness to apply them (R4) in a specific task context.

¹⁶ Thomas Simmons, *Situational Leadership Seminar* (Regent University School of Leadership Studies, Virginia Beach, VA, September 22, 2005).

- S5. The Situational Leadership Model predicts that leadership approaches need to be adapted to the readiness level of followers to maximize the likelihood of organizational success. This predicts that effective leaders will reflect in their leadership style the skill level and commitment to the task or organization of the followers. At the same time, the longer term approach of successful leaders will also incorporate elements to move followers to higher levels of readiness and more independent relationship behavior.¹⁷

II: Analytic Approach

The framework for this analysis is based on the Situational Leadership Model of Hersey and Blanchard. Their model is combined with Simmons' hierarchy for identifying commitment or readiness levels in followers (see Figure 2). The background and recipients of the Epistle to the Ephesians are also brought into the discussion as part of the contextual fabric against which Ephesians must be read and understood. The writer's assessment of follower readiness of his readers and associated leadership style in Ephesians is contrasted in selected points with that used in the companion Epistle to the Philippians.

Analysis

Sixteen major themes have been identified in Ephesians.¹⁸ Figures 3A and 3B identify these sixteen major themes, indicating the follower readiness that may be inferred from the descriptive language of these portions, and specifying the leadership style contained in each of these passages. This narrative analysis follows that outline, explicating six of these sixteen portions, including

1. Ephesians 1:3-10: Hymn of praise to God.
2. Ephesians 1:16-21: Prayer that they may know their destiny and the power of God to fulfill it.
3. Ephesians 1:22-2:10: Summary of what God has done in Christ.
4. Ephesians 4:7-16: The different gifts that have been given to the Christians.
5. Ephesians 4:17-24: The spiritual darkness of the old Gentile life compared to their new life.
6. Ephesians 4:25-6:9: Individual and social relations in the church.

¹⁷ Ibid.

¹⁸ *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*.

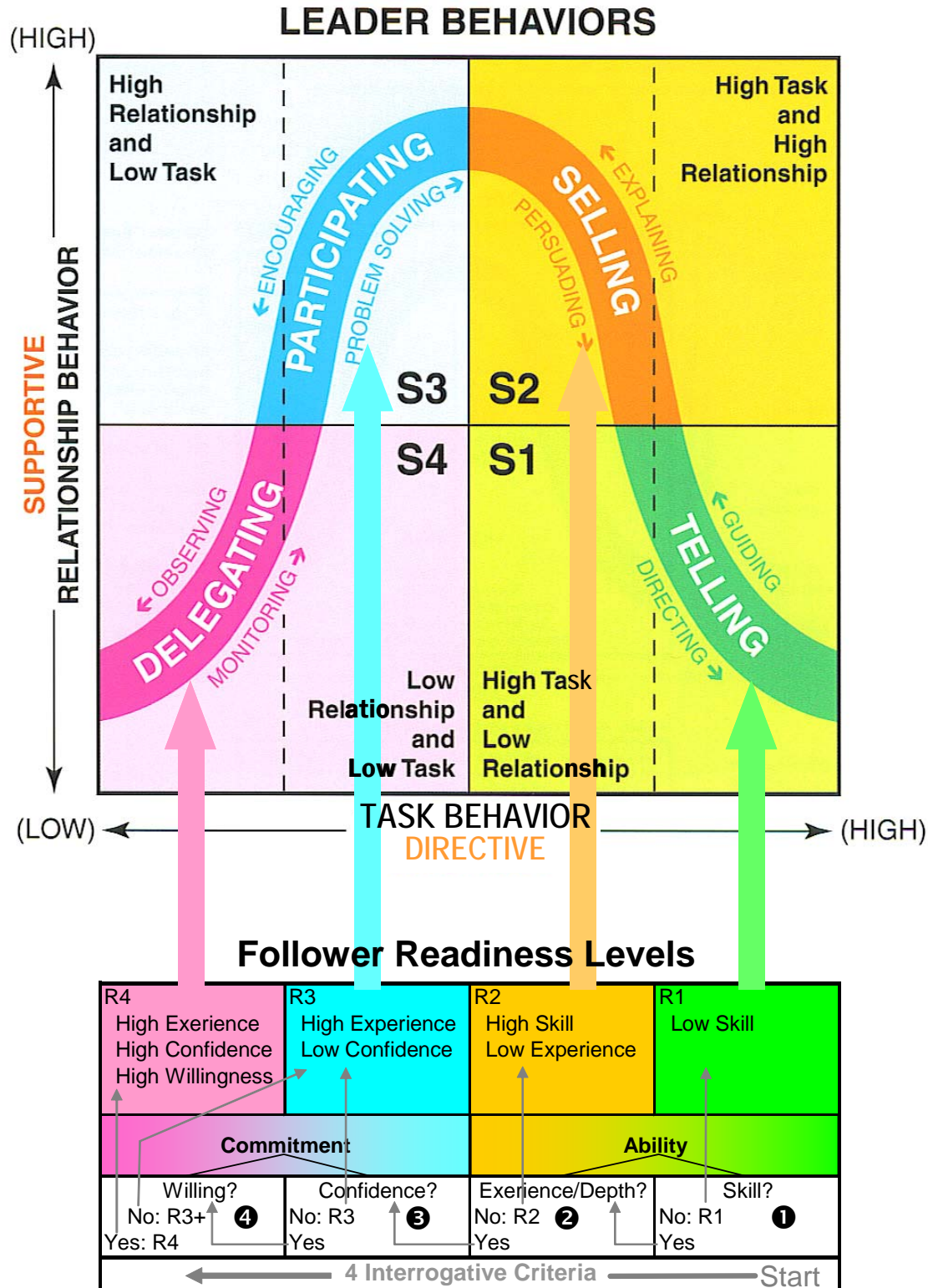


Figure 2. Hersey and Blanchard's situational leadership theory linked to Simmons' interrogative criteria for follower readiness (adapted from Hackman and Johnson; Simmons).

Ephesians 1:3-10: Hymn of praise to God

This early section in Ephesians uses terminology typified by “given grace,” “redeemed,” “forgiven,” and “knowledge of God’s purpose.” The Protestant theology associated with these terms and concepts do not permit any relationship between the plan of redemption to the skills, depth of experience with those skills, or confidence in implementing those skills, nor with the willingness to apply those skills on the part of the recipients of grace.

In fact, Luther’s views on predestination would support that an individual’s redemption “depend(s) on the divine appointment; whereby it was foreordained who should receive the word of life.”¹⁹ That Luther’s views rested on the “uncompromising doctrine of God’s Sovereignty” is held by Cunningham and Mattson, and in this regard it reflects the earlier, Augustinian view. The apostle’s readers were chosen to be holy, “not because (God) foresaw they would be holy, but because he determined to make them so.”²⁰ Therefore, in follower readiness terms, they may be judged to qualify for high skill due to their “sanctification, as well as their salvation” resting on “the counsels of divine love.”²¹

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God’s grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment—to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.²²

As a result, we may answer “yes” to the first question in Simmons’ interrogatory criteria. But as nothing is apparent to address their depth of experience (the second interrogative criteria), their confidence in their abilities (the third interrogative criteria), nor their willingness to implement specific actions or tasks on their own (the fourth interrogative criteria), their follower readiness may be assessed to be R2 high skill/low experience. For best effect, this readiness level is associated with an S2 leadership style, but what style does the author use?

Inspection of this passage reveals the apostle does use an S2 Selling style of communication with his audience. His narrative in this section is very strongly in the explaining mode, which may be thought of as high selling. (See the arrows in Figure 2

¹⁹ Brian G. Mattson, *Double Or Nothing: Martin Luther’s Doctrine of Predestination* 1997, www.contra-mundum.org/essays/mattson/Luther-predestination.pdf (accessed December 1, 2006), 1.

²⁰ Matthew Henry, *Commentary on the Whole Bible: New Modern Edition*, Electronic Database (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, Inc., 1991).

²¹ Ibid.

²² Eph. 1:3-10.

associated with S2 leader behavior.) Elements of persuading (low selling) may be detected, as well, as Paul was clearly attempting to convince his readers with his arguments. His language reveals his explanatory style. He goes to some lengths to explain that

- It is God the Father “who has blessed us in the heavenly realms.”²³
- The Father did so “For he chose us in him.”²⁴
- The result is that “In him we have redemption.”²⁵
- As to why the Father did this, “He has made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure.”²⁶
- His purposes are to “bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ.”²⁷

In this passage, the apostle uses an S2 selling leadership style (explaining and persuading), which is commensurate with his listeners’ R2 level of readiness. He does not overly emphasize the low S2 persuading communication style. Rather, he emphasizes using a high S2 explaining communication style.

Ephesians 1:16-21: Prayer that they may know their destiny and the power of God to fulfill it

This second section in Ephesians uses terminology that focuses on the apostle’s desire that his readers “May know him (‘the glorious Father’) better.”²⁸ Here, as before, we may answer “yes” to the first question in Simmons’ follower readiness interrogatory criteria, as his language is sufficient to support the conclusion that his readers already “know the Father.” This follows from the same logic used in the first theme.

I have not stopped giving thanks for you, remembering you in my prayers. I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better. I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparably great power for us who believe. That power is like the working of his mighty strength, which he exerted in Christ when he raised him from the dead and seated him at his right hand in the heavenly realms, far above all rule and authority, power and dominion, and every title that can be given, not only in the present age but also in the one to come.²⁹

However, with regard to the second interrogative criteria, it is clear that his strong desire is for his audience to obtain a depth of experience in the Father that is beyond

²³ Eph. 1:3.

²⁴ Eph. 1:4.

²⁵ Eph. 1:7.

²⁶ Eph. 1:9.

²⁷ Eph. 1:9-10.

²⁸ Eph. 1:17.

²⁹ Eph. 1:16-21.

their current state. In Ephesians 1:17, he uses “know him *better*” (*apokalupseos*)³⁰ This figurative language is suggestive of the baptismal rite of the Early Church, as initiates were baptized after removing all their clothes. Metaphorical “putting off” and “putting on” appears again later in this epistle³¹ and symbolizes the transformation of conversion.³²

Beyond this desire that they know God better, though, the author remains silent in this section regarding the confidence of the readers (the third interrogative criteria) and their willingness to implement specific actions on their own (the fourth interrogative criteria).

In contrast with Ephesians 1:3-10, the follower readiness in Ephesians 1:16-21 is at least R2 high skill/low experience, with the author using language to encourage his listeners to move further to an R3 state. Such a readiness level is associated with an S2 moving to an S3 leadership style. Does Paul’s leadership style measure up with that suggested by the Situational Leadership Model?

Yes, in this passage the apostle shifts into an S3 participating leadership style. He goes beyond merely selling his readers on the idea or explaining or persuading that they need to “know Him better.” He moves into a problem-solving mode by personally interceding in prayer on their behalf³³ and participates in the problem solving. What solution does he suggest? He prays that they would attain “wisdom and revelation” leading to “knowing Him better”³⁴ and prays that their “hearts would be enlightened” so they will know his “hope, riches, and power.”³⁵

In this passage, the apostle uses an S3 participating leadership style to encourage his readers to move beyond their current R2 level of readiness. His style is a blend of low S3 problem solving and high S3 encouraging communication.

³⁰ *Thayer’s Greek Lexicon* 2000, www.biblesoft.com/ (accessed December 1, 2006). *Apokalupseos* is described as “a laying bare, making naked, a disclosure of truth.”

³¹ Eph. 4:22-24.

³² Wayne A. Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1983), 150-157.

³³ Eph. 1:16-17.

³⁴ Eph. 1:17b.

³⁵ Eph. 1:18-21.

Readiness					Leader Communication Style				
Willing	Confident	Experience /Depth	Skill/ Ability	Delegating - Observing - Monitoring S4	Participating - Encouraging - Prob Solving S3	Selling - Explaining - Persuading S2	Telling - Guiding - Directing S1		
Eph 1:1-2: Greeting.			The faithful			By the; from			
Eph 1:3-10: Hymn of praise to God for the manifestation of His purpose for men in Christ Jesus, chosen from the beginning to a holy life in love, predestined to adoption as sons through Jesus Christ, in whom as the Beloved He has given us grace (1:3-6).			Given grace, redeemed, forgiven, knowledge of God's purpose			Who has; for he; in him we have; he made known; which he purposed			
Eph 1:11-14: For this Israel has served as a preparation, and to this the Gentiles are come, sealed unto salvation by the Holy Spirit of power.			Chosen, predestined		We were chosen	In order that; you also were included; having believed; who is			
Eph 1:15-16 a: Thanksgiving for their faith.			Faith, love		Thankfulness for them				
Eph 1:16 b-21: Prayer that they may, by the spirit of wisdom and revelation, know their destiny and the power of God to fulfill it.		May know him better				Enlightened... brings know- ledge of the hope, riches, power			
Eph 1:22-2:10: Summary of what God has done in Christ. Christ's sovereignty (1:22-23), and headship in the church (1:22-23); His work for men, quickening us from a death of sin into which man has sunk, and exalting us to fellowship with Christ by His grace, who has created us for good works as part of His eternal purpose (2:1-10).			Positional description of believers			God placed; you were; all of us; but because; And God; for it is by; and we are...			
Eph 2:11-13: The contrast between the former estate of the Gentiles, as strangers and aliens, and their present one, brought near by the blood of Christ.			You are; You were; but now			Formerly; remember; but now			
Eph 2:14-18: Christ, who is our peace, uniting Jew and Gentile and reconciling man to God through the cross; by whom we all have access to the Father.			Reconciled..w/ access			He himself is; by abolishing; his purpose was to; For through him			
Major Arguments: International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Biblosoft Electronic Database, 1996.									
Detailed analysis appears in the body of the paper.				Current state of follower readiness		Observed Leadership Style			
				Desired level of follower readiness					

Figure 3A. Major arguments in Ephesians—indications of follower readiness and leadership style.

Readiness					Leader Communication Style				
Willing	Confident	Experience /Depth	Skill/ Ability	Delegating - Observing - Monitoring S4	Participating - Encouraging - Prob Solving S3	Selling - Explaining - Persuading S2	Telling - Guiding - Directing S1		
Eph 2:19-22: This is theirs who as fellow-citizens of the saints, built up on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, become a sanctuary of God in the Spirit.			Joined... being built			Consequently...			
Eph 3: A digression on the "mystery," i.e. the revelation to Paul, together with a prayer that men may grasp it. The "mystery" is that all men, Jews and Gentiles, are partakers of the promise. Paul is given the stewardship of that mystery (3:1-13). Prayer they may live up to their opportunities (3:14-19). Doxology (3:20-21).		Grasp love...fulness of God				This mystery is that; His intent was; For this reason;			
Eph 4:1-6: The outcome of this privilege, the fulfillment of the Divine purpose, must show itself in unity of life in the Christian fellowship.		Worthy life; humble; unified			I urge you; be; make				
Eph 4:7-16: The different gifts which the Christians have are for the upbuilding of the church into that perfect unity which is found in Christ.		Gave some to be; no longer infants; grows in love...work				It was he; that is why; then; instead			
Eph 4:17-24: The spiritual darkness and corruption of the old gentile life set over against the enlightenment and purity and holiness of the new life in Christ.			Heard; taught; made new			They are; you however	You must no longer; do not; put off; put on		
Eph 4:25-6:9: Special features of the Christian life, arising out of the union of Christians with Christ and making for the fellowship in the church. On the side of the individual: sins in word (4:25-30); of temper (4:31-32); self-sacrifice as opposed to self-indulgence (5:1-8); the contrast of the present and the past repeated			Members of one body, once in darkness, now in the light			For this reason; just as Christ; as if you were serving the Lord	You must; do not; be imitators; always; submit; each must love; obey; honor; do not		
Eph 6:19-20: The Christian warfare, its foes and armor and weapons.			Pray that		Pray for me	So that			
Eph 6:21-24: Conclusion.			So you know			Will tell you...purpose			
Major Arguments: International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia, Biblosoft Electronic Database, 1996.					Observed Leadership Style				
Detailed analysis appears in the body of the paper.					Current state of follower readiness				
					Desired level of follower readiness				

Figure 3B. Major arguments in Ephesians—indications of follower readiness and leadership style.

Ephesians 1:22-2:10: Summary of what God has done in Christ

This third section in Ephesians uses terminology to describe the position of believers. This includes Christ's sovereignty³⁶ and headship in the church³⁷ and his work for men, quickening us from death due to sin into which man has sunk and exalting man to fellowship with Christ who has created us for good works as part of His eternal purpose.³⁸

And God placed all things under his feet and appointed him to be head over everything for the church, which is his body, the fullness of him who fills everything in every way.³⁹

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our sinful nature¹ and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature objects of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions—it is by grace you have been saved. And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus, in order that in the coming ages he might show the incomparable riches of his grace, expressed in his kindness to us in Christ Jesus. For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.⁴⁰

For the same reasons as with our initial analysis, we may answer “yes” to the first question in Simmons' interrogatory criteria. Similarly, nothing is apparent to address the second, third, or fourth interrogative criteria regarding their follower readiness from this passage. Therefore, this passage supports a high skill/low experience follower readiness level of R2. Does the apostle revert to an S2 leadership style or continue with the S3 style?

The apostle does revert to a selling leadership style in this section. He explains,

- The authority God gave to Christ, including over the church.⁴¹
- The previous condition of his audience and the reason for it.⁴²
- The universality of this circumstance.⁴³
- The role of God's love in the redemption plan.⁴⁴

³⁶ Eph. 1:22-23.

³⁷ Eph. 1:22-23.

³⁸ Eph. 2:1-10.

³⁹ Eph. 1:22-23.

⁴⁰ Eph. 2:1-10.

⁴¹ Eph. 1:22-23.

⁴² Eph. 2:1-2.

⁴³ Eph. 2:3.

⁴⁴ Eph. 2:4.

- The benefits Christ shares with them.⁴⁵
- The role of grace and works by his readers and by Christ.⁴⁶

This passage supports an R2 level of readiness on the part of his readers, and the apostle uses a corresponding S2 selling leadership style. It is not overtly oriented to persuading, but it is a high S2 explaining communication style.

Ephesians 4:7-16: The different gifts that have been given to the Christians

This portion in Ephesians addresses the different gifts that the Christians have been given for the edification of the church into the perfect unity, which is to be found in Christ. Here, the author uses terminology that is focused on “attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”⁴⁷

But to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. This is why it says: “When he ascended on high, he led captives in his train and gave gifts to men.” (What does “he ascended” mean except that he also descended to the lower, earthly regions? He who descended is the very one who ascended higher than all the heavens, in order to fill the whole universe.) It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of men in their deceitful scheming. Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head, that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.⁴⁸

Again, this text supports answering “yes” to the first question in Simmons’ follower readiness interrogatory criteria as he describes the provision of these spiritual offices and gifts as an existing fact and uses the past tense for the provision, while using a participle to characterize the effect. He “gave” (*édookēn* v. 11) for the perfecting (*katartismón*, or complete furnishing, making them perfectly joined together).⁴⁹

At the same time, this passage does not credit his readers with great experience or depth of understanding in these matters. He projects such completeness to some future time. (“Then we will no longer be infants”).⁵⁰ The spiritual roles are not universally

⁴⁵ Eph. 2:5.

⁴⁶ Eph. 2:6-10.

⁴⁷ Eph. 4:13.

⁴⁸ Eph. 4:7-16.

⁴⁹ *Strong’s Numbers and New Exhaustive Concordance with Expanded Greek-Hebrew Dictionary*, 1994, www.biblesoft.com/ (accessed December 1, 2006).

⁵⁰ Eph. 4:14.

given (“given to some”),⁵¹ and he contrasts their current state of skill with their future maturity. (“Instead . . . we will in all things grow up.”)⁵² It remains a goal for their work to be fully coordinated (“held together”)⁵³ and reflect the contributions of all those in the Church (“as each part does its work”).⁵⁴ This passage also supports a high skill/low experience” follower readiness level of R2.

Consistent with the follower readiness R2 in this section, the apostle provides details, clarifies, provides reasons, and describes relationships to his readers. He uses an S2 selling leadership style as he explains

- The role of Christ in the provision of grace.⁵⁵
- Christ’s function in allocating roles within the church.⁵⁶
- The designed outcome for the body of Christ of these roles of service.⁵⁷

This passage supports an R2 level of readiness on the part of his readers, and the apostle uses a corresponding S2 selling leadership style in the relationship with his readers. His emphasis is not explicitly to persuade, influence, or convince his readers—a low S2 persuading style. Rather it is a high S2 explaining communication style.

Ephesians 4:17-24: The spiritual darkness of the old Gentile life compared to their new life

This portion in Ephesians addresses the spiritual darkness and corruption of the old Gentile life as opposed to the enlightenment, purity, and holiness of the new life in Christ. Here, the author uses terminology that centers on “no longer (living) as the Gentiles.”⁵⁸ This segment supports answering “yes” to the first question in Simmons’ follower readiness interrogatory criteria. The apostle asserts his readers “know Christ”⁵⁹ and “were taught . . . truth . . . in Jesus”⁶⁰ so they have an entry level of ability. However, they have not fully matured or attained a depth of experience. He points out they need to “put off” their old lifestyle.⁶¹ They need to be “made new”⁶² and “put on the new.”⁶³ As a result, it is reasonable to conclude they are still at an R2 level of follower readiness. This use of the “metaphorical allusion (sic) to taking off and putting on clothing”⁶⁴ is culturally linked to the baptismal practices of the early church and is consistent with the readers of this epistle being relatively new in their Christian faith. In light of this characterization, what leadership style does Paul use to address his readers?

⁵¹ Eph. 4:11.

⁵² Eph. 4:15.

⁵³ Eph. 4:16a.

⁵⁴ Eph. 4:16b.

⁵⁵ Eph. 4:7-10.

⁵⁶ Eph. 4:11.

⁵⁷ Eph. 4:12-16.

⁵⁸ Eph. 4:17.

⁵⁹ Eph. 4:20.

⁶⁰ Eph. 4:21-22.

⁶¹ Eph. 4:22.

⁶² Eph. 4:23.

⁶³ Eph. 4:24.

⁶⁴ Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 151.

So I tell you this, and *insist on it* in the Lord, that you must *no longer live as the Gentiles* do, in the *futility* of their thinking. They are *darkened* in their understanding and *separated* from the life of God *because of* the ignorance that is in them *due to* the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more.

You, however, did not come to *know Christ* that way. Surely you *heard* of him and *were taught* in him in accordance with the truth that is in Jesus. You were taught, with regard to your former way of life, *to put off* your old self, which is being corrupted by its deceitful desires; *to be made new* in the attitude of your minds; and *to put on the new* self, created to be like God in true righteousness and holiness.⁶⁵

In this portion, the author uses a combination of styles. He begins in a telling style, (“I . . . insist”)⁶⁶ and changes to a persuading style in his attempt to convince his readers that the lifestyle of the Gentiles is not one they should return to, due to its “futility,” “darkness,” (*eskotooménōi*, blinded), and “separation from . . . God.”⁶⁷ He then moves to an explaining approach, as he elucidates that the Gentiles find themselves in these circumstances “because of . . . ignorance” and “due to . . . (hard) hearts”⁶⁸ (*poóroosin*, stupidity or callousness; KJV--blindness, hardness). He continues in the explaining mode, with the clarification that this results in “them (having) given themselves over”⁶⁹ to sensual appetites that cannot be satisfied and with his contrasting description of their coming to knowledge of Christ⁷⁰ and transformation in him.⁷¹

This section contains a description that is consistent with an R2 level of readiness on the part of its readers. The apostle transitions from a directive, telling leadership style of S1 to a persuading and then explaining S2 selling leadership style.

Ephesians 4:25-6:9: Individual and Social relations in the church

This last of the major themes to be analyzed touches on various aspects of the Christian life, including individual relations as well as broader social interactions. An overall summary may be taken from the apostle’s injunction to “be imitators of God”⁷² in “building others up”⁷³ and “living as wise, not unwise.”⁷⁴ This overall emphasis on an ordered life served as a defense against the typical objection of Greco-Roman writers

⁶⁵ Eph. 4:17-24.

⁶⁶ Eph. 4:17.

⁶⁷ Eph. 4:18a.

⁶⁸ Eph. 4:18b.

⁶⁹ Eph. 4:19.

⁷⁰ Eph. 4:20-21.

⁷¹ Eph. 4:22-24.

⁷² Eph. 5:1.

⁷³ Eph. 4:29.

⁷⁴ Eph. 5:15.

who often accused novel religious movements like Christianity of "corrupting households" and threatening the social fabric.⁷⁵

Therefore each of you must *put off falsehood and speak truthfully* to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body. "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold. He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need. Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is *helpful for building others up* according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice. Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.⁷⁶

Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"-which is the first commandment with a promise" that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth." Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord. Slaves, *obey* your earthly masters with respect and fear, and with sincerity of heart, just as you would obey Christ. *Obey* them not only to win their favor when their eye is on you, but like slaves of Christ, doing the will of God from your heart. *Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord*, not men, because you know that the Lord will reward everyone for whatever good he does, whether he is slave or free. And masters, treat your slaves in the same way. Do not threaten them, since you know that he who is both their Master and yours is in heaven, and there is no favoritism with him.⁷⁷

Again, this text supports answering "yes" to the first question in Simmons' follower readiness interrogatory criteria. These are Christians to whom the author is speaking, as he affirms that they are "all members of one body"⁷⁸ who have been "sealed" by the Holy Spirit.⁷⁹ Although they once were in "darkness," they are now in the "light."⁸⁰

With regard to the second question in Simmons' follower readiness interrogatory criteria, the author's treatment would indicate a negative response. His audience is not particularly experienced nor do they have in-depth knowledge. The basic nature of the instructions in this passage confirms the elementary level of his audience. Van Unnik and Dibelius cite Paul's injunction to work with their hands⁸¹ as "the kind of instruction

⁷⁵ Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 106.

⁷⁶ Eph. 4:25-32.

⁷⁷ Eph. 6:1-9.

⁷⁸ Eph. 4:25.

⁷⁹ Eph. 4:30.

⁸⁰ Eph. 5:8.

⁸¹ Eph. 4:28.

that Paul and his associates generally gave to new converts.”⁸² Paul’s readers remain, at best, at an R2 level of follower readiness.

The leadership style of the author in this passage is one of telling his audience through informing and advising them of the basics regarding Christian behavior and to influence their relationships to conform to a godly pattern. In doing so, he uses a combination of directing and guiding in the S1 telling leadership style, along with persuading in the S2 selling leadership style. He repeats “do not” at least ten times and uses various other forms of prohibitory language (put off, get rid of, must not be, let no one, etc.) another eight times. Much of this passage is in a directing mode to the point of dictating to his hearers.

With a transitional use of “instead” in Ephesians 5:18, the writer pivots into a less commanding voice for the remainder of the passage. He uses language that is more guiding in tone, with its emphasis on thanksgiving, submission, love, and obedience. He resorts to a persuading leadership style in his attempt to influence and sway his readers toward such behavior. He urges them to “know him better,”⁸³ to grasp the fullness of God’s love,⁸⁴ and to live a life modeled after God’s character.⁸⁵ He chooses to cite the example of Christ (“just as Christ loved the church”)⁸⁶ and a combination of reason, self-interest, and further references to the example of Christ,⁸⁷ practical benefits (“long life on the earth”),⁸⁸ and fear of a just God⁸⁹ as part of his strategy to persuade them to these Christian values.

His use of Christ’s example to encourage his readers to move to a higher state of readiness is illustrated with regard to forgiving (“just as in Christ God forgave you”)⁹⁰ and love (“Be imitators of God . . . and live a life of love, just as Christ loved”).⁹¹ This type of leadership behavior that prompts growth to higher levels of Follower Readiness is also in alignment with the Situational Leadership Model.

Conclusion

This passage supports an R2 level of readiness on the part of the readers. The leadership style is a combination of S1 telling and S2 selling. His emphasis is initially on very candidly marking the path, but he shifts midway to influence or convince his readers, using a low S2 persuading style of selling.

⁸² Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 64-65.

⁸³ Eph. 1:17.

⁸⁴ Eph. 3:18-19.

⁸⁵ Eph. 4:32-5:1.

⁸⁶ Eph. 5:25.

⁸⁷ Eph. 5:28-33.

⁸⁸ Eph. 6:3.

⁸⁹ Eph. 6:5-9.

⁹⁰ Eph. 4:32.

⁹¹ Eph. 5:1-2

III: Summary

The appearance that Ephesians may have been an encyclical letter intended to be shared among several congregations in western Asia Minor⁹² provides context for the low follower readiness levels reflected in the text. The author may well have been writing to the lowest common denominator among his target audiences. Together with the fact that these congregations were composed of a significant element from the slave population and that the Greco-Roman culture in which they existed placed a high social value on maintaining a proper hierarchal structure⁹³ all reinforced a relatively low estimation of his reader's follower readiness.

Values and Readiness Level in the Ephesians

In the letter to the Ephesians, Paul underscores the importance of spiritual wisdom and the necessary enlightenment of their hearts.⁹⁴ He indicates the Ephesians are enabled for this because they have been "made alive" by God's grace⁹⁵ and have been taught according to the truth.⁹⁶ However, their depth of experience is suspect because they need to be reminded of certain basics,⁹⁷ including that they are no longer beginners⁹⁸ and continue to require instruction in elementary behaviors.⁹⁹ The apostle omits any mention of their depth of experience (the second interrogative criteria), their confidence in their abilities (the third interrogative criteria), and any willingness to implement specific actions or tasks on their own (the fourth interrogative criteria). This is in marked contrast with characterization of other congregations (see *Contrast with Others* below.) The apostle provides specific encouragement for them to improve in confidence.¹⁰⁰ With regard to their willingness to live a life worthy of their calling in Christ ("fit to obtain the blessings"),¹⁰¹ Paul urges them to their utmost¹⁰² and challenges them to "make every effort."¹⁰³ Taken together, the text supports a view that Paul's assessment of their readiness to pursue these values would be at the follower readiness level R2 high skill/low experience.

Situational Leadership Approach S2

The apostle Paul's characterization of his readers not only aligns with a high skill/low experience readiness level, but his communication with them also reflects a

⁹² Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 143. Nils Alstrup Dahl, *Adresse und Proömium des Epheserbriefs* TZ, 7 (1951):241-64.

⁹³ Meeks, *The First Urban Christians: The Social World of the Apostle Paul*, 106-107.

⁹⁴ Eph. 1:17-18.

⁹⁵ Eph. 2:1, 5.

⁹⁶ Eph. 4:21.

⁹⁷ Eph. 2:12.

⁹⁸ Eph. 4:14.

⁹⁹ Eph. 4:25-31.

¹⁰⁰ Eph. 3:12.

¹⁰¹ Thayer's Greek Lexicon. Electronic Database, 2000, www.biblesoft.com (accessed December 1, 2006).

¹⁰² Eph. 4:1.

¹⁰³ Eph. 4:3.

style suited to them (see Figures 3A and 3B). Paul's approach to infusing these values emphasizes explaining, clarifying, persuading, and selling the task to the followers. It is consistent with the S2 situational leadership approach of selling.¹⁰⁴

Selling. The apostle goes to some length to provide a gospel synopsis very early in the epistle.¹⁰⁵ He highlights the blessings of God's plan and uses language describing his audience as being "chosen," "adopted," and having a redemption that was "freely given," including forgiveness of sins and eternal riches. One might be prompted to respond to Paul's summation with "Such a deal!" To think of this preamble in Ephesians as "selling" does not require much imagination.

Explaining. The apostle continues along these lines by explaining the reasons for his desire that they have spiritual wisdom and enlightened hearts. He makes it clear that these values will enable them to better know God and the hope to which he had called them.¹⁰⁶ He wants them to understand why these things were important to them.

Clarifying. Paul goes further to clarify how these concepts apply to them. Ephesians 2 begins with "As for you,"¹⁰⁷ continues with the description of how the Gentiles fit into the plan of redemption,¹⁰⁸ and explicates that this relationship has resulted in them becoming "fellow citizens" and "members of God's household."¹⁰⁹

Persuading. The author of the epistle carries on in this vein and uses his tools of persuasion to influence them in practical steps toward achieving spiritual wisdom and enlightenment of their hearts.¹¹⁰

The apostle's approach in this epistle is to explain and to convince his readers of a "big idea." His aim was not primarily to correct false views on some special point (i.e., telling), although he does resort to an S1 leadership style in some sections as we've demonstrated (see Figures 3A and 3B). Rather, his focus is to emphasize a great central truth—that God's eternal purpose is to gather and restore harmony into the entirety of the created universe, in Christ Jesus¹¹¹—through an explaining and persuading methodology using an S2 selling leadership style. His overall purpose was to communicate a full, clear knowledge of this purpose of God. That he adopts the leadership style of communication observed in this epistle is demonstrably consistent with, and supportive of, this purpose.

The apostle desired to effectively communicate certain strongly held concepts to the Christians at Ephesus. From the text of his letter, he viewed them as able—but not yet sufficiently experienced—to behave consistently with those values. His communication approach with them is consistent with the Situational Leadership Model in attempting to influence their behavior to incorporate those values.

¹⁰⁴ *Situational Leadership Model.*

¹⁰⁵ Eph. 1:3-14.

¹⁰⁶ Eph. 1:15-18.

¹⁰⁷ Eph. 2:1.

¹⁰⁸ Eph. 2:11-22.

¹⁰⁹ Eph. 2:19.

¹¹⁰ Eph. 5:1-6:14.

¹¹¹ Eph. 1:10.

Contrast with Others

The apostle Paul did not always adopt the S2 selling leadership style. Philippians reflects a different level of follower readiness. For example, one may detect indications of follower readiness substantially higher in the Philippians than in the Ephesians. With regard to experience/depth, they have progressed and have “joy in the faith.”¹¹² They also are experiencing similar trials to Paul’s own sufferings.¹¹³

With regard to confidence, Paul expresses certainty in their tested abilities and has confidence that “God will complete the good work in them.”¹¹⁴ Their prayers have been effective in Paul’s life,¹¹⁵ and they have stood the test of suffering for Christ.¹¹⁶ They have demonstrated a level of commitment that prompts the apostle to challenge them to “work out your salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.”¹¹⁷ Thayer renders this as “work out your salvation with most intense earnestness.”¹¹⁸ Paul is challenging, confronting, and almost daring them to move to the next level of commitment! The Philippians were at a high R3 and the apostle is challenging them to move ahead to an R4 level of follower readiness.

Commensurate with this higher level of follower readiness, Paul’s leadership style was S3 participating with some indications of S4 delegating. He collaborates with them as they “share in God’s grace”;¹¹⁹ he enjoins them to “complete (his) joy, being like-minded and in one spirit”;¹²⁰ rejoice with him;¹²¹ follow his example;¹²² and learn from him.¹²³ They also partnered with him by providing funds for the apostle’s financial needs.¹²⁴ Paul sends Epaphroditus back into their care.¹²⁵ This can be viewed as a test of their willingness and commitment to deal with delegated responsibility. As mature as the Philippians have become, Paul provides them an opportunity to move to the next level of follower readiness. His assessment of the Philippians’ follower readiness and his Leadership style were markedly different from that in the Epistle to the Ephesians.

IV: Conclusion

As a result of this analysis of leadership style and follower readiness in the Epistle to the Ephesians, two conclusions are readily supported. First, there is a high degree of congruence between Paul’s leadership style with the follower readiness levels

¹¹² Eph. 1:25.

¹¹³ Eph. 1:30.

¹¹⁴ Eph. 1:6-7.

¹¹⁵ Eph. 1:19.

¹¹⁶ Eph. 1:29.

¹¹⁷ Eph. 2:12-13.

¹¹⁸ Thayer’s Greek Lexicon. Electronic Database, 2000, www.biblesoft.com (accessed December 1, 2006).

¹¹⁹ Eph. 1:7.

¹²⁰ Eph. 2:2.

¹²¹ Eph. 2:18.

¹²² Eph. 3:17.

¹²³ Eph. 4:9.

¹²⁴ Eph. 4:15-16.

¹²⁵ Eph. 2:25.

of his readers. Second, the author of this epistle also endeavors at certain points to move his readers to the next level of follower readiness. Both of these leader behaviors are highly consistent with the Situational Leadership Model and its predictions of successful leadership.

The apostle Paul adapted the form of his message or values, and his style of communication in attempting to influence his respective audiences in this epistle. He tailored his communication style to the characteristics of his audience in a way very consistent with the Situational Leadership Model. His Epistle to the Ephesians provides an excellent example from the first century of a leader assessing his followers and adjusting his leadership style to fit their readiness as followers. These results provide encouragement to religious and secular leaders today to follow his approach in achieving effective communications.

To answer the question “So what?” is to assess the results of Paul’s leadership and go beyond mere descriptive analysis. It is historical fact that the church in Ephesus played a major role in disestablishing the Diana worship that had dominated the social, economic, and religious culture of the city for centuries. History also attests that the Christian church, at large, was significantly influenced by the apostle Paul’s writing and leadership, surviving the ravages of Rome and the lions of the Coliseum. The extent to which these successes reflect the effectiveness of Paul’s leadership style in inculcating his values, as predicted by the Situational Leadership Model or the playing out of his central message concerning the eschatological victory of Christ as Savior and Lord of Lords independent of Paul’s leadership style, is beyond the scope of this analysis. This analysis does suggest that Paul’s situational leadership style aligns with successful leadership principles as described by the Situational Leadership Model and its predictors of leadership and organizational success.

About the Author

Gordon R. Middleton is Director of the Strategic Intelligence Program at Patrick Henry College and Adjunct Assistant Professor of Government. He is a retired U.S. Air Force Colonel and former member of the senior executive staff at the National Security Agency, the Central Intelligence Agency, and Federal Bureau of Investigation. He is a doctoral candidate at Regent University in the School of Global Leadership and Entrepreneurship. He is currently providing executive consultation to various U.S. intelligence organizations.

Email: gordmid@regent.edu