

Introduction

Recently I gave my oldest son my collection of golf instructional books. Included were a binder full of frame-by-frame pictures of some of the greatest golfers of all time. Today there is sophisticated video and computer technology to analyze golf swings, but in my earlier days of professional golf, these were not available. We learned from looking at the great players and trying to glean as much as we could from them.

In our spiritual lives, it is also helpful to glean from the great men and women of faith. In John 13, Jesus washed the disciples' feet and then said that He had given them an example to follow. The Apostle Peter charged elders to be examples to the flock. The Apostle Paul to Timothy to show himself as an example to others. He told Titus to be an example of good deeds. God wants us to have examples in our lives to follow.

(Jn 13:15) "For I gave you an example that you also should do as I did to you."

(1 Pet 5:3) "nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock."

(1 Tim 4:12) "Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but *rather* in speech, conduct, love, faith *and* purity, show yourself an example of those who believe."

(Tit 2:7) "in all things show yourself to be an example of good deeds, *with* purity in doctrine, dignified,"

Paul offered himself as an example. He told the Philippians to join in following his example, and to walk according to the pattern that he gave to them. He said a similar thing to the Thessalonians, telling them that they offered themselves as a model for them so that they would follow their example. Paul and his team were great examples to the churches of how to live godly lives.

(Php 3:17) "Brethren, join in following my example, and observe those who walk according to the pattern you have in us."

(2 Th 3:9) "not because we do not have the right *to this*, but in order to offer ourselves as a model for you, so that you would follow our example."

God wants us to have examples to pattern our lives after. God is also concerned about churches having an example to follow. In 1 Thessalonians, Paul commended them because they became imitators of the churches in Judea. The churches in Judea were devoted to the apostles' teaching, prayer, fellowship, and breaking of bread. Churches today follow many different patterns, but many of them are not the pattern of the churches in Judea. There are some churches, including the Connection Church, that are committed to following the Biblical pattern for churches found in the New Testament. We are devoted to solid Biblical teaching and prayer. We prioritize teaching the word and spending time in prayer. We are devoted to fellowship and to breaking bread together. We share meals together, which is a great opportunity for fellowship.

(1 Th 2:14) "For you, brethren, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea, for you also endured the same sufferings at the hands of your own countrymen, even as they *did* from the Jews,"

(Ac 2:42) "They were continually devoting themselves to the apostles' teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer."

God is also concerned about ministries having an example to follow. Paul's ministry is a great model for us to look at and imitate. Paul and his ministry were attacked by someone in Corinth, and 2 Corinthians is his defense of himself and his apostolic ministry. His response and defense give us an excellent glimpse into Paul's ministry. Paul had a successful and triumphant ministry and today we are going to look at seven characteristics of his triumphant ministry. Paul had a strategic ministry. He had a Spirit-led ministry. He had a caring Ministry. He had a confident ministry. He had a fragrant ministry. He had a grateful ministry. Seventh, he had a sincere ministry.

Seven Characteristics of Paul's Triumphant Ministry

1. Strategic Ministry
2. Spirit-led Ministry
3. Caring Ministry
4. Confident Ministry
5. Fragrant Ministry
6. Grateful Ministry
7. Sincere Ministry

(2 Co 2:12–17) "Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, {13} I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia. {14} But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. {15} For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; {16} to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things? {17} For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God."

1. Strategic Ministry (2 Cor 2:12-13)

Paul led a very strategic ministry. In our text, Paul went to Troas, and he was looking for Titus. Paul had been in Ephesus, and purposely went to Troas. After writing the letter of sorrow or severe letter to the Corinthians, which was his third letter to them, he sent Titus to Corinth to find out how they were doing. Paul did not want to go there again in sorrow, but he wanted to know how they were doing. He did not just send Titus there, but he set up a rendezvous place to meet afterwards, and that place was Troas. So, when Paul went to Troas, he was looking for Titus to get a progress report on the Corinthians. Paul and Titus did not have cell phones, internet, land lines, or other modern ways of communicating, so they planned ahead.

(2 Co 2:12–13) "Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, {13} I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia."

When Paul did not find Titus in Troas, he went on to Macedonia. Apparently, they had a contingency plan, and if Titus could not be in Troas by a certain time, the plan was to meet up in Macedonia, which was probably in Philippi. Without modern communication services, these plans and contingency plans were extremely important. Paul was a great planner, and this helped

him run a successful apostolic ministry. Some say that Paul had between thirty and fifty people on his team. I have found that the bigger the organization is, the more important these plans become so that everyone is on the same page.

In my earlier years of playing golf, we did not have cell phones. I would make my travel plans in the offseason, and secure hotel reservations in every city. I sent our parents our travel plans so that they knew which hotel we were going to be at so that they could contact us if necessary. That is essentially what Paul did with Titus. They made a plan to be in Troas at a particular time.

Troas was on the way from Ephesus, where Paul was, and Macedonia, where he was planning to go. Troas was located on the Aegean Sea and had an excellent harbor. Therefore, it was a common stopping stop for ships traveling from Asia to Europe. That may have been one of the reasons that Paul chose Troas as a place to meet up with Titus. Troas was a city that Paul had been to in his 2nd apostolic journey. While there, he had a vision of a man standing and appealing to him to "Come over to Macedonia and help us." So, Paul, Timothy, and Silas went to Philippi to preach the gospel there. We do not know if there were some people who received Christ in Troas, but a church was planted.

(Ac 16:7–10) "and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; {8} and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. {9} A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." {10} When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them."

On Paul's third apostolic journey, he also went to Troas. The church was gathered together to break bread, and Paul prolonged his message until midnight. A young man named Eutychus was sitting on the window sill and was overcome with sleep and fell down from the third floor and died. Paul went down and raised him from the dead, and they went back up and broke bread, which is another way of saying that they shared a meal together.

(Ac 20:7–12) "On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul *began* talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. {8} There were many lamps in the upper room where we were gathered together. {9} And there was a young man named Eutychus sitting on the window sill, sinking into a deep sleep; and as Paul kept on talking, he was overcome by sleep and fell down from the third floor and was picked up dead. {10} But Paul went down and fell upon him, and after embracing him, he said, "Do not be troubled, for his life is in him." {11} When he had gone *back* up and had broken the bread and eaten, he talked with them a long while until daybreak, and then left. {12} They took away the boy alive, and were greatly comforted."

In Paul's ministry, he had a plan of where he was going to go preach the gospel. Once he arrived in a city, he had a plan for reaching the city. For example, when he arrived in Thessalonica, he found the synagogue of the Jews, and according to his custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures. Even though he was an apostle to the Gentiles, he went to the Jews, and preached to them for three weeks. Then he would turn to the Gentiles.

(Ac 17:1–2) "Now when they had traveled through Amphipolis and Apollonia, they came to Thessalonica, where there was a synagogue of the Jews. {2} And according to Paul's custom, he went to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures,"

One of the charges brought against Paul was that he was not a man of his word. He had planned to come to them, and because of some things that came up, he had not gone to them. None-the-less, Paul had a plan, a very detailed and strategic plan. His plans included contingency plans in case something went awry in the original plans. His plans were clearly communicated to his team members so that they were all on the same page.

2. Spirit-led Ministry (2 Cor 2:13-14)

Paul not only had a strategic ministry, where he planned his trips and ministry, he had a Spirit-led ministry. In our text, Paul was in Troas preaching the gospel. The Lord opened a door for him to preach in Troas, but Paul had no rest for his spirit. Even though it would appear that he should stay where he has an open door, especially one that the Lord has opened, Paul sensed that the Holy Spirit wanted him to go on to Macedonia. He also said that God always leads us. The Holy Spirit is the third person of the trinity, and Paul was led by the Spirit.

(2 Co 2:13–14) “I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia. {14} But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”

On Paul's second missionary trip they had planned on going to Bithynia, which was the region north of Mysia. However, the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them. We do not know how the Spirit stopped them, but Paul did not have a peace about going there. So, they went to Troas, where Paul had the Macedonians vision, and they went there instead.

(Ac 16:6–8) “They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; {7} and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; {8} and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas.”

God tells us that the plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the Lord. The mind of a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps. Paul took responsibility for the plans that belonged to his ministry, but he submitted those to the Lord. He allowed the Lord to direct and redirect his steps. Trusting in the Lord and being led by the Spirit does not negate our responsibility to plan. We should plan our ministries, but we should present and submit all of our plans to the Lord, and allow Him to direct as He chooses.

(Pr 16:1) “The plans of the heart belong to man, But the answer of the tongue is from the Lord.”

(Pr 16:9) “The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps.”

Paul said that God always leads us in triumph in Christ. Paul relied upon the Lord to always lead him, and he was confident that the Holy Spirit was always going to lead him. Paul wrote that as many as are led by the Spirit, these are the sons of God. Paul was a man that was led by the Spirit, and his ministry was led by the Spirit.

(Ro 8:14) “For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.”

3. Caring Ministry (2 Cor 2:12-13)

Our text today shows that Paul's ministry was a caring ministry. Paul wrote a letter to the Corinthians. Then he sent Titus to Corinth to check on their well-being. They planned to meet up in Troas so that Paul could get an update on their status. When Paul did not find Titus, he had no rest for his spirit. He was longing to know how the Corinthians were doing. He genuinely cared about them.

(2 Co 2:12–13) “Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, {13} I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia.”

Another sign that Paul had a caring ministry was his decision to go on to Macedonia. The Lord had opened a door in Troas. People were getting saved, and the ministry looked great. However, Paul was carrying a burden for the church Corinth. Their well-being meant more than an open door for preaching. Paul's priority was caring for people. He prioritized people over ministry.

Many years ago, I was one of the elders in a church in Florida that became more focused on “the ministry” rather than people. When that happens, the care for the people in the church becomes secondary to the ministry goals. People were continually asked to make sacrifices in order to make the ministry successful. There is nothing wrong with making sacrifices for the kingdom of God; that is a great thing. But when the leadership of the church is more interested in seeing numbers than caring for people, there is a problem. On the flip side, when a church is only concerned about their own, and not reaching out to others with the gospel, there is a problem.

Paul was very ministry focused, and he knew that ministry was about people, not numbers. He genuinely cared for the people that he ministered to. Paul laid his life down serving the churches he planted, working day and night so that he would not be a burden to them. One sign that a pastor cares for people is by the way he prays for them. Someone who cares about people will pray for them regularly. Someone who cares about people will check up on them. Someone who cares about people will write notes and letters, make calls, and show interest in their well-being. Paul prayed for people and churches. Paul wrote letters to the churches. Paul corrected when necessary, and was always encouraging and exhorting them.

We know that Jesus loved Lazarus because He wept for them. We know that Paul loved and cared for the Corinthians by how troubled he was when he did not find Titus.

(Jn 11:35–36) “Jesus wept. {36} So the Jews were saying, “See how He loved him!”

4. Confident Ministry (2 Cor 2:12-14)

When Paul was in Troas, God opened a door for ministry for him. When he had no rest of spirit, he went on to Macedonia. Paul was confident that God would open doors of ministry for him in Macedonia. Then he stated, “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.” Paul was confident that God was leading him and would manifest through him the knowledge of Christ in every place. He could be in Troas, or he could be in Philippi; it did not matter. Paul was confident that God would open doors and manifest Himself through Paul in every place.

(2 Co 2:12–14) “Now when I came to Troas for the gospel of Christ and when a door was opened for me in the Lord, {13} I had no rest for my spirit, not finding Titus my brother; but taking my leave of them, I went on to Macedonia. {14} But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.”

In Hebrews 11:1, God defines faith for us. Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. That definition describes Paul's ministry. The Greek word for faith is *pistis* (Strong's G4102), and the root word is *peitho* (Strong's G3982), which means to be convinced of, to be persuaded, to trust or have confidence. Paul had a confident ministry. He was not confident in or trust in his own abilities, he trusted in God. Paul was convinced that God would do the things He promised to do. Paul was confident that God would always lead him in triumphant ministry.

(Heb 11:1) “Now faith is the assurance of *things* hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”

When Paul was on the ship in the storm in Acts 27, an angel of the Lord appeared to him and told him that he must stand before Caesar, and that the lives of all the men would be spared. Paul believed what the angel told him, and he declared it to the two hundred and seventy-six men aboard the ship. Paul was confident that God would do exactly what He said he would do. Throughout Paul's ministry, he lived by faith. When God said something to him, he acted accordingly, being confident that God would do what he said.

(Ac 27:21–25) “When they had gone a long time without food, then Paul stood up in their midst and said, “Men, you ought to have followed my advice and not to have set sail from Crete and incurred this damage and loss. {22} “*Yet* now I urge you to keep up your courage, for there will be no loss of life among you, but *only* of the ship. {23} “For this very night an angel of the God to whom I belong and whom I serve stood before me, {24} saying, ‘Do not be afraid, Paul; you must stand before Caesar; and behold, God has granted you all those who are sailing with you.’ {25} “Therefore, keep up your courage, men, for I believe God that it will turn out exactly as I have been told.”

5. Fragrant Ministry (2 Cor 2:14-16)

Paul had a fragrant ministry. Paul wrote that God always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of him in every place. For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing. To help us understand this, we need to look at the word and the context.

(2 Co 2:14–16) “But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place. {15} For we are a fragrance of Christ to God among those who are being saved and among those who are perishing; {16} to the one an aroma from death to death, to the other an aroma from life to life. And who is adequate for these things?”

The Greek word for triumph is *thriambeuo* (Strong's G2358), which means a noisy song sung in honor, or to make an acclamatory procession. In Unger's Bible Dictionary, he gives the following explanation.

“Among the highest honor which could be bestowed on a citizen or magistrate was the triumph or solemn procession, in which a victorious general passed from the gate of the city to the capitol...The streets were strewn with flowers and the altars smoked with incense. The procession was formed as follows: First a numerous band of music, singing, and playing triumphal songs; the oxen to be sacrificed, their horns gilded and heads adorned with fillets and garlands; the spoils, and captives in chains; the lictors, having their fasces adorned with laurel; a long train of persons carrying perfumes; the general dressed in purple embroidered with gold, wearing a crown of laurel, in his right hand a laurel branch and a scepter in his left, his face painted with vermilion, and a golden ball suspended from his neck. He stood erect in his chariot, with a public slave by his side to remind him of the vicissitudes of fortune and of his mortality. Behind him came the consuls, senators, and other magistrates, on foot; the whole procession closing with the victorious army.”

This was not a parade that was given to just anybody. In order to be given this kind of special triumph or procession, at least five thousand enemy soldiers must have fallen, and it must have been fought in foreign soil, and with the result that the Roman empire acquired new territory. These triumphs were rare, and were very special for those that were honored in such a way.

These triumphs were also very fragrant. The combination of flowers, incense and perfumes made this a very fragrant parade. The fragrance signified different things to different people. For the victorious general and his troops, who were at the end of the parade, it was the sweet aroma of victory. For the defeated enemy soldiers that were marching in chains, it was the aroma of death. There were lictors, or punishers, and they would beat these captives while they were marching. At the end of the triumph these conquered soldiers were going to be put to death, so this was an aroma of death to them.

This is the backdrop to Paul's remarks about his fragrant ministry. The gospel message was like an aroma, and it meant different things to different people. To those who were being saved, it was the aroma of life. To those that rejected the gospel message, it was an aroma of death. Because they were rejecting Christ, they were going to perish.

How do we have a fragrant ministry? We must spend time with Jesus. One day as we were driving home from our Sunday service, Karen said there was a perfume smell in the car. I don't wear cologne, so I insisted it was not me. Then, I smelled my hands, and my right hand had a strong smell of perfume. I had shaken hands with somebody that had cologne on his hands, and it had rubbed off on me. Apparently after shaving the man put cologne on his hands to put on his face, and the aroma stayed on his hands. When I shook hands with him, the aroma spread to my hands. The way that we have the aroma of Christ is to clothe ourselves with Christ, and to spend time in His presence. The body of Christ was anointed before He was crucified. The body of Christ was anointed after He was buried. If we want to have the aroma of Christ, when we spend time with Him, and we will have the fragrance of Christ.

Another way that we become fragrant is by worshiping the Lord. In John 12:3, Mary anointed the feet of Jesus with her hair. Jesus had a strong smell of perfume on Him, but guess who else smelled like Jesus? Mary smelled like Jesus. In fact, the whole house smelled like Jesus. When people bring their sacrifices of praise and thanksgiving to Jesus, they smell like Jesus.

(Jn 12:3) “Mary then took a pound of very costly perfume of pure nard, and anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped His feet with her hair; and the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume.”

6. Grateful Ministry (2 Cor 2:14, 16)

In our text today, Paul gave thanks to God for always leading them in triumph. Then, he said, "And who is adequate for these things?" Paul knew that it was God who led them in triumph. It was God who richly supplied all of his needs. Everything that he had came from God. His life, his calling, his anointing, and his ministry were all from God.

(2 Co 2:14–16) "But thanks be to God, who always leads us in triumph in Christ, and manifests through us the sweet aroma of the knowledge of Him in every place.... And who is adequate for these things?"

In all Paul's letters, he gives thanks to God. He told the Philippians that he thanked God in his every remembrance of them. He told the Colossians that they gave thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for them. He told the Thessalonians to give thanks in everything, for this was God's will for them in Christ Jesus. Paul taught people to give thanks, and he gave thanks to God for everything in his own life and ministry. Paul had a grateful ministry.

(Php 1:3) "I thank my God in all my remembrance of you,"

(Col 1:3) "We give thanks to God, the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, praying always for you,"

(1 Th 5:18) "in everything give thanks; for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

Gratefulness to God begins with knowing that everything we have is from God. It comes from knowing our adequacy is from God, not ourselves. Second, gratefulness to God comes from being intentional and purposeful about thanking God in everything. An attitude of gratitude will become a great habit in our lives, but it must never become a rote thing. Our giving of thanks must always come from our hearts. We must maintain a heart of gratitude. We can maintain a heart of gratitude by taking time to give thanks about everything every day. Find new things to thank God about. Paul's ministry was a grateful ministry. Third, acknowledge what other people do and contribute, and thank them. Paul thanked God, and he also thanked those around him. People like to be appreciated, and when you have a grateful ministry, God will be honored and those around you will feel appreciated.

7. Sincere Ministry (2 Cor 2:17)

The seventh characteristic of Paul's ministry in our text today is that he had a sincere ministry. He said, "For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God." Paul was sincere in what he did.

(2 Co 2:17) "For we are not like many, peddling the word of God, but as from sincerity, but as from God, we speak in Christ in the sight of God."

Paul and his ministry had been under attack, and in his defense, he told them that he was sincere in everything he did. Not everyone does things with sincerity. A number of years ago I was asked to go listen to a Nigerian pastor. Karen and I, and our children, went to listen to the pastor. He pressured people to give money to him. He promised to bless those who gave to him. We were not asked to go listen to him so that we could grow in our faith. We were asked to go listen

to him because the man wanted something from us. He was peddling the word of God in order to get something; it was not from sincerity.

Paul did not peddle the word to get something; he preached the word from sincerity. He spoke from God. He spoke in Christ. He spoke in the sight of God. Everything he did was in plain sight of God. There were no hidden agendas or ulterior motives. Paul said to die is gain, and to live is Christ. Paul's life was about Christ. The word for sincerity is *eilikrineia* (Strong's G1505), which means clearness, purity, or sincerity. Paul was pure before the Lord in what he did. There was nothing cloudy, murky, or shadowy in what he did; it was with clearness. We have a water filter that takes out impurities in the water. We want to drink pure water. Paul refreshed people with the pure water of the word; he ministered with sincerity.

In 1 Timothy 1:5, Paul was instructing Timothy to deal with some of the false teachers. Then, he highlighted their ministry, saying, "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith." Paul's ministry flowed out of a pure heart and a sincere faith. Paul's ministry was a sincere ministry.

(1 Tim 1:5) "But the goal of our instruction is love from a pure heart and a good conscience and a sincere faith."

How do we have a sincere ministry. First, we must be transparent. Paul did his ministry before God. He was transparent before God. But Paul was also transparent before men. In chapter six, Paul said, "Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide." Paul was open and transparent before the people he served. I was once in a church where I always felt the senior pastor was not being transparent. I felt he was always hiding some things. Eventually, I resigned from being one of the elders and we left that church. Years later the elders became aware of an affair that this pastor had, and the senior pastor was forced to step down. I was not surprised because he did not have a transparent ministry. A sincere ministry begins with openness and transparency.

(2 Co 6:11) "Our mouth has spoken freely to you, O Corinthians, our heart is opened wide."

A sincere ministry also needs accountability. In chapter eight Paul said that they had regard for what is honorable in the sight of the Lord and also in the sight of men. There was transparency and there was accountability. Some people do not want to give account to anybody for what they do. Someone who is sincere will have no problem giving account to other people. We need a team of people around us who are not afraid to tell us no when they disagree with us. We do not need a bunch of "yes men" around us. We need people around us that will speak the truth in love. We need people around us that love us and are have our backs, but are willing to speak up when necessary. Paul had a great team of men and women around him, and that was one reason they had a sincere ministry.

(2 Co 8:21) "for we have regard for what is honorable, not only in the sight of the Lord, but also in the sight of men."

A sincere ministry also takes time to check motives. It is not only okay to ask ourselves why we are doing something, but it is something that we should do intentionally. We need to search our own hearts to make sure that we have a pure heart. Our motives need to be pure.

A sincere ministry will also maintain a good conscience. Paul often spoke about how he had lived his whole life with a good conscience. If we are going to have a sincere ministry, a pure and clear ministry, we must always maintain a good conscience.

Conclusion and Applications

Paul had a triumphant ministry. He was strategic and made detailed plans. He even had contingency plans in the event things came up. Paul planned to meet Titus in Troas, and their contingency plan was to meet up in Macedonia.

Paul had a Spirit-led ministry. It was the Lord who always led him in triumphant ministry. Even though he planned, it was always with an understanding that the Lord could redirect him at any time.

Paul had a caring ministry. He cared deeply about the Corinthians and their welfare. He prioritized the care of them over other ministry plans. People mattered to Paul.

Paul had a confident ministry. He believed that God would always do what He said He would do. Paul's confidence was not in himself, but in God.

Paul had a fragrant ministry. God manifested the aroma of Christ through Paul everywhere he went. It was an aroma of life to those being saved, and an aroma of death to those who were perishing.

Paul had a grateful ministry. He gave thanks to God in everything. He understood that everything that he had came from God, and he made a point to always give thanks.

Paul also had a sincere ministry. He was not like others who were peddling the gospel, with the hope of getting something from it. Paul ministered from a pure heart. There were no hidden agendas or ulterior motives. He was transparent, accountable, and did everything in God's sight. Paul had an incredible ministry, and it is a model for all of us.

Closing Prayer

Father God, thank You for the Apostle Paul, and the model that you gave us for our ministries. Lord, help us to conduct our ministries in the same way. Help us to be diligent with our planning, and to submit those plans to you. Help us to allow You to direct our steps and change our plans at any time. Our desire is to be led by You into triumphant ministry. Help us to be compassionate and caring. Help us to prioritize people over ministry. Help us to communicate in our words and actions that we care about them. Help us to be people of faith. May our confidence be in You, and may we have full assurance that You always do what You promise. Lord, help us to have a fragrant ministry. May the aroma of Christ always manifest itself in our lives. May Your aroma bring encouragement to those who are being saved. May our conversations be filled with the fragrance of Christ. May our actions be filled with Your aroma. Father, help us to be a grateful people and to give thanks in everything. We know that if You were hungry You would not tell us, but one thing that does please and bless You is our giving of thanks. May we be a grateful people. Father, help us to have a sincere ministry. Search our hearts and see if there is anything hurtful. Lead us in the everlasting way. We pray these things in Jesus' name. Amen.

Characteristics of Paul's Triumphant Ministry

Introduction (Jn 13:15, 1 Pet 5:3, 1 Tim 4:12, Tit 2:7, Php 3:17, 2 Th 3:9, 1 Th 2:14, Ac 2:42, 2 Cor 12-17)

- 1. Strategic Ministry** (2 Cor 2:12-13, Ac 17:1–2, 16:7–10, 20:7-12)
- 2. Spirit-led Ministry** (2 Cor 2:13-14, Ac 16:6–8, Pr 16:1, 16:9, Rom 8:14)
- 3. Caring Ministry** (2 Cor 2:12-13, Jn 11:35–36)
- 4. Confident Ministry** (2 Cor 2:12-14, Heb 11:1, Ac 27:21–25)
- 5. Fragrant Ministry** (2 Cor 2:14-16)
- 6. Grateful Ministry** (2 Cor 2:14, 16, Php 1:3, Col 1:3, 1 Th 5:18)
- 7. Sincere Ministry** (2 Cor 2:17, 1 Tim 1:5, 2 Cor 6:11, 8:21)

Conclusion and Applications