

SPIRITUAL



LEADERSHIP

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SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

MORE THAN A SKILLSET

Spiritual leadership is not an occupation – it is a calling. God is not looking for charismatic, strong, attractive people – He is looking for surrendered servants.

Popularity is not leadership. A title or corner office does not make a leader. Spiritual leaders must be godly men and women called by God, equipped to serve, and committed to stewarding God’s Kingdom plans.

Spiritual leaders are filled and directed by the Holy Spirit, steadfast in the face of opposition, and unrelenting amid spiritual inertia. Spiritual leadership is moving people onto God’s agenda. How does a spiritual leader fulfill the call to move people on to God’s agenda? This online Bible course will explore Jesus’ model of spiritual leadership and how to follow it.

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**“AND I SOUGHT FOR A MAN AMONG THEM WHO SHOULD
BUILD UP THE WALL AND STAND IN THE BREACH
BEFORE ME FOR THE LAND, THAT I SHOULD NOT
DESTROY IT, BUT I FOUND NONE.”**

EZEKIEL 22:30 ESV

1.

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP?

Spiritual leadership is not an occupation - it is a calling. God is not looking for charismatic, strong, attractive people - He looks for obedient servants to use. A title does not make a leader.

George Barna states, "The American church is dying due to a lack of strong leadership. In this time of unprecedented opportunity and plentiful resources, the church is actually losing influence. The primary reason is a lack of leadership. Nothing is more important than leadership."¹

Churches have adopted a CEO model for pastors as a means to measure success. Attendance numbers, revenue, and amenities are considered signs of success. Spiritual leaders follow God regardless of popularity or pressure. A spiritual leader's responsibility is to move people into a deeper relationship with God, not to fulfill earthly expectations. The Israelites clamored for a strong worldly leader. God gave them one, and the results were disastrous.

In 1 Samuel 8:10-22, the prophet Samuel warned the people of Israel about the perils of appointing a king instead of the Lord God ruling as King over His nation. The Israelites refused to listen because they

¹ Barna, G., (1998). *Leaders on Leadership*. Regal Publishing.

wanted to be like all other nations. This national decision to dilute and pollute their dependence on their Creator, Provider, and Deliverer had disastrous consequences that continue to this day.

The same is true of all nations, governments, and organizations not governed by God's Kingdom principles. Leaders called to govern by a biblical value system must not pollute or dilute higher Kingdom standards regardless of the arena they serve in or the popularity of their decisions.

If worldly pressures cause spiritual leaders to succumb to worldly values, they lose their ability to be salt and light in a darkening world. Jesus tells us to put Kingdom values first in our decision-making. Kingdom values are how our Heavenly Father has ordered His Heavenly Kingdom, and we are to emulate that value system. He promises to take care of our practical needs. He is faithful and desires our faithfulness.

But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will he not much more clothe you, O you of little faith? Therefore do not be anxious, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?' For the Gentiles seek after all these things, and your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek

first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

Matthew 6:30-33 ESV

Christian leaders who courageously follow God will be phenomenally more effective than the most skilled and trained leaders who lead without God.

WHAT IS SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP?

Oswald Sanders, “Leadership is influence, the ability of one person to influence others.”²

George Barna, “A Christian leader is someone who is called by God to lead; leads with and through Christlike character; and demonstrates the functional competencies that permit effective leadership to take place.”³

Spiritual leadership must be directed by the Holy Spirit. It must be steadfast in the face of opposition and unrelenting amid spiritual inertia. Popularity is not leadership. Spiritual leadership requires an

² Chambers, O., (2007). *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer*. Moody Publishers.

³ Barna, *Leaders on Leadership*.

understanding of calling, a godly character and being equipped with practical leadership competencies.

Spiritual leaders continue to persevere with godly leadership despite the responses of the people they lead. Consider Moses and his call to deliver the Jewish people to the Promised Land. It took forty years, due to stubborn rebellion, to finally arrive. Moses was not free to abandon his calling or people until he got them where God wanted them.

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP IS MOVING PEOPLE ONTO GOD'S AGENDA.

How does a spiritual leader fulfill the call to move people on to God's agenda?

Leaders lead through influence. Influence is a result of leading by example and through the process of persuasion. Mobilizing God's people to do God's will requires sharing God's plans, leading by example, and equipping people to fulfill their individual callings. In a secular setting, leaders share the vision and higher purpose that motivates people much more than a paycheck or punitive measures.

Spiritual leaders can influence all people, not just God's people. God often works in ways that are beyond our wisdom and planning. For

example, in Genesis Chapters 37-46, we find the story of God using the Egyptians to provide food for Israel and the Middle East during a seven-year drought. Although betrayed by his brothers, thrown into a well to die, and then sold into slavery, God raised up Joseph to help lead Egypt, a pagan nation.

Because Joseph sought God, God was faithful to reveal His plans, giving Joseph the divine ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams. Because of Joseph's faithful spiritual leadership, he was given responsibility over all of Egypt. Joseph's family was also restored and provided for. Joseph did not compromise his faith, despite being immersed in a pagan culture. He trusted God, maintained his relationship with Him, and acted with integrity. God makes a way if we trust His ways.

Spiritual leaders understand that the work of God can only be accomplished by the power of God. The leader's responsibility is to work from God's agenda, not their own. To do this, leaders must be filled with the Holy Spirit, equipped with God's Word, and directed through prayer.

When leaders hear God's voice through prayer, confirmed by His Word, they move forward purposefully, not jumping from one thing to another if the results are disappointing. God's plans and purposes don't change.

The overarching call of every leader, and indeed every believer, is to help people move from self-focus to living faithful, God-centered lives as disciples of Christ.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20 ESV

JESUS' MODEL OF SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

If Christians around the world were to suddenly renounce their personal agendas, life goals, and aspirations and begin responding in radical obedience to everything God showed them, the world would be turned upside down. How do we know? Because that is what the first-century Christians did, and the world is still talking about it.⁴

Jesus led for three years, and the world was changed forever. He did not develop one-year, five-year, or ten-year plans. He did not cast His own vision. He sought His Father's will, and His vision came from

⁴ Blackaby, H.R., *Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda*.

His Father's plans. Jesus was the Father's plan from the beginning. Galatians 4:4 tells us that "when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law." John 3:16 reaffirms the plan, "For God so loved the world that He sent His only Son..."

Satan tried to get Jesus to shortcut the suffering of the cross in exchange for the gift of dominion over the earth. Jesus knew that nothing but obedience to the Father's plan would accomplish the Father's eternal purposes.

A leader's temptations usually involve an easier way with lower personal cost and immediate fulfillment of temporal desires. The temptation is to assume God's plans can be fulfilled in an easier way.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Write down the Scriptures below. Identify the component of spiritual leadership that Jesus is exemplifying.

John 5:19-20

Luke 6:12-13

John 17:6-7

Matt. 16:17

Matt. 26:39



“NOW WHEN THEY SAW THE BOLDNESS OF PETER AND JOHN, AND PERCEIVED THAT THEY WERE UNEDUCATED, COMMON MEN, THEY WERE ASTONISHED. AND THEY RECOGNIZED THAT THEY HAD BEEN WITH JESUS.”

ACTS 4:13 ESV

2.

EQUIPPING

Are leaders born that way, or do they have to train to become a leader? Does God gift leaders differently? Are just a few called to leadership?

THE CALLING AND EQUIPPING

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds, and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes.

Ephesians 4:11-14 ESV

God calls many that we would assume are “just ordinary people” and gives the leaders their specific assignments. Only people who press in deeply, listen to God’s voice through His Word and prayer, and then operate in the power of the Holy Spirit will hear, understand, obey, and ultimately fulfill God’s call on their lives. God desires, calls, and equips ordinary people with open, hungry hearts to pour out His Spirit upon.

Leaders are flawed people. Moses was a man with a temper problem. He was also a murderer. He spoke with a lisp. Yet, God called Moses His friend and spoke with him face to face (Numbers 12:6-8).

Joshua had to follow in Moses’ footsteps, facing powerful, hostile, well-equipped armies. Yet God called and equipped him as evidenced in Joshua 1:5-9:

No man shall be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I was with Moses, so I will be with you. I will not leave you or forsake you. Be strong and courageous, for you shall cause this people to inherit the land that I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be strong and very courageous, being careful to do according to all the law that Moses my servant commanded you. Do not turn from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may have good success[a] wherever you go. This Book of the Law

shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it. For then you will make your way prosperous, and then you will have good success. Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be frightened, and do not be dismayed, for the Lord your God is with you wherever you go.

Spiritual leaders should always be learners, growing in faithful obedience into ever-increasing responsibility in God's Kingdom. Abraham is the perfect example of God calling and training an ordinary man for His great purposes.

THE EXAMPLE OF ABRAHAM

Abram (Abraham) was a descendant of Noah's son, Shem. He was an ordinary man, born in Ur, a city in southern Babylonia. The Chaldeans were pagans, worshipping the moon and other idols. His father, Terah, took his family, intending to move to Canaan. When they arrived in Haran in southeastern Turkey, his father decided they had gone far enough, and they settled there.

While living on the fertile plains of the Haran Valley, when Abram was seventy-five, God spoke directly to him, telling him to leave his country

and all of his father's household. As the eldest son, leaving meant giving up his rights and inheritance. God promised that if Abram obeyed and went to the land He would show him that a tremendous blessing would result. Genesis 12:4 tells us that Abraham departed "as the Lord directed him." This was a tremendous step of obedience, except that when God told him to leave behind his family, he brought his nephew Lot, who would later cause trouble for him.

Abram had received a call to lead an entire nation. He was required to walk in faith. Abram needed some training, and in the process, he experienced the testing and made the inevitable mistakes that all leaders experience.

The second test was that after arriving in Canaan, there was a severe famine. Abram decided to move his family to Egypt. Was he lacking the faith that the God who called him to the land could provide for him? As a result of his choice to go to Egypt, he told his wife Sarai to lie, saying she was his sister, in case she was taken to Pharaoh because of her beauty. His wife was taken to Pharaoh and lived there while Abram was treated well by Pharaoh, acquiring sheep, cattle, donkeys, servants, and camels. Despite Abram's deception, God's plans were not to be thwarted. He inflicted serious diseases on Pharaoh and his family

because of Sarai. Finally, Pharaoh discovered he was lied to, and he sent them all back where they came from.

Despite the Lord's promises that he would be the founding father of an entire nation, give him a son of his own flesh, and covenanted the land to Abram's descendants (Gen. 15), his wife could not bear children. At the age of eighty-six, he decided to have children a different way. A son, Ishmael, was born through his wife's servant, Hagar. History tells us that Ishmael, Hagar's son, became the father of the Arab nations, who remain fierce enemies of Israel to this day. Eventually, after the birth of Isaac, God required Abram to send Hagar and Ishmael away. Abraham learned the hard way not to modify God's plans with his own ideas.

Despite his mistakes, God continued to train and bless him. At the age of ninety-nine, the Lord appeared to Abram and called him to walk faithfully and blamelessly before him. God changed his name from Abram to Abraham, meaning exalted father. The name change indicated a change in his authority from a father of his children to a father of many nations. At this time, God instituted what we now call the Abrahamic Covenant - deeding the whole land of Canaan to his descendants (Gen. 17). God also promised to open Sarai's womb even though she was ninety years old and changed her name to Sarah.

In Genesis 21, we learn that Sarah's barren womb was miraculously opened in her old age. She gave birth to Isaac, the son of the promise. If ever a leader had to learn faith and patience the hard way, it was Abram!

After a lifetime of learning, Abraham faced the most significant test of his faith. God asked him to sacrifice Isaac, the miraculous son of the promise. By this time, Abraham knew he did not have to modify God's plan. He had experienced God as the miraculous provider and responded obediently. As a result of his absolute faith in God, God blessed him greatly and fulfilled His promises through Abraham.

...and said, "By myself I have sworn, declares the Lord, because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you, and I will surely multiply your offspring as the stars of heaven and as the sand that is on the seashore. And your offspring shall possess the gate of his enemies, and in your offspring shall all the nations of the earth be blessed, because you have obeyed my voice.

Genesis 22:16-18 ESV

God knew Abraham's heart and thus called him to lead. He walked with him, equipping him sequentially for the challenges of his calling. Ultimately, Abraham was referred to as a friend of God in both the Old

and New Testaments. It is a true honor when God calls someone His friend - it is about the relationship shared on the journey of faithful leadership!

Abraham became the father of the Jewish faith because he believed God. He didn't always get it right, but as James tells us in his epistle to Jewish Christians of the Diaspora:

“...and the Scripture was fulfilled that says, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness”—and he was called a friend of God.”

James 2:23 ESV

“THERE IS NO SUCH THING AS A SELF-MADE SPIRITUAL LEADER.”⁵

The journey of the ordinary Abram to Abraham, the friend of God and father of many nations, should encourage leaders in all phases of ministry life. It is comforting to know that we don't have to have all the answers or be perfect. God equips whom He calls, and He doesn't give

⁵Chambers, O., *Spiritual Leadership: Principles of Excellence for Every Believer*.

up on us. For mature leaders in the later years of service, it is exciting to know that God will honor our faithfulness and use us in miraculous ways!

God's leadership development of Abraham is mirrored in the research of Dr. Robert Clinton, Professor Emeritus of Fuller Seminary, who identifies Six Stages of Leadership Development:⁶

Phase One - Sovereign Foundations: These are our formative childhood years, where God providentially works to build personality and character through good and bad experiences. Home life, personal limitations, and personal struggles impact shaping a leader. Many of the world's most outstanding leaders experienced a traumatic upbringing.

Phase Two - Inner Life Growth: At this stage, emerging leaders are aware of their calling, and a hunger for spiritual growth develops. This phase includes intentional training and equipping for ministry.

Phase Three—Ministry Maturing: The leader answers the call to serve in a leadership capacity. Learning continues through formal training and ministry experiences, both good and bad. Learning from failures and mistakes is key to leadership development. Leadership ability is expanded through biblical responses to experiences, whether

⁶ Clinton, R., (2014)., *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development*. Nav Press.

good or bad, as the necessary character to lead through a crisis is developed.

Phase Four—Life Maturing: Leaders have identified their strengths and unique giftings through successes and failures. With God’s guidance, they move forward well-equipped to steward God’s Kingdom priorities.

Phase Five—Convergence: This is the life-maturing phase in which leaders serve with their most effective gifts in the most effective place. They leave the other roles and places behind and now serve with true spiritual giftedness and authority.

Phase Six - Afterglow or Celebration - This is a beautiful season to recount God’s faithfulness and celebrate what He has done. It is also an important season to focus on preparing the next generation to lead.

Growing in our leadership capacity is challenging. Character building can be slow and painful. It includes mistakes and failures. Knowing that God will not leave us alone and that He looks at our hearts and willingness to learn and grow brings hope in times of trial. Spiritual leaders must intentionally focus on learning the lessons God brings our way and remaining faithful in times of testing.

God’s leadership assignments are based on character - the greater the character, the greater the assignment.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1) Write down the six phases of leadership development that Dr. Clinton outlines. Read Genesis chapters 11-25. Match each leadership development phase to Abraham's life, writing down his circumstances, choices, and the lessons God was teaching him.

2) Write down the six phases of leadership development that Dr. Clinton outlines. Match each leadership development phase with your life, writing down circumstances, choices, and the lessons God has taught and is teaching you.



**“WHERE THERE IS NO PROPHETIC VISION THE
PEOPLE CAST OFF RESTRAINT, BUT BLESSED
IS HE WHO KEEPS THE LAW.”**

PROV. 29:18. ESV

3.

VISION

How important is having a vision? Does a vision genuinely inspire people?

There are many approaches to vision casting, both within and outside the Church. In some instances, the same approach is used. Some leaders assume that the vision is to conquer the organization's obstacles. Some Christian leaders assume that when an opportunity presents itself, it is God opening a door. They believe it must be God's will if the opportunity is there.

Other leaders duplicate success - if it worked in the past, let's keep doing it. If an organization or church is having success, it can be packaged, marketed, and replicated.

Some leaders struggle with selfish ambition and vanity and hide it behind statements filled with Scripture. Their vision is to expand their own kingdom instead of God's. Branding, marketing, name recognition, views, and clicks become metrics by which success is measured.

Others take a page from secular leadership books and start with a need analysis of the area they serve, asking the people who live there for their insights on what the church should do. While there is certainly nothing wrong with meeting needs, the approach is flawed because it allows unregenerated people to set the agenda for churches instead of God. It usually focuses on symptoms instead of root causes.

Other organizations make decisions solely on resources. What if Jesus had made that decision instead of feeding the 5,000 with a handful of fish and a few loaves of bread? If it is God's vision, resources will follow the vision. Resources do not determine the vision, as God provides what is needed to accomplish His will.

There are also personality-driven visions and leader/personality-driven visions - current trends include leaders adopting "BHAGs" or "Big Hairy Audacious Goals," as described in the book *Built to Last*. It is framed as "We need to dream big dreams for God..."

At other times, we have something in mind that we would like to see transpire and ask God to bless our plans. Man-made visions, however well-intended, will always fall short of God's miraculous, marvelous plans.

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the

earth, so are my ways higher than your way and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isa. 55:8-9 ESV

GOD'S REVELATION - THE SOURCE OF VISION

During His time on earth, Jesus provided the perfect leadership model. Where did Jesus' vision come from?

And the whole city was gathered together at the door. And he healed many who were sick with various diseases and cast out many demons. And he would not permit the demons to speak because they knew him. And rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him, and they found him and said to him, "Everyone is looking for you." And he said to them, "Let us go on to the next towns, that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.

Mark 1:33-38 ESV

We do not usually receive direction from God if we do not seek it and are not listening. To ensure that Jesus clearly heard His Heavenly Father, he removed himself from the constant clamoring of the people He was ministering to. After hearing from His Father, He had a very clear direction and succinctly restated His purpose to Peter.

The Apostle Paul was busy ministering in the bustling city of Corinth. Jews and Gentiles alike were coming to faith, but Paul was driven from the synagogue, and persecution was increasing. Luke records a vision that Paul receives during this challenging time that provided the specific instruction he needed for his ministry time in Corinth:

And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, 'Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.' And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them.

Acts 18: 9-11 ESV

How many of us would love this specific instruction from Jesus for our ministries! How do we get it? Hearing God's voice requires studying Scripture and intentional listening, as He sometimes speaks in a still, small voice. Incorporating listening into our patterns of prayer can train our ears to hear His instruction.

Having an intimate, personal experience of the heart of Jesus, the Apostle John assured church leaders and members alike that He is listening and will answer our prayers for direction. When we ask for vision, wisdom, and direction, we are always praying according to His will.

And this is the confidence that we have toward him, that if we ask anything according to his will he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him.

1 John 5:14-15 ESV

Spiritual leaders must seek God through His Word, consistent prayer, and listening in solitude, as Jesus did. Very often, when studying the Word, or when our minds and hearts are stilled in prayer and worship, the Holy Spirit quickens or brings alive God's Word to the leader's heart and mind. Because our minds are not divine, receiving confirmation in the Word and through the counsel of other mature believers are ways the spiritual leader can embrace a vision from God with confidence.

God can use circumstance to direct us, but we must be very careful to weigh the circumstance against Kingdom values and Scripture. For example, God called Abram to leave his home and family in order to

give him the land of Canaan. Abram obediently left, but almost immediately upon arrival to Canaan, there was a famine, so he packed up and went to Egypt (Genesis 12:10-20). While in Egypt, he told his wife Sarai to pretend they were not married so that he would not be harmed. Pharaoh intended to take Sarai as one of his wives. Because of Abram's deception, Pharaoh's people suffered plagues. When he discovered Sarai was married, he confronted Abram, and ejected them from Egypt back to Canaan. Was the God that called Abram not capable of providing for him? Abram's detour should serve as an example of how important our responses to circumstances can be.

WHY IS VISION IMPORTANT FOR THE SPIRITUAL LEADER?

The Hebrew translation of Proverbs. 29:18 reads, "Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint." God's Word tells us that without vision, people perish.

The Hebrew word for vision is "hazown". In context, it refers to divine communication.

The Hebrew word for restraint is "yippara". In this context, it means to let loose of restraint.

The Hebrew word for law in this verse is Torah (toe-rah), which refers to God's Law. It is easy to see the connection between receiving and communicating God's vision and His plan for His people to walk in obedience to His instructions, which will never contradict His written Word in Scripture.

People recognize the spiritual authenticity of leaders and the source of the leader's vision. When God affirms leaders and is present in their lives, the fruit will change lives. If the godly leader has an authentic vision from God, people are willing to join in. Leaders led by God's vision and living godly lives will lead their people to accept God-sized assignments.

When spiritual leaders model Christlike behavior and lead from a Spirit-filled position of biblical truth, people grow in faith and are willing to serve and obey God more fully. Regardless of the specific assignment, making disciples is a top priority for all Christian leaders.

The opposite is also true. Just as the author of Proverbs 29 articulates, when leaders are not spiritual men and women filled with the Holy Spirit and instead are hypocritical in their lifestyles, people reject their leadership and go their own way.

God's plans are impossible to achieve apart from Him, and His promises are absolute. Apart from God at work, we will only achieve

human results. Receiving vision from God and remaining faithful to quiet times of listening prayer, time in the Word, and modeling Christ-like behavior will enable spiritual leaders to faithfully steward the vision, moving God's people from where they are to where He wants them to be.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1) How can you be sure God will give you a vision? Use Scripture to support your answer.

2) Describe the process of seeking and receiving vision. Use Scripture to support your answer.

3) Set aside a minimum of one hour each morning this week. In a place of solitude, seek God for vision through prayer, listening, and His Word. Write down what God communicates to you during this time.



“BUT THE LORD SAID TO HIM, “GO, FOR HE IS A CHOSEN INSTRUMENT OF MINE TO CARRY MY NAME BEFORE THE GENTILES AND KINGS AND THE CHILDREN OF ISRAEL.”

ACTS 9:15 ESV

4.

MISSION

Spiritual leaders receive vision from God. The vision is future-focused. Out of the God-given vision, the mission unfolds and supports the vision. It provides the specific direction to fulfill the vision.

During a leader's lifetime, there may be multiple missions. The mission should always be faithful to the vision. Saul of Tarsus received a vision of Jesus that knocked him off his feet and blinded him. The reality of his vision turned the course of his life entirely upside down. From previously persecuting Christians, he immediately began to powerfully teach and preach about Jesus, Israel's Messiah, the Son of the Most High God.

The Holy Spirit instructed Paul through a vision given to Ananias that his mission was "to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel" Acts 9:15 ESV.

Paul received his mission assignments in multiple ways. The assignments were not always "Go hear and preach the Good News."

One of Paul's first assignments was to deliver funds to Jerusalem for struggling churches in Judea, as directed by the leadership in Antioch. That doesn't sound very appealing for an evangelist. Paul, directed by his overarching vision, remained absolutely faithful to preach the truth of the vision he had received—Jesus, Israel's Messiah, the Son of the Most High God.

Consider the Apostle Peter, of whom Jesus said in Matthew 16:18, "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." In Acts chapter 10, Luke describes the vision Peter received of a large sheet filled with unclean animals, reptiles, and birds coming down out of heaven. A voice instructs Peter to eat, and when Peter protests, he is admonished, "Do not call anything impure that God has made clean." Acts 10:15 ESV. The clarification of the vision unfolds as Peter is summoned to Caesarea to minister to Gentiles. While he shared the Gospel, the Holy Spirit fell upon those gathered in the room. Peter realized that God does not show favoritism and that salvation was available through Jesus to all who would receive it.

As a result of Peter's vision, his immediate mission was to share the Gospel with Cornelius, his family, and the Gentile crowd gathered there. As the meaning of his vision unfolded, it compelled Peter to

passionately defend God's grace extended to the Gentiles before the Council of apostles and elders in Jerusalem. As a result of his faithfulness, his ministry to the Gentile world opened up.

Peter and Paul received very different visions from God that, at their core, were the same - to deliver the Good News of the Gospel to the Gentiles. The same Savior, the same overarching responsibility, but different visions representing various facets of fulfilling the Great Commission, which is the commission for all followers of Christ:

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.

Matthew 28:19-20 ESV

Peter's vision opened his understanding that his mission was to preach and teach the truth of the Gospel to all who would listen, not considering any person unworthy to hear the message of the Good News, but the Apostle Paul became known as the missionary to the Gentiles. Peter and Paul had very different experiences. Both men received visions and were faithful to embrace the specific missions contained in the vision. How did they know what to do with what God had given them?

In each example, the disciples received a vision from God. In both cases, they shared their visions with the apostles and elders, known as the Jerusalem Council, presiding over the Church across the known world. At this time in history, this group represented the highest church authority. The leaders included the disciples who served in ministry with Jesus and received His instructions and teachings personally. Paul received mission instructions from this leadership body, and in Acts 13, Luke records him receiving mission-specific instruction through the leadership in Antioch. In other instances, during Paul's four missionary journeys, he received instruction directly from the Holy Spirit, the circumstance of persecution forced action, and in other instances, doors opened for ministry.

These men did not serve alone. They served with authority and under authority. They served with other leaders, built ministry teams, and raised up leaders in the churches that they founded.

By vocation, Peter was an uneducated fisherman, and Paul was a well-educated tentmaker. By faith, they heard individually from God and were empowered by the Holy Spirit. Through obedience, they fulfilled God's plans and purposes for their lives. They were influential leaders who founded, built, and strengthened churches across the known world.

As true spiritual leaders, these men helped men and women move from being disoriented to God to God being their compass to direct their paths. In Colossians 1:28-29, Paul tells the church in Colossae,

Him we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me.

The Apostle Peter, who continued to minister in the very large church in Jerusalem, instructed churches scattered through Asia Minor in his Epistles. He remained faithful to the vision of inclusivity, writing to all believers in Christ. Peter encouraged them in their suffering. He taught them about holiness and life in the Christian community and instructed their leaders—a far cry from a brash, impulsive fisherman!

By modern standards, these men had successful ministries. Acts chapter 2 records that in one day, Peter preached, and three thousand people came to faith, and Scripture tells us that this church in Jerusalem grew daily. Theologians estimate that Paul planted and ministered to fourteen churches.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

Now, it is time to examine modern-day practices. Let's ask questions in light of Jesus' example in the previous chapter and the missions of Peter and Paul.

1) How should mission success be defined? Should revenue growth measure it? The size of the crowd? Describe why Peter and Paul's missions were successful. Use Scripture to support your position.

2) Many leaders in both secular and Christian organizations exercise a "top-down" strategy to complete their missions, delivering their strategy to those beneath them to fulfill. What strategy did Peter and Paul both employ after they heard from God? Use Scripture to support your position.

3) Many spiritual leaders wrestle with the tension between vocation and calling, feeling bound financially to their vocations. By vocation, Peter was a fisherman, and Paul was a tentmaker. How did they navigate this tension in fulfilling their mission? Use Scripture to support your position.

4) Many modern leadership books caution leaders to maintain a professional distance from those they serve. Describe the relationships that Jesus, Peter, and Paul maintained with those they served with. Use Scripture to support your position.

5) Whether spiritual leaders serve in Christian organizations or secular companies, the Great Commission still applies as the overarching mission. Describe ways a spiritual leader can fulfill their mission within a secular company. Use Scripture to support your position.



**“WHOEVER WALKS IN INTEGRITY WALKS
SECURELY, BUT HE WHO MAKES HIS WAYS
CROOKED WILL BE FOUND OUT.”**

PROVERBS 10:9 ESV

5.

THE LEADER'S CHARACTER

A leader's quality of character is of utmost importance to God. God's validation of spiritual leaders stems from WHO the leader is, not WHAT the leader does. Encounters with God should yield increased faith and total surrender to God's will. The surrender to God's will drives a leader to hold nothing back. Spiritual leaders move from commitments to absolute submission to God.

A spiritual leader's accomplishments flow from surrender to God's will and should result from listening and faithfully implementing God's instructions.

THE LEADER'S INTEGRITY

Leaders must protect their integrity at all times and at all costs. Integrity means being consistent in one's behavior with firm moral boundaries in every circumstance, seen or unseen. Integrity does not happen by accident; it happens on purpose. Wise spiritual leaders implement personal policies to prevent themselves from being in

potentially compromising settings. This can include specific boundaries like not counseling someone of the opposite sex without a third party present, not traveling with someone of the opposite sex, not going out for meals alone with members of the opposite sex, and keeping one's office door ajar when meeting with members of the opposite sex.

Wise spiritual leaders understand their humanity and take proactive steps to protect the integrity of their families, ministries, and relationship with God.

Spiritual leaders must avoid even the potential for misconstrued impropriety. We live in a time of unprecedented visibility. The late Rev. Billy Graham is a tremendous example of maintaining a reputation for integrity. Rev. Graham had personal policies that included not meeting, eating, or traveling alone with a woman other than his wife.

Reputations are made and lost in a day. Much of the modern media actively seeks opportunities to identify and display immorality within the Church in an effort to disparage faith.

The wise spiritual leader builds their personal boundaries, mindful that we live out our faith before a watching world and have a responsibility to witness to the reality of a holy God. Spiritual leaders understand they are accountable to God, and nothing is unseen by Him.

Luke the physician tells us in his accounting of the life of Jesus, “For nothing is hidden that will not be made manifest, nor is anything secret that will not be known and come to light.” Luke 8:7 ESV

It is fitting that spiritual leaders be held to a higher standard of accountability in our leadership positions because God holds us to a higher standard. The Apostle James describes this principle in his Epistle:

Not many [of you] should become teachers [serving in an official teaching capacity], my brothers and sisters, for you know that we [who are teachers] will be judged by a higher standard [because we have assumed greater accountability and more condemnation if we teach incorrectly].

James 3:1 AMP

Maintaining integrity requires intentionality. Building the boundaries in advance and remaining committed to living by them can require discipline, as there can be the temptation to make exceptions when it seems expedient. Even though it can be more inconvenient or even more difficult to minister within the integrity boundaries, the benefits are immense. The good news is that God provides strength, wisdom, and protection for the leader who seeks Him and strives to live uprightly before Him.

ACCOUNTABILITY

Spiritual leaders are ultimately accountable to God for how they have lived and led. God will judge the leader for how they have stewarded what they have been given (Matthew 25:14-30). Leaders will be judged more strictly (James 3:1), as they are held accountable for their spiritual impact on the lives of those they have served.

Because of this accountability to God, spiritual leaders do well to seek out mature, godly leaders to whom they can be accountable. There is great encouragement and strengthening that comes from sharing the burdens of leadership and placing one's self in a position of accountability to others. Spiritual leaders are not lone rangers and were never intended to hold all authority and power. The Bible is full of examples of shared leadership and accountability that help us reach spiritual maturity, including the apostle Paul's description of several types of leaders necessary to build and strengthen the Church.

So Christ himself gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the pastors and teachers, to equip his 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.

Ephesians 4:11-13

THE THIEF - PRIDE

Perhaps the greatest robber of genuine spiritual leadership is pride. It lurks in man's old nature and can clothe itself in religiosity. Pride can manifest itself in subtle ways. No matter how pride manifests itself, the end result is that the glory due to God has been somehow diverted to the leader.

One often undiagnosed form of pride is self-sufficiency. Spiritual leaders are readily available to help others but can find themselves unwilling to ask for or receive help. This can be especially true in pastoral settings, where pastors often feel isolated and devoid of vulnerable relationships. This type of isolation actually makes the leader weary and more vulnerable to temptation.

Leaders need to heed their own counsel and develop safe, trustworthy relationships of the same sex where they can maintain personal accountability. Prayer partners are an essential part of this support system for spiritual leaders, who need to be humble enough to ask for prayer instead of always being the ones praying for others.

Leaders can be most vulnerable in the areas where they are most gifted. Without daily communion with God, where the mind and heart can be renewed, a subtle slide into taking credit for one's gifts and spiritual outcomes occurs. Leaders can forget the source of their

strength and anointing and, as a result, find themselves operating in their own abilities instead of within the favor of God.

When the leader is self-reliant, an additional temptation raises its head. Without God's affirmation, the leader begins craving the affirmation of man, becoming self-absorbed instead of God-absorbed. This can manifest in taking personal credit for organizational accomplishments without recognition for the team's efforts or through seeking praise in subtle ways. Subtle praise-seeking might include telling a story of an accomplishment or success, exaggerations of events, or an experience to which the listener will likely respond with admiration.

When praise-seeking occurs, the recognition of God as the source of success and the contributions of others as participants in God's work is lost. Affirmation can bring temporary pleasure, but it also creates an appetite for more. When this occurs, the focus has shifted from pleasing God to self-gratification.

GUARDING THE HEART

Because of their positions, leaders wear bullseyes on their backs. They are easy targets for the disgruntled, the rebellious, the insecure,

and the power-hungry. Unfair, dishonest, and even treacherous criticisms are leveled at leaders, and the continuous barrage can be exhausting.

Being criticized and having one's decisions constantly second-guessed comes with the territory of serving in leadership positions. Men and women who cannot navigate this should not step into leadership roles. Constructive criticism is good for leaders, but backbiting and slander can sap a leader's joy and strength. Many leaders leave their positions because they believe the position is not worth the pain.

One of the spiritual leader's difficult challenges is maintaining an open heart to people and not becoming cynical of others' intentions. Thinking the best of others as a first response can easily be torpedoed by a defensive posture and the learned response of pessimism.

When leaders have been wounded by the people they serve, it is easy for compassion to wane. As the sayings go, "The sheep have teeth," and "Hurting people hurt others." It is challenging to maintain a heart of compassion when the sheep have bitten the shepherd, and the wounds remain untended.

Jesus knew the disciples would betray Him. He called them to serve and loved them anyway. Jesus was persecuted and said His followers would be persecuted as well.

Remember the word that I said to you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours.

John 15:20 ESV

Criticism will come and go for the leader. It comes with the leadership territory as spiritual leaders do not govern from popularity polls. Criticism or opposition should not take leaders by surprise. No amount of opposition is sufficient to cancel God's will in the leader's life. Spiritual leaders must stay focused on pleasing God and not man.

Oswald Chambers concluded, "Often the crowd does not recognize a leader until he has gone, and then they build a monument for him with the stones they threw at him in life."⁷

Through the prophet Isaiah, God tells us that He is our defender and vindicator.

No weapon that is fashioned against you shall succeed, and you shall refute every tongue that rises against you in judgment. This is the heritage of the servants of the Lord and their vindication from me, declares the Lord.

Isaiah 54:17 ESV

⁷ Chambers, O., 2007, Spiritual Leadership. Moody Publishers.

Daily renewal in the Father's presence and maintaining the right relationships with people on a day-to-day basis can protect the spiritual leader from defensive pessimism. Right relationships require intentionality, as it takes time to converse with people to better understand them and seek and grant forgiveness as needed. The time spent maintaining them is an act of obedience to the Father and will yield great fruit. Matthew 5:23-24 illustrates the need to keep right relationships with one another:

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

WORLDLY DESIRES

Critics are not the only ones who paint a bullseye on the spiritual leader's back. Make no mistake - every Christian leader has a target painted on them by Satan. He hates anyone who would influence others to follow Christ.

For isolated, discouraged, and worn-out spiritual leaders, the temptation to seek relief from the pressures of leadership is always

lurking. Lust is the lurker, and it does not just come in the form of forbidden sexual relationships. Lust can come in many forms. Lust for power and lust for wealth are two other ways lust can manifest itself.

The Apostle John addresses the issue of lust in 1 John:

Do not love the world or the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the desires of the flesh and the desires of the eye and pride in possessions is not from the Father but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of God abides forever.

1 John 2:15-17 ESV

The Greek word that John used in this epistle is “epithumia.” It means a desire, craving, longing, and desire for what is forbidden. With this definition, one can imagine how many forms lust can take. In each form, lust is the action of stepping outside of biblical boundaries to fulfill a felt need or desire. Each spiritual leader must identify for themselves what forms lust takes when anger, loneliness, weariness, etc., takes over. Recognizing the temptations and planning in advance for how to manage the temptation victoriously is crucial to spiritual growth and walking uprightly before the Lord. Advance planning for victory

includes memorization of appropriate Scripture and a practical plan to turn from the temptation to something that is pleasing to God.

For example, if the temptation is pornography, memorization of 2 Corinthians 10 with the mandate to take every thought captive is a powerful verse. The next step is the practical plan of walking away from the temptation. For example, in this instance, it means moving away from the device on which the pornography can be viewed, picking up one's Bible, spending some time in the Word, or calling a friend to pray with and for them.

During these times of vulnerability, spiritual leaders can take comfort in the actions of Jesus, who Himself was tempted in every way and did not sin. He stood firm against the onslaught of Satan, wielding God's Word as His weapon of warfare. He withdrew from the pressing demands of people to pray in solitude, seeking strength and wisdom from His Father. We have the promise of God's Word that He will never allow us to be tempted beyond what we are able to bear, and He will always make a way of escape for us.

No temptation has overtaken you that is not common to man.

God is faithful, and he will not let you be tempted beyond your

ability, but with the temptation, he will also provide the way of escape, that you may be able to endure it.

1 Corinthians 10:13 ESV

GUARDING THE MIND

Leaders are thinkers. They do not have lazy, passive minds. They lead with their minds, cutting new paths and breaking through stereotypical thinking to solve profound problems. Leaders prepare by learning. They study God's Word, relentlessly pursue His presence, and persistently seek to hear His voice and know His will.

Problem-solving is a primary function of leadership. Leaders cannot afford to stagnate intellectually. They should be learners, committed to spiritual growth, readers, learners, and thinkers.

Jesus taught the disciples how to process events and circumstances around them. They were given the authority to cast out demons and heal diseases (Lk. 9:1). When faced with the subsequent impossibility of feeding hundreds of hungry people, they just wanted to send them away, with no thought of divine intervention (Lk 9:12). Jesus fed the 5,000 then sent them away across the Sea of Galilee where they were terrified by a storm.

Having witnessed and personally experienced God's miraculous power, they still did not comprehend (Mark 6:52). Jesus rebuked them for being slow to understand (Lk. 9:41). The disciples rushed from activity to activity without spending time processing the lessons from the circumstances. In Acts 1:15-17, Peter and the disciples grew in understanding, learned to process their experiences, and could withstand the fiercest persecution. Leaders must learn from the life lessons God provides, and then be transformed in the way they think through the renewing of their minds (Rom. 12:2).

SPIRITUAL EXHAUSTION

The Fully Equipped Bible Institute recently surveyed 3,000 U.S. pastors. Forty-five percent of respondents stated that they were either exhausted or managing day-to-day while telling themselves they could not continue at their current pace. Forty-seven percent stated that they do not have a fulfilling personal life apart from their ministerial duties. Ninety-four percent stated that they feel the tension between busyness and time spent with the Lord.⁸

⁸ Isaac, V., 2022., Fully Equipped Bible Institute Pastoral Survey. Elevate Publishing.

Spiritual leaders are inherently busy. Because they are respected, they are constantly called upon to speak into circumstances and relationships. Eighty-seven percent of the pastors' responses indicated they feel they are expected to have all the answers.

When leaders are suffering from spiritual exhaustion, their emotional reserves are empty. In this condition, their leadership role can slip from a high calling directed by the Holy Spirit into the dullness of a task-oriented job. Spiritually exhausted leaders go through the motions, doing what they do out of habit to make it through the day.

Wise spiritual leaders know that they must guard their relationship with Christ above all else to avoid spiritual exhaustion. It is humanly impossible to meet all the expectations placed on a spiritual leader. Just as Christ withdrew from the overwhelming needs of the pressing crowds, spiritual leaders must intentionally remove themselves to be renewed in God's presence. In addition, intentional rest (the Sabbath rest), time with family, and rejuvenating activities are all essential components to avoid spiritual burnout.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1) Outline a practical, step-by-step plan to protect your integrity including your accountability plan. This should be a minimum of one page.

2) Outline a practical, step-by-step plan to prevent physical, emotional, and spiritual exhaustion. This should be a minimum of one page.



**“AND WHEN THEY BRING YOU BEFORE THE SYNAGOGUES
AND THE RULERS AND THE AUTHORITIES, DO NOT BE
ANXIOUS ABOUT HOW YOU SHOULD DEFEND YOURSELF OR
WHAT YOU SHOULD SAY, 12 FOR THE HOLY SPIRIT WILL
TEACH YOU IN THAT VERY HOUR WHAT YOU OUGHT TO SAY.”**

LUKE 12:11-12 ESV

6.

LEADERSHIP RESPONSIBILITIES

Spiritual leaders receive vision from God, which informs their mission. God gives mission instructions in various ways, which dictate the specifics of the leader's responsibilities and day-to-day tasks. To fulfill the mission faithfully, the first responsibility of a leader is to keep the mission on track. How does a leader do that?

CONCENTRATED PRAYER

Jesus provides the perfect example of the leader's first and most important responsibility - staying in touch with the Father. Jesus' practice of prayer is recorded in all of the Gospels, but Luke describes Jesus even leaving large crowds who clamored for His help so that He could seek His Father's instructions:

But now even more the report about him went abroad, and great crowds gathered to hear him and to be healed of their infirmities. But he would withdraw to desolate places and pray.

Luke 5:15-16 ESV

No matter how pressing the need or large the crowd, Jesus made concentrated prayer a first priority. His prayer habits are recorded in all four Gospels by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John.

He prayed in solitude, either at night or early in the morning, or both, listening intently for His Father's specific instructions for day-to-day ministry. At times, the Gospels record ministry going extremely well and Jesus still leaving where He was to go elsewhere. For most of us, this would make no sense. Why leave when people are responding?

Jesus prayed before making significant decisions. He prayed during times of temptation. During the most challenging times, Jesus' response was extended prayer, as in the Garden of Gethsemane. In times of temptation, Jesus coupled fasting with prayer to focus entirely on the will and the Word of the Father. Jesus also prayed before performing many of His miracles.

Spiritual leaders who desire to steward God's vision and mission faithfully will embrace Jesus' example of concentrated prayer as the first responsibility. From fulfilling this first responsibility, the leader is equipped with the wisdom, strength, and grace to stay faithful to the vision and on task to fulfill the mission.

SERVING

After Jesus received His Father's instructions and strengthening, He focused on serving. Because His love for people was so great, Jesus never distanced Himself by sending others to do the work. He did not serve out of obligation. He served from a heart filled with love and moved by compassion. The majority of Jesus' short earthly ministry was spent in the midst of hurting, sick, and broken people. The crowds followed Him for food, for healing, and finally, for faith and hope.

Then Jesus called his disciples to him and said, "I have compassion on the crowd because they have been with me now three days and have nothing to eat. And I am unwilling to send them away hungry, lest they faint on the way.

Matt. 15:32 ESV

The disciples witnessed His compassion and response to the people's needs. They saw Him take the meager seven loaves and a few small fish, give thanks to God the Father, and step out in faith to feed four thousand men, plus women and children. Then, they participated in collecting the seven baskets of leftovers.

Jesus led by example. His authenticity, instead of audacity, inspired His followers to give up everything to follow Him. He did not demand special treatment - the Son of God slept where His disciples slept, ate what they ate, and shared financial resources with them. He

even told Peter to go catch a fish, take the coin from its' mouth, and pay Roman taxes for both of them.

Despite being God incarnate, He chose to serve in humility, even taking on the role of a servant, washing the disciples' feet at His Last Passover. With full knowledge of the crucifixion ahead of Him, Jesus was certainly entitled to enjoy His last meal on earth and be served while He shared it with men He loved. This was not the case. Faithful to the end, fully God and fully man, He remained mission-focused instead of self-focused.

EQUIPPING

He served the crowds but always made time to minister to His disciples. This is the third responsibility of the spiritual leader - to prepare others for leadership. It is not necessarily third in order of priority but simply third in the discussion of a leader's responsibilities. Jesus spent a great deal of time answering the disciples' questions.

And when he was alone, those around him with the twelve asked him about the parables. And he said to them, "To you has been given the secret of the kingdom of God, but for those outside everything is in parables..."

Leading by example through serving alongside the disciples, Jesus taught them through His actions about God's love, godly character, faith, service, and the gifts of the Holy Spirit that the disciples witnessed through the life of Jesus. Leaders who invite others to serve alongside them offer invaluable training for future leaders.

Jesus equipped them for ministry through example, teaching, and hands-on application of what they were learning. The disciples witnessed Jesus' unflinching commitment to Truth—He was not in the business of people pleasing but Truth-telling. They saw the way He responded to heal the blind, the lame, and the leprous and cast out demons, and they mirrored what they saw Him do when He was gone.

DELEGATING

Jesus led through delegation. This is the fourth responsibility of the spiritual leader. Leaders of godly character do not need to hoard power or be the focal point of all ministry success. Jesus didn't have to be the only one performing miracles. He empowered the disciples to drive out demons and heal diseases. The bigger mission was that the power of God would be on display for people desperately in need of His touch.

When spiritual leaders delegate effectively, ministry is multiplied instead of contained and restrained. God is not looking for controllers, He is looking for equippers. In Luke Chapter 9, verses 1-2, we read that Jesus empowered, and then sent His disciples out.

And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.

In Luke Chapter 10, we read that Jesus appointed seventy-two disciples, instructed them, and sent them out to heal the sick and proclaim that the Kingdom of God was at hand. Jesus sent them as an “advance team” to every town and place where He was about to go.

He sent them out to minister, to preach the Good News, and to heal the sick. He knew they would experience successes and failures as they learned through serving. He didn’t wait until He was sure they would get everything 100% right. Jesus encouraged and supported their efforts and always gave honest feedback so they could change and grow.

When they returned, Jesus rejoiced with them in their success. Scripture tells us that He was filled with joy, thanking His Father for their ministry. He was not jealous; He was fulfilling His responsibility to equip, train, empower, and send disciples to a hurting world.

Spiritual leaders stay mission-focused, refusing to allow themselves to become the focus because the goal is to reflect God's heart instead of project our personality.

COMMUNICATION

God gave Moses a vision in a burning bush. Moses had recently murdered an Egyptian. Even though he was considered a prince, Moses was in hiding. He spoke with a lisp. When God told him that he would lead the nation of Israel out of bondage in Israel, Moses had reservations about his abilities. God reminded Moses that if He had called him to serve, He was faithful to equip him for the task, even if it was communicating. God made us for His purposes. He will continue to provide for us and teach us. God is not bound to operate through our strengths, He is fully capable of transforming our weakness into usefulness for His Kingdom purposes. Moses was very reluctant to answer God's call because he was really stuck on his own capabilities instead of recognizing God's miraculous capacities.

But Moses said to the Lord, "Oh, my Lord, I am not eloquent, either in the past or since you have spoken to your servant, but I am slow of speech and of tongue." Then the Lord said to him,

“Who has made man's mouth? Who makes him mute, or deaf, or seeing, or blind? Is it not I, the Lord? Now therefore go, and I will be with your mouth and teach you what you shall speak.” But he said, “Oh, my Lord, please send someone else.” Then the anger of the Lord was kindled against Moses and he said, “Is there not Aaron, your brother, the Levite? I know that he can speak well. Behold, he is coming out to meet you, and when he sees you, he will be glad in his heart. You shall speak to him and put the words in his mouth, and I will be with your mouth and with his mouth and will teach you both what to do. He shall speak for you to the people, and he shall be your mouth, and you shall be as God to him.

Exodus 4:10-16 ESV

As Moses obediently embraced God’s vision and mission for his life, he grew in faith and leadership skill. Moses was incredibly blessed to be a vessel that God used to display His mighty power to Pharaoh, the Egyptians, and the Israelites, who all witnessed the power of God on full display. Despite his early arguing with God, Moses learned to do exactly what God directed him to do and was privileged to be the instrument God worked through for His miraculous deliverance of Israel

from the bonds of Egypt. He heard directly from God and, on one occasion, witnessed God's glory pass by him.

As our faith grows in God's abilities rather than our own, our confidence grows—we become not self-confident but God-confident. As Moses' confidence in God grew out of his intimate relationship with Him, so did his confidence that God would equip him with what he needed to lead God's people. As time passed, Moses did not need to rely on his brother Aaron to speak for him.

The life of Moses provides a powerful illustration. The most crucial component of effective communication is the Holy Spirit working in the leader's life, providing vision, mission, wisdom, and specific instructions to share with those being led.

Moses lived with those he led. He was acutely aware of their struggles and needs. Jesus lived with those He led. Modern research supports the observation that the best leaders intentionally spend time with those they lead. Top leaders spend 90% of their time with the people they lead. As leaders interact more personally or charismatically, trust increases, and influence expands.⁹

⁹ Towler, A., (2003), Retrieved 07.18.22 from <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1744-6570.2003.tb00154.x>

As a result of knowing the audience, leaders exhibit linguistic intelligence in the form of clarity of communication explicitly tailored for the people they are addressing. Effective communication is not found in a multitude of words.

Jesus exhibited this leadership skill by telling parables or stories that His audience would understand and relate to. Many of His parables are stories that are also easily retold, with consequential impact, just as any leader would want their messages shared.

Effective communication through reliance on God's ability to speak through us, His faithfulness to provide the wisdom needed, and the anointing for passionate communication through the power of the Holy Spirit creates powerful connections with those we serve. It is through this powerful communication of vision, mission, values, and instruction that an organization's DNA is developed and replicated.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1. Jesus modeled the first priority of the spiritual leader - focused prayer. Describe your current prayer life and compare it to the model of Jesus. Identify ways to more fully embrace Jesus' prayer model and practical steps to move forward in becoming more like Jesus.

2. Jesus tirelessly served, refusing to isolate Himself from everyday people and refusing to take the easy way out. Describe your current day-to-day service to God's people. Identify ways to more fully embrace Jesus' model and practical steps to move forward in becoming more like Jesus.

3. Jesus equipped the disciples, teaching and training them to become the leaders of the newly birthed Church. Describe your current practices of equipping the next generation of leaders where you serve. Identify ways to more fully embrace Jesus' model and practical steps to becoming more like Jesus.

4. Moses was reluctant to answer God's call to service. He was unsure of his personal ability to effectively communicate and motivate the Israelites to lead them out of slavery. Moses was focused on his inabilities instead of God's capabilities. Prayerfully consider ways you have been reluctant to step out in obedience to God's call as a result of your perceived inadequacies. Identify Scripture that addresses this issue. Describe practical steps to more fully embrace a biblical understanding of God's capacity to fully equip you for His service, and ways you can become more reliant on His strength and not your own.

5. Jesus delegated ministry responsibilities to provide training opportunities and to expand Kingdom ministry. Describe your current practices of delegating to the leaders you are discipling. Identify ways to more fully embrace Jesus' model of delegation and practical steps to becoming more like Jesus.

6. Moses did not want to answer God's call to lead the Israelites out of Egypt. One of the primary reasons is that he said he was not eloquent, slow of speech, and tongue. It is possible that Moses had a speech impediment. Did God not already know that? And called him anyway? If God calls you, is He capable of equipping you as a communicator? We can learn from the example of Moses as he grew in confidence with his communication skills, no longer needing Aaron as his faith in God and practice in communication grew. Jesus also modeled effective communication skills. Describe the components identified in the text that are crucial to developing strong communication skills. Analyze your communication skills in light of these components. Describe the ways your communication skills are strong. Identify practical steps you can take to improve your communication skills.



“WHATEVER YOU DO, WORK AT IT WITH ALL YOUR HEART, AS WORKING FOR THE LORD, NOT FOR HUMAN MASTERS, SINCE YOU KNOW THAT YOU WILL RECEIVE AN INHERITANCE FROM THE LORD AS A REWARD. IT IS THE LORD CHRIST YOU ARE SERVING.”

COLOSSIANS 3:23-24 NIV

7.

BUILDING KINGDOM EXCELLENCE

Why is building Kingdom excellence important? Should it be a biblical value to strive for? Perhaps a different question puts this into better perspective—does God want our best? Is He satisfied with half-hearted worship, prayer, lukewarm love, or casual handling of His Word? The answer is undoubtedly a resounding “No!”

Throughout Scripture, we are exhorted to give God our best. In Matthew 22:37, Jesus tells us that the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.”

The Apostle Paul challenged the members of the church in Rome to excellence regardless of their individual callings and responsibilities. This challenge applies to individuals, church cultures, Christian organizations, and the marketplace—anywhere believers are called to serve with the gifts and talents God has given them.

I appeal to you, therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to

God, which is your spiritual worship. Do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that by testing you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and acceptable and perfect.

For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that God has assigned. For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, in proportion to our faith; if service, in our serving; the one who teaches, in his teaching; the one who exhorts, in his exhortation; the one who contributes, in generosity; the one who leads, with zeal; the one who does acts of mercy, with cheerfulness. Let love be genuine. Abhor what is evil; hold fast to what is good. Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord.

Paul also exhorted Timothy in 2 Timothy 2:15, “Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who has no need to be ashamed, rightly handling the word of truth.” Further in his letter to Timothy, he continued in verses 20-21:

Now in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if anyone cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work.

We want to be the vessels set aside for honorable use, set apart as holy, and useful to our Master, equipped for every good work. We all want to hear our Master say, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:21).

In order to steward our gifts and talents, and be abundantly used by God for His purposes, we must diligently strive for personal excellence, as Paul describes to the church in Corinth. He used the example of athletic games, as the Corinthians were well acquainted with the Isthmian Games, a festival that included athletic competitions similar to the Olympics. Paul described the strict training simply to receive a

crown made of pine boughs, and why our strict training as believers is so much more important:

“Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last, but we do it to get a crown that will last forever.”

1 Corinthians 9:25 NIV

By now, it should be evident that God wants our best. As Christian leaders, this includes the process of discipling others to give God their best because these Scriptures do not only apply to our own lives. As leaders, then, building a culture of excellence becomes a responsibility that Christian leaders must intentionally embrace and cultivate.

SERVING WITH EXCELLENCE

Spiritual leaders will fulfill God’s plans with excellence because they strive to honor God in what they think, say, and do. Excellence is not perfection, as leaders know from their own mistakes. Excellent leadership does not happen by chance. It is hard work and happens on purpose as leaders strive to grow and serve in a way that pleases God.

Leaders teach excellence first by modeling it and then by teaching how it is achieved. The spiritual leader wisely emphasizes

prioritizing people's spiritual growth over accomplishing tasks. As people grow in spiritual maturity, their desire for excellence increases, resulting in higher standards in task quality.

When mistakes are made, or outcomes are less than optimal, responding with a teaching perspective instead of punitive actions enhances growth. Leaders don't have to be controllers. This does not mean a nonchalant attitude toward work quality or that employees should not be accountable. Corrective conversations should be seasoned with grace and a sense of humor. Moving away from a punitive philosophy to a teaching mentality helps others to serve with freedom and joy. Employees feel empowered and safe - willing to think outside the box and take risks that can lead to breakthroughs.

As spiritual leaders serve with excellence and train others to do the same, emphasizing the necessity of maintaining the right heart and mindset is crucial. Critical attitudes are damaging and highly contagious. As they spread virally, their symptoms include anxiety, distrust, pessimism, and cynicism which hinder faith and decrease work performance. Spiritual leaders cannot afford to give place to pessimism or cynicism. Daily renewal in God's presence cleanses us from bad attitudes and enables the spiritual leader to continue lovingly serving in a fallen world.

Building a culture of excellence requires training those we serve to embrace a continuous transformation model. Why? Because our organizations should reflect our call to excellence. This means that the status quo should become a “no-go” because there are always opportunities to grow and change.

Creating this culture starts with teaching your teams about God’s desire for excellence. Our service is unto God, as the Apostle Paul instructed the church in Ephesus in chapter six, verse seven, “Serve wholeheartedly, as if you were serving the Lord, not people, because you know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free.”

In the context of this Scripture, Paul was addressing slaves, but the principle of serving God and not man applies to all of us and is quite appropriate to apply in a workplace context.

It is also important to be aware that by nature, humans are resistant to change. Integrating a standard of excellence and a culture of continuous transformation includes enhanced accountability, working in teams, improved communication, and measurable metrics. In a church environment, leaders may be met with resistance, as people may believe the processes and procedures do not have a place in church.

We also encounter those who struggle with burnout, who believe that we are asking too much, that the load is already too heavy, and that they are already too busy and too stressed out to take on one more thing. People serving in ministry often carry heavy workloads, particularly if they are bi-vocational. It is important to acknowledge the concerns but also reassure people that this standard of excellence is God's standard and that the continuous transformation process will actually improve the work environment and, as time goes on, make processes more efficient, which improves workloads.

When people have this mindset, it is very easy to miss growth opportunities, as people become desensitized to what is not working. Broken processes impact ministry quality, and excellence in ministry is the goal, so the processes must be identified and improved upon.

Addressing the possibility of negative responses in advance is important to reduce the likelihood of negativity and gossip, which can undermine the change processes.

A.W. Tozer addressed this problem in the Church very directly:

In this world of corruption, there is real danger that the earnest Christian may overreact in his resistance to evil and become a victim of the religious occupational disease, cynicism. The constant need to go counter to popular trends may easily

develop in him a sour habit of fault-finding and turn him into a critic of other men's manners, without charity and without love. What makes this cynical spirit particularly dangerous is that the cynic is usually right. His analyses are accurate, and his judgments are correct, yet for all that - he is wrong, frightfully, pathetically wrong. As a cure for the sour, fault-finding attitude, I recommend the cultivation of the habit of thanksgiving. Thanksgiving has great curative powers, and a thankful heart cannot be cynical.¹⁰

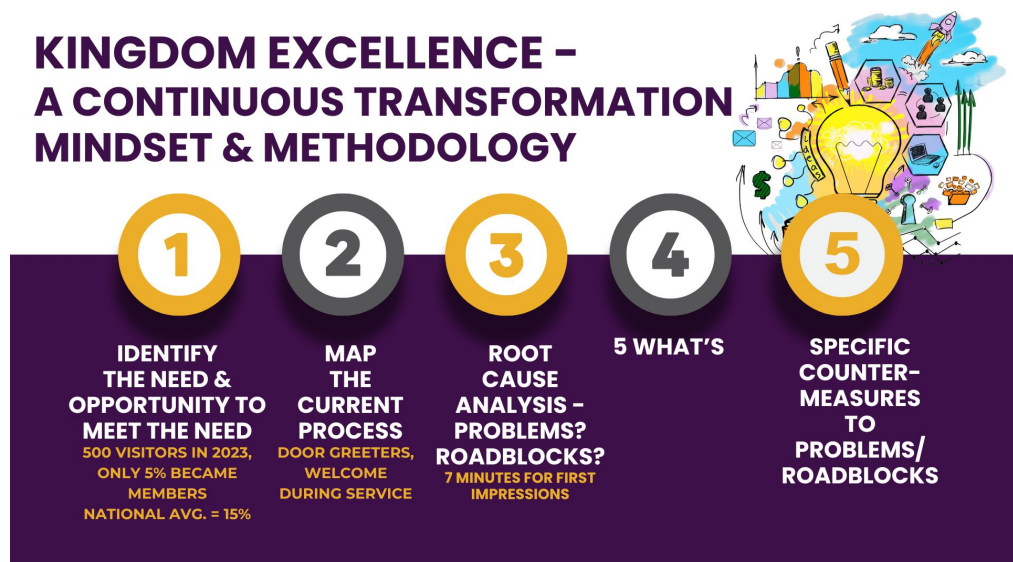
After teaching your staff about the importance of embracing excellence and a culture of continuous transformation, training and implementing specific processes that support the standard of excellence and goal of continuous transformation is crucial to success.

The continuous transformation process identifies growth and improvement opportunities and then breaks the opportunities down into incremental projects that are time-limited and task-focused so that creating positive change becomes attainable. Embracing a time-limited, task-focused model is important to success, as a recent study informs us that only 2.5% of U.S. companies successfully completed their

¹⁰ Tozer, A.W., The Essential Works of A.W. Tozer., Chapter 35. Google Books. Retrieved 03/09/24 from: <https://books.google.com/books?id=fRHmEAAAQBAJ&pg=PT270&lpg=PT270&dq>

projects. In a company as large and well-resourced as IBM, only 40% of their projects were successfully completed.¹¹

If big companies can't get this done, who can? You and your team! Why? Because, as a Christian leader, you value excellence and people. So, where does the Christian leader start to incorporate a standard of excellence and a culture of continuous transformation?



You start by gathering your staff and placing them into appropriate teams to work on projects. The teams should represent a particular area of the organization that they are involved in. Each team will identify a need and articulate the opportunity to meet the need, including identifying the goal of meeting the need.

¹¹ Andriole, S. (Dec. 1, 2020). *Why No One Can Manage Projects*. Forbes. <https://www.forbes.com/sites/steveandriole/2020/12/01/why-no-one-can-manage-projects-especially-technology-projects/?sh=48a68c8b2da2>

As an example, one church I recently worked with enjoys a substantial number of visitors each year, but the conversion rate to members is quite low. They identified a 5% visitor-to-church member conversion rate as unacceptably low and set a new annual goal of 15% visitor-to-church member conversion rate.

Their next step was to map the current process step-by-step. The team working on this process defined the greeting processes, as well as the welcome during the church service, follow-through after the service, and follow-up after the Sunday was passed.

After mapping the existing process, they were instructed to conduct a root-cause analysis. Were there problems with their process? Were there roadblocks in implementing the process? The root-cause analysis consists of asking the question, “What causes this to occur?” at least five times. With each root cause, the team then worked on countermeasures to the roadblocks. In this example, one of the “what causes this to occur?” roadblocks was that the greeters became too engaged with church members, neglecting first-time guests. The countermeasure to this roadblock was to move the greeters to the front of the building near the parking lot, where church members did not regularly gather to visit and where first-time guests could be more easily identified.

KINGDOM EXCELLENCE: CONTINUOUS TRANSFORMATION MINDSET



The team then assigned the implementation of the countermeasures to specific team members, along with due dates and the identification of people who could provide resources should progress be blocked. They also set progress check-in due dates to review progress, including metrics, to determine if adjustments needed to be made or if the project should continue as outlined.

When the due dates arrived, the team met to report outcomes and evaluate results. At this time, they also determined whether additional adjustments needed to be made or if the process had been transformed to reach the intended goal.

When the project was completed successfully, the team would then examine their area of responsibility to identify additional opportunities for transformation.

As leaders, these results should roll up to you to affirm successful completion or request additional adjustments. Below, please find an image that identifies the basic steps of the process. The presentation and the Opportunities worksheet are available for download at:

<https://bit.ly/FreeChristianResources>

Embracing the biblical value of excellence in service and the continuous transformation process will take time. Your teams will only be as consistent as you are in the implementation, measurement, and accountability processes. It has to be worked at, or it will be discarded, and you will return to the status quo. However, if you commit to the value of excellence and the process of continuous transformation and train the people you serve to do the same, the results can and will transform your organization and energize your team in the process.



**“CALL TO ME AND I WILL ANSWER YOU, AND WILL
TELL YOU GREAT AND HIDDEN THINGS THAT YOU
HAVE NOT KNOWN.”**

JEREMIAH 33:3 ESV

8.

DECISION MAKING

Christian leaders have the serious responsibility of making decisions that impact the lives of those they serve. Leadership decisions have consequences that create negative or positive outcomes in everyday life. Because of the substantial impact these decisions can make, this responsibility deserves a deeper look.

Great leaders understand how to balance emotion with reason and make decisions that positively impact themselves, their employees, their customers and stakeholders, and their organizations.”

There are scientific approaches to the leadership decision-making process. Many of the processes outlined are quite good, and there is wisdom to be gained from examining the information. The spiritual leader, however, must approach the responsibility of decision-making differently than leaders who are not given their vision and mission by God and are accountable to Him for stewardship.

Emotional intelligence is an essential attribute of influential leaders. Emotional intelligence includes self-awareness, self-management, social awareness, and relationship management. These are wonderful characteristics that enhance effective leadership. Even the most emotionally intelligent leader, however, will foundationally fall short. Human beings simply do not have the capability or capacity to think as God thinks or see the future as He does. God tells us specifically through the prophet Isaiah:

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, declares the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.

Isaiah 55:8-9 ESV

Without God's guidance, we only get human results. The results might be perfectly acceptable, but we will never accomplish God's best plans without God's guidance. The leader's decision-making responsibility so directly impacts people and organizations that wise spiritual leaders train themselves to engage in prayer as the first, most crucial step in the process.

Spending unhurried time in His Presence is critical to hearing God's voice in decision-making. Taking adequate time with God on the front end of a decision can protect from the unintended consequences of short-sighted decisions. Every decision of consequence should be viewed in the light of God's Word, His calling, and the assigned mission. Leaders who do not have God's direction will fall short of God's plans.

Humility is crucial in the decision-making process. The wise spiritual leader must recognize the limitations of a finite mind, seeking God first and then wise counsel. Proverbs 15:22 advises us, "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed."

Just as we saw illustrated in the ministries of Peter and Paul, the Holy Spirit can provide guidance through other believers. Embracing the wisdom of seeking counsel, spiritual leaders must take care not to surround themselves with "yes men." To steward God's vision and mission excellently, leaders should surround themselves with godly, mature people of faith, wisdom, courage, and integrity.

Wise leaders encourage input from others. Spiritual leaders should create an atmosphere where input is welcomed, and the contrary opinion is not quickly squelched. In receiving contrary input, leaders should be "quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to become angry" (James 1:19).

Research illustrates the benefits of asking for a second opinion, with data pointing to the second opinion as preferable. Research of over 1200 Fortune 500 companies found that leaders may waste more than 500,000 cumulative days a year on ineffective decisions.¹² Leaders must create an atmosphere where input is welcomed.

Humble spiritual leaders also recognize that the Holy Spirit has already been at work in the lives of the people they serve and the organizations they are called to. Wise leaders will seek to understand how God worked in the past to better understand the bigger picture of His plans and purposes for the organization's future. A leader may be called to accomplish specific goals at a specific, finite time in the organization's history.

A humble spiritual leader's mission, unless very explicitly directed by God and affirmed by wise counsel, should never be to walk into an organization with the plan of turning it upside down and inside out. Wise leaders should be good listeners, lifelong learners, and information gatherers. Leaders cannot afford to be secretly motivated by insecurity, possessiveness, or pride, driven to prove their capabilities by undertaking new initiatives just to prove themselves.

¹² Smet, A., Jost, G., Weiss, L., (2009), *Three Keys to Faster, Better Decisions*. McKinsey & Company. Retrieved 07.19.22 from <https://www.mckinsey.com/business-functions/people-and-organizational-performance/our-insights/three-keys-to-faster-better-decisions>

The more the leader learns about the people and organization, the greater the wisdom he can apply to decision-making. Joseph knew when he was providing leadership for the Egyptians that he had received a vision and that His role was for the provision of the Jewish people during an intense famine. He did not forget that he served the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob while providing leadership in Egypt. Despite his suffering and trials, he understood the big picture and was faithful to God's plan. And, because of his faithfulness, God's big-picture plan continued through Joseph's sons, as Genesis 48 recounts how Jacob blessed Ephraim and Manessah for the future of Israel.

By nature, most Christian leaders are visionaries. As a result, they often neglect to build the organizational structure necessary to accomplish the vision. Leaders must maintain organizational health through conflict resolution, timely communication, effective prioritization, and efficient delegation.

Prayer, wise counsel, listening, and learning are crucial to effective decision-making. Additionally, the Holy Spirit can guide you through circumstances. Luke recorded numerous occasions in Acts where Paul's decisions were directed by circumstances, including intense persecution and personal attacks against him. Wise spiritual

leaders watch for God's activity amid their experiences. They evaluate "coincidences" in light of God's Word, prayer, and counsel.

If leaders are meticulous in their decision-making process, they must stand behind the decision, even if it is unpopular or creates undesirable results. Indecisiveness, or failure to make difficult, unpopular decisions, may reflect an inordinate desire to please people instead of remaining faithful to the plans and purposes of God. "Keeping everyone happy" is not the same as pleasing God. When the leader avoids decision-making, "little kingdoms," or small centers of control and power, are set up within an organization, formed around people who have some authority and want more power.

Quite often, this avoidance method of leadership eventually creates dysfunction and discord, as people inherently want their own agendas to be recognized and followed and no longer want to recognize the authority of the organization's leader.

Procrastination can fall into this category as well. It is frequently the result of hoping "everything will just work out," thus delivering the leader from the difficulties that often surround decision-making. Taking the necessary time to pray and seek God's direction, as well as seek input from other mature leaders is not the same as "this thing will sort itself out." When God's Word provides clear direction, and the leader

knows what the right decision is but simply procrastinates, this is a passive form of disobedience. Frequent procrastination creates unhealthy passivity, which can ultimately result in disorder and chaos.

The spiritual leader's responsibility for decision-making doesn't end after the decision is made. A leader of integrity accepts the consequences of the decision, refusing to blame others or take punitive actions as a result of the leader's decision.

Inevitably, all leaders will make mistakes. When flawed decisions occur, wise leaders view them as learning opportunities. A failure is an event, not a character trait, unless it results in cover-up and blame-shifting. When decisions prove to be wrong, admitting the mistake will reveal the honest character of the leader. It also teaches those that the leader serves that making mistakes is sometimes part of the process and does not have to be covered up. Additionally, respect for the leader will grow, as honesty is one of the most valued traits employees desire from leaders.

Leaders should make crucial organizational decisions and delegate less crucial decision-making to others to continue to teach and train upcoming leaders. The delegation also frees up time so that the leader can focus on making the right decisions for the significant issues.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1) Describe in bullet point form your current decision-making process.

2) Based on the information in this chapter, restructure your decision-making process. Use Scripture to support your processes.

3) Articulate why you have ordered the steps in your new decision-making process.

4) Describe how you will implement this new decision-making process, including ways you will discipline yourself to use it to prevent falling back into former patterns.

5) Identify a current situation that requires a decision from you.

Using your new decision-making process, sort through the situation to find a decision that best aligns with God's plans and purposes. Write down each step of your decision-making process and articulate the action you are taking for your situation by the corresponding decision-making process step.



“LOOK CAREFULLY THEN HOW YOU WALK, NOT AS UNWISE BUT AS WISE, MAKING THE BEST USE OF THE TIME BECAUSE THE DAYS ARE EVIL. THEREFORE DO NOT BE FOOLISH, BUT UNDERSTAND WHAT THE WILL OF THE LORD IS.”

EPHESIANS 5:15-17 ESV

9.

DAY-TO-DAY LIFE

Time is one of the most precious resources a spiritual leader must steward. Where and how a spiritual leader chooses to allocate time substantially impacts organizational effectiveness.

According to a Harvard Business Review study, where and how CEOs are involved determines what gets done. It signals priorities.¹³ Spiritual leaders understand that God has given them their responsibilities and will graciously equip them to successfully complete them with the time they have available. The key is not to pack in more activities but rather to stay on God's agenda.

With a relentless schedule and constant stream of requests, staying on God's agenda can be easier said than done. An oft-quoted statement from Peter Drucker identifies a wise strategy for effectively managing day-to-day responsibilities. He states, "Effective executives,

¹³ Porter, M., Nohria, N., 2018. Harvard Business Review. Retrieved 08.07.22 from <https://hbr.org/2018/07/how-ceos-manage-time>

in my observation, do not start with their tasks. They start with their time.”¹⁴

Jesus set the ultimate example of effective management of day-to-day responsibilities. While His schedule and tasks changed daily, his routine of praying in the early morning and late at night did not.

“IN THESE DAYS HE WENT OUT TO THE MOUNTAIN TO PRAY, AND ALL NIGHT HE CONTINUED IN PRAYER TO GOD.”

LUKE 6:12 ESV

This Scripture identifies Jesus’ prayer life as a daily habit and illustrates that Jesus did not rush in and out of the Father’s presence. It is impossible to hear God speak without intentional listening, which requires solitude, focus, and time. Leaders who prioritize time in God’s presence to receive His instructions will receive His provision to get the job done with His best results, not the leader’s best efforts.

¹⁴ Drucker, P., (2006). *The Effective Executive: The Definitive Guide to Getting the Right Things Done*. New York: Collins Business.

LEADERS DELEGATE

Spiritual leaders typically have compassionate hearts. When people are hurting or need help, it is the hard-wired response to help when asked. Seventy-eight percent of U.S. pastors surveyed by the Fully Equipped Bible Institute indicated that they are personally involved in handling church member and lay leader conflict resolution. Eighty-eight percent of the pastors surveyed stated that all or most of the time, they are expected to have all of the answers to the organization's problems.¹⁵

Meeting all of these expectations is simply not realistic, nor is it part of the Father's plan for the leader. God never intends for His servants to be in lose-lose scenarios. Unsurprisingly, 45 percent of the U.S. pastors surveyed feel exhausted or recognize that their current pace is unsustainable.¹⁶

U.S. pastors are not alone in their plight. Moses had the same problem. As the leader of the Israelites, Moses was definitely the "go-to" guy. The people had seen him perform mighty miracles. God had given him the Ten Commandments. They knew He spoke face-to-face

¹⁵ Isaac, V. 2022. Fully Equipped Bible Institute Pastoral Survey. Elevate Education Publishing.

¹⁶ Ibid. Isaac, V. 2022.

with God. Who would want to get their advice from anyone else when Moses was right there? How could Moses possibly say no when the people needed him?

We are told in Exodus 18:13-26 that every day, long lines of people waited for Moses to settle their issues. Realizing the impossibility of Moses' situation, his father-in-law, Jethro, stepped in. He advised Moses that he needed to delegate. They set up a new system using other leaders among the Israelites, and Moses handled only the most challenging cases. As a result of effective delegation, the people received the help they need matters of national importance.

TIME INVESTMENT

Just as a leader cannot possibly solve every dispute or minister in every situation, leaders cannot possibly be in a relationship with everyone who desires it. Leaders often receive more social invitations than they can manage and recognize others' requests for deeper, more personal relationships. The compassionate heart of a spiritual leader would never want to cause hurt or rejection. Still, the wise spiritual leader must choose whom to invest time with and whom to enter into more personal relationships with.

A leader's wisely chosen friends are a source of great strength, wisdom, and joy. Deep, lasting friendships are birthed by sharing the same Kingdom priorities and by walking side by side in faithful service. Leaders need friends and should invest the time to enjoy and nurture the relationships without guilt for work that is going undone. Jesus shared meals and served side by side with the disciples. It wasn't just about business; He called them His friends.

Jesus set the model for where the spiritual leader should invest most of their time. His time on earth was quite limited, and He intentionally maximized every moment. In the same way, spiritual leaders must recognize and steward time with a Kingdom perspective. A leader's valuable time should be invested in teachable people who are willing to grow and invest in others. Time investment is Kingdom investment.

Many churches and ministry organizations have chronically needy people with significant time expectations from the leader. When the leader invests valuable time, and people do not change their behaviors or move forward to help others, continuing to invest time is no longer good stewardship. Investing large amounts of time into people who refuse to change or move forward in service to God and others limits

the organization's growth and negatively impacts those eager to learn and grow.

FAMILY PRIORITIES

With unending requests and responsibilities, spiritual leaders will never “get everything done.” The most successful leaders know that there are more important things than their jobs, and they put boundaries in place to preserve what is essential. They also recognize that leading their own families well is a top priority and primary responsibility given to them by their Heavenly Father. Wise leaders preserve their family priorities despite the external pressures of leading. They recognize the responsibility to teach and train their children in God’s ways so that they will carry their faith and leadership calling into the next generation.

Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one.[a] 5 You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might. And these words that I command you today shall be on your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, and when you walk by the way, and when you lie down, and when you rise. You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and

they shall be as frontlets between your eyes. You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.

Deuteronomy 6:4-9 ESV

Family relationships have the potential to bring leaders both their greatest joy and their most profound grief. Much depends on how leaders nurture their family relationships. When leaders fail to model in private the godly behavior they discuss publicly, heartbreaking consequences can occur. A leader may be more vulnerable at home. Emotionally and physically exhausted, leaders return home to rest and regroup for the next day's battles. Instead, another set of needs and an even deeper emotional connection are needed. When this goes unrecognized or spiritual leaders save no emotional or physical energy for family, something or someone will inevitably fill the void.

King David was a brilliant leader of Israel. In 2 Samuel Chapter 11, Scripture tells us that in the spring, when kings regularly go off to battle, David sent someone in his place. It goes on to say that he got off his couch in the late afternoon. Does this sound like an energetic leader actively leading his nation? Is it possible that David was exhausted? And in that state, more vulnerable to his next mistake of committing adultery with Bathsheba, the wife of one of his loyal commanders? Then it goes from bad to worse. David had the commander Uriah

murdered. Clearly, David was not seeking the Lord for strength, direction, or priorities in this dark period of his life. As a result of neglecting his spiritual disciplines and family priorities, the heartbreak continued.

David's son Amnon raped his half-sister, Tamar, his son Absalom murdered his son Amnon, and then he launched a rebellion against his father. As King David lay dying, his sons Adonijah and Solomon were plotting against each other for their father's throne. His failures in leading his family caused great pain and ultimately damaged the leadership of the nation of Israel.

The struggle to balance leadership roles at work and home is a genuine challenge, even for the godliest of leaders. Billy Graham had once been away from home for so long that he did not recognize his newborn baby when he saw her again. He asked his sister, who was holding the baby, whose child it was. At the end of his life, he confessed that if he could live his life over again, he would travel less and spend more time with his family.

Leaders must be intentional about preserving non-negotiable family time except for the most severe emergency. It is important to define the severe emergency in advance. Once defined, the definition should be shared with family and other leaders who may be required to step into

the ministry situation. This requires that leaders have other trained leaders around them, just as Moses learned to delegate responsibility. By delegating ministry responsibilities, the leader can fulfill their calling toward their families that no one else is qualified to fulfill.

Wise leaders use their leadership skills as much at home as they do in the workplace. Rewards for intentional, godly leadership in one's family will be directly proportional to the effort invested.

SELF-CARE

The Creator knew His creation's limits. Human beings have limits. As illustrated by the Fully Equipped Bible Institute research, leaders push so hard that they become exhausted. The unending demand on the leader's time makes it easy to become overweight, out of shape, and vulnerable to illness and temptation. They leave no margin for rest even though God emphasized the need for His creation to rest once a week and gave a command to honor the Sabbath.

Leadership is hard work. The most effective leaders understand the toll that leading takes and do their best to remain physically, emotionally, and mentally fit for their leadership roles. Influential leaders understand that self-care in the form of adequate rest, exercise, and a healthy diet is also wise stewardship.

Leaders avoid time wasters to have time for the proper priorities. There are numerous creative ways to redeem time that might otherwise be lost. Carrying a laptop to catch up on emails or to study and write can redeem otherwise lost time when waiting or traveling.

PRACTICAL APPLICATION

1) Write out a practical delegation plan. You do not have to include names but do include titles and areas of responsibility. Be specific about what responsibilities and tasks you will delegate to each person. Include an estimate of the time it will take to complete the delegated tasks and a final summary of the time you will personally save through delegation. Identify one person you will share your delegation plan with who will help you remain faithful to delegation. This should be a minimum of one page.

2) Identify specific time blocks you will set aside for your family.

Articulate a written commitment that unless there is a genuine emergency, you will guard this time for leading and nurturing your family. Identify one trusted person you will share this family commitment with and remain accountable to them. This should be a minimum of three paragraphs.

3) Create a self-care plan that includes rest, exercise, and a healthy eating plan. Describe your daily schedule for each of these three items. Include time blocks committed for each. Identify one person you will share this self-care commitment with and remain accountable to them. This should be a half-page.



“NOT ONLY THAT, BUT WE REJOICE IN OUR SUFFERINGS, KNOWING THAT SUFFERING PRODUCES ENDURANCE, AND ENDURANCE PRODUCES CHARACTER, AND CHARACTER PRODUCES HOPE, AND HOPE DOES NOT PUT US TO SHAME, BECAUSE GOD'S LOVE HAS BEEN POURED INTO OUR HEARTS THROUGH THE HOLY SPIRIT WHO HAS BEEN GIVEN TO US.”

ROMANS 5:3-5 ESV

10.

PERSEVERING THROUGH TRIALS

The call to lead as Christ led is one of enormous weight. Spiritual leaders provide care for the soul, which is of eternal significance. The calling is filled with the potential for enormous eternal impact and is fraught with opportunities to cause tremendous damage.

The crux of the challenge springs from the flawed human soul. Original sin marred mankind, and it is only by Christ's redemption that we are empowered to break free.

And you were dead in the trespasses and sins in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.

Ephesians 5:3-5 ESV

SIN WITHIN AND WITHOUT

What does original sin have to do with persevering through suffering? Everything. By implication, both leaders and followers are sinners, desperately in need of the mercy and forgiveness of God. As leaders, we each wrestle with our particular areas of weakness. Pride, jealousy, unforgiveness, bitterness, covetousness, judgment - the list can go on. We are not immune to sin but are called to battle against the old nature and the unending lure of the enemy of our souls. Daily, we must choose to overcome the temptation to sin through the power of the Holy Spirit that indwells us.

There is a second battlefield for spiritual leaders that has its own share of dangers. Each person that you lead, minister to, communicate with, who listens to your teaching or preaching, or knows someone who has, is also impacted by the fallen human nature. And, for people who are not mature in their faith, they may be unaware of just how deep the disease of sin runs in the souls of men.

All of this dialogue on the topic of original sin is to set the stage for the discussion regarding suffering and perseverance. On our personal battlefield, we cause ourselves great suffering when we choose sin instead of the Savior. As leaders, our sins are amplified. They don't just

ourselves, but they also love those we love and serve, and sometimes even those we have never met but who have received the benefits of our ministry. Suffering as a result of our own sin is not suffering for righteousness' sake. The best cure for self-inflicted suffering is the spiritual surgery of repentance, forgiveness, and restoration.

**“IF WE CONFESS OUR SINS, HE IS FAITHFUL
AND JUST TO FORGIVE US OUR SINS AND TO
CLEANSE US FROM ALL UNRIGHTEOUSNESS.”
1 JOHN 1:9 ESV**

We urgently and quickly confess our sins, humbly seeking forgiveness from God and those impacted by our sinful behavior. We make restitution, setting situations and circumstances right wherever possible. As spiritual leaders, we will sin, but we can't afford to ignore it, or its impact will spread like a virus.

To prevent the virus of sin from rampaging through our lives and those we love, the spiritual leader should always start with themselves, in daily self-examination through the reading of God's Word and prayer. Walking in daily forgiveness, not allowing the sun to set before wrongs

are righted, keeps the leader free from the entanglements of sin that can so quickly weigh us down.

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12:1-2 ESV

PERSEVERING THROUGH TRIALS

“Not only that, but we rejoice in our sufferings, knowing that suffering produces endurance, and endurance produces character, and character produces hope, and hope does not put us to shame, because God’s love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us.”

ROMANS 5:3-5 ESV

				
SIN WITHIN & WITHOUT EPH. 5:3-5 1 JN. 1:9	MAINTAINING RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS MATT. 5:23-24	IT'S ALWAYS OUR MOVE MATT. 18:15-17	WHAT IF NOTHING CHANGES? MATT. 6:14-15	WILL IT ALWAYS BE THIS HARD? PHIL. 4:11-13

Having received the admonition from the writer of Hebrews to lay aside the sin that clings so closely to us, we are challenged to run the

race of endurance that is set before us. Note the term run - not walk! The author moves forward in this passage to identify the hostility that Jesus endured from sinners, even to the point of the shedding of His blood. He identifies difficulties, including hostility from others, as a means that God uses to train us in righteousness.

Consider him who endured from sinners such hostility against himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. And have you forgotten the exhortation that addresses you as sons? "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by him. For the Lord disciplines the one he loves, and chastises every son whom he receives." It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but he disciplines us for our good, that we may share his holiness. For the moment

all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.

Hebrews 12:3-11 ESV

The author of Hebrews articulates the struggles that we face from within and without—our own sin and the sin of those around us. It could sound like a hopeless mess, but our loving Heavenly Father promises that if we endure the hostility of others and resist sinning ourselves, the peaceful fruit of righteousness (right relationship with God) will expand in our lives.

MAINTAINING RIGHT RELATIONSHIPS

None of us are perfect, and none of us minister to perfect people. The old adage, “The sheep have teeth, ” refers to the biting words and deeds of those in our own congregations and the Church at large. Wounds from those we serve can be particularly painful, as we have chosen to pour ourselves out in service to them. When this happens repeatedly, and over a long period of time, the bonds of Christian love can get very frayed indeed. These wounds fester, and the damage can compound without swift action.

So if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar and go. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Matthew 5:23-24 ESV

The passage is in a larger context about right relationships between believers. You will notice Jesus states in this instruction that before we worship if we realize that someone has something against us, we should go to the offended person to attempt to make things right. Maintaining right relationships matters to God, as unconfessed sin and unresolved conflict can negatively impact our worship.

It is critical to note that the instruction was not about when we are wounded by someone, but when we know we have wounded someone else. It might be easy to think, "Well, if they are upset, that's their problem. They can come talk to me. As far as I can tell, I didn't do anything wrong." While this might let us off the hook temporarily, it is the spiritual leader's responsibility to maintain right relationships with others when it is possible. Maintaining our relationships in loving humility on a daily basis protects our spirits from being weighed down

with anger, resentment, hurt, grief, disillusionment, isolation, etc. - the results of being wounded by people we love and serve.

The Apostle Paul reminds us of our responsibility in his letter to the Romans, “Do not repay anyone evil for evil. Be careful to do what is right in the eyes of everyone. If it is possible, as far as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone.” (Romans 12:17-18).

IT'S ALWAYS OUR MOVE

We might expect that if someone has hurt us, they should come to us to seek forgiveness. While we hope this is the case, it sadly is not often the norm. This instruction from Jesus in Matthew chapter 18 is for when we have been wounded by our Christian brothers and sisters.

If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you, that every charge may be established by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church. And if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector.

Matthew 18:15-17

Honesty in relationships creates vulnerability, and vulnerability requires both courage and humility. Why risk a big scene or cause more drama? It could be easier to just hope it will all just eventually blow over. Unfortunately, unresolved conflict more frequently blows up instead of blows over. More important than which approach creates less risk is our instruction from Jesus, who is very explicit in His direction about going to our brother or sister, whether we have offended them or they have offended us.

How does this relate to the topic of suffering and perseverance? A great question. A recent survey of U.S. pastors by the Barna Group illustrated the result of not maintaining right relationships. Over 65% stated that they feel lonely and unsupported. Loneliness has a substantial impact on mental health, which has a trickle-down impact on physical well-being. Conversely, previous research from the Barna Group identifies what pastors are doing to prevent burnout, and the key is to nourish meaningful relationships.

Pastors who are bucking the trend toward burnout tend to portray a strong connection with others around them, a flourishing connection with God and a sense of optimism about the future of the Church. They are energized by their jobs, feel well-supported by the people in their lives, and are generally

satisfied with their mental, emotional, and spiritual health. ...

Taking steps to build more spiritual and mental health support can be a transformative part of holding off burnout and working toward quality solutions for other stressors in the job.”¹⁷

WHAT IF NOTHING CHANGES

Maintaining right relationships despite the wounds that inevitably occur is crucial to one’s relationship with Jesus and to the ability to persevere despite difficulties. While it is always our move to restore relationships, we can’t make people move in the right direction. If we have been faithful, and nothing changes in the relationship, we have to move on. We move on in the peace of Christ, with a clean conscience, knowing that as far as it is up to us, we have done what we can.

We have to forgive the offense and the offender, regardless of their response to our reconciliatory efforts. We forgive because we, too, need forgiveness. Forgiving frees our hearts from the bondage of

¹⁷ Barna, G. (2023, July 12). 7-Year Trends: Pastors Feel More Loneliness & Less Support, The Barna Group.

<https://www.barna.com/research/pastor-support-systems/>

unforgiveness and protects us from allowing roots of bitterness and mistrust to spring up in our spirits.

For if you forgive others their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you, but if you do not forgive others their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses.

Matthew 6:14-15 ESV

As we move forward in obedience, embracing Christ's commands regarding maintaining right relationships, the peaceable fruit of righteousness expands in our souls, allowing us to rest in our relationship with our Heavenly Father despite the external trials.

WILL IT ALWAYS BE THIS HARD?

Many of us serving in ministry have dreams of what we hope the future will hold. Perhaps it is expanded ministry or freedom from the necessity of bi-vocational ministry where we work in both the marketplace and the Church. Perhaps it is a church building, a staff to share some of the burden, and the finances to fund church programs and congregational needs.

Some who read this book will be new to spiritual leadership, while others are seasoned leaders. All spiritual leaders are dreamers with

hopes and aspirations. Some have been praying for change for years or for a specific breakthrough in ministry or family life. Others are battle-weary and now drudge through the motions of pastoral ministry without personally sharing in the hope and healing they proclaim.

So... will it always be this hard? Yes. And no. Sorry if that shocks you, but we are not here on earth to “live our best life now.” Regarding the “yes, it will always be hard” part, we are supposed to be engaged in spiritual warfare, battling against the enemy who seeks to devour the souls of men. The Apostle Paul described the battle that we are engaged in, and it is not a passive one. If you are not battling, you are not ministering.

For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.

Ephesians 6:12 ESV

Don't be deceived by big church buildings or abundant financial resources. If the leaders inside the buildings are battling for the souls of men and women, their lives are not easy. Having been beaten, stoned,

left for dead, shipwrecked, imprisoned, and rejected by his own people, the Apostle Paul stated,

Not that I am speaking of being in need, for I have learned in whatever situation I am to be content. I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:11-13

Do not mistake financial resources for easy ministry, or a large staff to eliminate the burdens. While resources and staff do help in the practical arena, each area of expanded ministry brings with it increased spiritual responsibility. Guard your heart against the “If Only’s” so that you can serve faithfully where God has placed you. If God brings ministry expansion, financial resources, more staff, etc., remember that you are blessed to be a blessing, and must steward the resources in a manner pleasing to the King.

For the “no” part, we serve a gracious God who will never give us more than what He makes a way for us to bear. He also provides times of rest, refreshing, and renewal. There are seasons to ministry, and some are more strenuous than others. But, battling against darkness is

just that - a battle. And don't forget the promise of our Lord when we experience persecution,

Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when others revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Matthew 5:10-12 ESV

As you endure difficulties, God's character is formed within you. The character of God in you creates hope, and hope in the promises of God is never in vain. We are faithful because He is faithful, and so we persevere because serving our King is the highest honor and greatest reward on earth, while we await our Heavenly home.

3. Have you been hurt by people you have been serving? Describe how you handled the hurt. In light of Scripture, describe how you will manage offenses against you in the future.

4. Have you struggled with the “if only” statements? Identify each “If Only” and pair it with Scripture truth that puts this desire in biblical perspective. An example of an “If Only” statement is: “If only I had more money, I could accomplish more with my ministry.”

5. Develop an intentional plan of maintaining right relationships on a daily basis. Be specific about the steps you will take each day to walk in right relationship with God and others. Use Scripture to support your plan.



**“I HAVE FOUGHT THE GOOD FIGHT,
I HAVE FINISHED THE RACE,
I HAVE KEPT THE FAITH.
HENCEFORTH THERE IS LAID UP FOR ME
THE CROWN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS, WHICH THE LORD,
THE RIGHTEOUS JUDGE,
WILL AWARD TO ME ON THAT DAY...”
2 TIMOTHY 4:6-8 ESV**

11.

FINISHING STRONG

The Apostle Paul was preparing for his death at the hands of the Romans. He was not afraid to die. He could confidently tell Timothy that his work on earth was complete, that he had been faithful, and that the Lord would reward him for fighting the good fight and keeping the faith.

Luke recounts in Acts chapter nine that after receiving his calling, the Apostle Paul wasted no time wallowing in past sin or having an identity crisis. He was empowered by the Holy Spirit and immediately went to work proclaiming the Good News that Jesus was indeed the Messiah.

Though at times he had to make tents to pay the bills, and regardless of being deserted by a ministry companion, beaten, stoned and left for dead, shipwrecked, bitten by a poisonous snake, persecuted by the Jews, and imprisoned for the Gospel, Paul had discovered the strength and joy that springs from faithful obedience to the call of Christ.

I know how to be brought low, and I know how to abound. In any and every circumstance, I have learned the secret of facing plenty and hunger, abundance and need. I can do all things through him who strengthens me.

Philippians 4:12-13 ESV

Spiritual leaders do not prioritize monetary compensation, power, and prestige. For the spiritual leader, the rewards are different. As affirmed by the Apostle Paul, the reward comes in the form of God's pleasure, His presence, and the joy of witnessing God's work both in and around us. We can rejoice in the salvation of those who are lost and the joy of watching those we have invested in, both family and friends, step forward to fulfill their callings.

When we have been faithful in stewarding God's gifts and calling, we can rest in confidence that God will water and cause the seed we have sown to bear fruit. His Word does not return void, and man will not stop His work.

In conclusion, spiritual leadership is a high calling and a tremendous responsibility. When we embrace Kingdom priorities and surrender to God's wisdom and instruction in all areas of our lives, He will bless the work and multiply the fruit so that when we are finished, we will hear:

**“HIS MASTER SAID TO HIM, ‘WELL DONE,
GOOD AND FAITHFUL SERVANT. YOU HAVE
BEEN FAITHFUL OVER A LITTLE; I WILL SET
YOU OVER MUCH. ENTER INTO THE JOY OF
YOUR MASTER.’”**

MATTHEW 25:21



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"...that the man of God may
be complete, equipped
for every good work..."
2 Timothy
3:16-17

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Victoria Isaac is called to Christian education and is passionate about Christian discipleship training. She is the President of the Fully Equipped Bible Institute. It is a non-profit ministry dedicated to equipping and discipling Christian leaders around the globe, regardless of geographic or financial hurdles. She has been an adjunct professor at numerous Christian universities, teaching and writing course curricula.



From serving the homeless in inner cities, advocating for orphans, and ministering in Africa, her heart is drawn to the downtrodden and broken. Dr. Isaac's missions background deeply impacted her mindset for equipping the Church to be the hands and feet of Jesus to the "least of these."

Dr. Isaac loves God's Word deeply. She has spent the last fifteen years teaching through the Bible from Genesis through Revelation in a chapter-by-chapter, verse-by-verse format.

She draws on this extensive study of Scripture as a foundation for equipping Christian leaders with strong biblical foundations and practical discipleship training tools.

Immensely blessed as a wife, mother, and grandmother, Victoria's family is a source of deep joy and great inspiration. Her husband, Dr. Stephen Isaac, serves as the senior pastor of Reunion Church, a wonderful community of believers who are passionate about following Jesus. Dr. Isaac also serves as Provost of the Fully Equipped Bible Institute. By God's grace, Stephen and Victoria are both deeply committed to serving the local church and the global church through loving, serving, and teaching God's Word.



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"...that the man of God may
be complete, equipped
for every good work..."
2 Timothy
3:16-17

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Spiritual Leadership, More Than a Skillset, is available as an online course titled "Spiritual Leadership." Other courses are available online to equip believers with the biblical tools necessary to navigate this fallen world, including an intensive Christian Leadership training program and programs for pastoral training.

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Spiritual Leadership - More Than a Skillset

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