

THE PROCESS OF A LEADER PART 2

BY PASTOR JORDAN BIEL

DANIEL, DAVID & NEHEMIAH

What Leaders Are Saying About “The Process of a Leader”

“Not only is Jordan a smart leader, he’s a humble and Godly leader. THE PROCESS is filled with wisdom, story and pragmatic application to deepen your walk with Abba, and to sharpen and root your leadership. Embrace the promise, embrace the journey. This book is worth your time and energy.”

- Christopher Beard Peoples Church Cincinnati Peoples Church Network Author of *Remarkable*

“This book is a must read for every young leader endeavoring to make an eternal difference. I’ve heard it said that joy is in the journey, not in the destination. Jordan Biel does a masterful job not only of helping leaders navigate around the pitfalls that could detour them from their destination, but also in immersing us in the mindset necessary to find joy in every stage of the journey. If God has given you a dream, this book will equip you to see it become a reality.”

- Andy Lehmann, Executive Director 415 Leaders

Dedication:

This book is dedicated to my beautiful wife Danielle. Danielle, you've taught me what it means to follow Jesus, to love people well, no matter what their background is or questions they have. You allowed me to be gone many, many times to minister and follow my music dreams early in our marriage. You have sacrificed so much for the Kingdom! You've shown me such incredible kindness. You were my best friend when I was fourteen and you still are. You're still the love of my life, and I am so grateful that I get to follow Jesus with you and we spend every day together! You are stunningly beautiful, inside and out!

INTRODUCTION

The *process* of a godly leader who finishes strong.

I'm so glad you're reading this. If someone gave you this book or you decided to read it, it tells me that you're called to be a leader in the Kingdom of God. Whether you're a businessman who follows Christ, a missionary who's going across the globe, or a teenager who just knows that you want your life to matter, whoever you are, I'm thrilled you're going to take this journey with me. I encourage you to read with an open heart.

It's possible you've read the first edition of this where I covered the stories of Joseph and Gideon. If you haven't, I encourage you to check that out as it shares the same process that God took them through in their journey of leadership. There are some beautiful insights in their stories that I believe will speak to your heart.

Growing up, my dad used to grab my shoulders before I'd head off to school and say "Son, you're going to be a world-changer." I was crazy enough to believe him. I've wanted God to use my life however He sees fit since I was a teen. I hope you do too. If you'll step out in faith and activate the grace gifts that God's already given you and begin to walk in the truth of being God's child, you'll discover the joy that life is meant to have! God will take you on some amazing adventures!

I believe that every child of God is uniquely wired to impact others with their God-given talents all for the purpose of displaying Father God's love. Yet so many, who have great potential to influence, never begin to truly lead, or worse, they begin but give up. Many leaders start strong, then end their leadership because of a sexual affair, a loss of direction, or even a tragedy. These two traps of victimhood or pride are traps set by the enemy to stop you from becoming the leader and more importantly, the person God intends you to become. This book is an attempt to help prevent that from being your story. You don't have to be a statistic. You can be a success! I believe those who quit do so because they didn't know *the process* of becoming a godly leader and ultimately what leadership is all about.

I ran cross country as a teenager. If I didn't know I was in a race, how long it was, and the reward at the finish line, I would've easily been tempted to quit. If I wasn't warned about the cramps and taught how to pace myself, I would've quit.

Many Christians jump into ministry or organizational leadership without being warned of its pitfalls, cramps, and process. It's like thinking you're about to run the 200 meter only to discover that you're actually in the marathon, there's a horrible pain under your ribs, and you're only at mile two! The fact is, just like running, when I understand the race I'm in, its length, process, and reward, I'm much more likely to endure and finish strong. You too can run "the race set before you" and finish strong "according to the grace given to you." When you understand the process of becoming the leader, God intends you to become one, and you will be much more likely to endure that process, instead of quitting.

Every Christian leader who has come to a place of influence has gone through what I'm calling "the process." It seems that the more I read about the Biblical heroes of our faith or modern day leaders in Christianity, their lives seem to follow a pattern or a process. It's like they all go through a certain set of seasons or stages before attaining such influence. The Holy Spirit put this book in my heart to encourage you to let God do His work in you by learning from those who've gone before us.

My goal is to take a look at a few leaders in the Old Testament and recognize the process that they endured to see the promise the Lord gave them come to life! I pray you realize what they came to realize—Christian leadership is first and foremost about sonship. In today's culture, all too often we see leaders put projects above people or finish lines above relationships. Usually, that's because the leader has yet to value sonship above all. I want this book to inspire you to reach higher but more than that, I hope it reminds you of what's most important in life. After all, if we can see the process for what it is, we're more likely to endure it and reach the finish line. Like you, I want Jesus to say to me "Well done, good and faithful servant. Enter into your Master's joy!" That, my friend, is true success!

I want you to *know what it takes* to not only lead at the top but stay at the top *and* keep your friendships and your family. Those are *not* worth sacrificing on the altar of "success."

God wants you to succeed.

God wants your marriage to succeed. Sacrificing your marriage on the altar of “success” is not ok and not what God wants.

God wants you to make it as a leader and Satan doesn't. Period.

Satan wants to take you out. He wants to take me out. Why? His enemy is God, because he wants to be God; the Bible makes that clear. So why would the devil mess with you? Because you are the prized possession of God! You are His “special creation,” the Bible says. In fact, you are the image of God on the earth, so wouldn't it make sense for Satan to take out his anger toward God on you? You need to know who you are and understand the value you have as a special creation of God.

And if you're called to leadership, the target on your back is even bigger. Why? Satan doesn't want you to know how loved you are by Abba, Father God. Satan doesn't want you to know who you are and the power of God within you!

The truth is that you have the capacity to impact others for the Kingdom of Jesus and be a history maker and Kingdom builder, *and* find joy in it! You have the potential inside you to live out Father God's dream for your life and impact nations! You have miracles in your future! Jesus has promised to be with you, to empower you, to comfort you, and partner with you in bringing Heaven to Earth.

Nothing and I mean nothing is more meaningful than to build God's Kingdom using the gifts God's given you. If you're ready to live a meaningful life, read on. If you're tired of status quo, read on. If you're tired of seeing the problems that keep you up at night, then read on. If you want to endure till the end and *not* have an asterisk by your name, then read on. If you're ready to lead, read on.

In my Dad's generation, it was Jimmy Swaggart. In my generation it's Bill Hybels, Carl Lentz, or even Theologian Ravi Zacharias. These men impacted millions for Jesus Christ. They likely started out on fire for God with a heart of integrity, but their moral failures not only saddened the Body of Christ but also undoubtedly led some astray. Maybe there were some insecurities in their heart that led to some bad motivations. The sad part is that there are countless men and women in between who quit the ministry or quit being a Christian leader because:

- a) they fall for a trap set by Satan and lose their integrity
- b) they get too tired and burn out
- c) they begin to trust themselves instead of God
- d) they believe they are what they do

Think of this book as a guide on how to finish strong. This book invites you to trust God all the way through the p.r.o.c.e.s.s. of a leader. This book aims to inspire you with stories of others

who've paved the way, blazing a trail for you yourself to have faith. We are standing on the shoulders of men and women who've gone before us—those who trusted God despite all the naysayers, critics, and skeptics. Because of their faith, we now follow Jesus. Because of their courage, we now have learned to put our trust in God and His holy Word. If my Dad and Mom hadn't given their lives wholeheartedly to Jesus over thirty years ago and faithfully served Him ever since, I wouldn't be the man I am today. My wife, our four daughters, our foster child(ren), my three sisters and their children, and hundreds in our area have been impacted by my parents' faithfulness. Their faith and faithfulness have paved the way for me.

Here are a few things I want to ask you. Will you finish strong? Will you let the Holy Spirit do His work in you? Who will you pave the way for? What will your obedience to God result in? Will you fight the good fight and finish the race? Will you let God form you into the image of Jesus? Will you let the Holy Spirit continue His work of building your character into the character of Christ? Too many Christian leaders focus too much on calling and charisma and too little on character. It's time we change that. Will you trust the p.r.o.c.e.s.s. of a leader?

CHAPTER 1—THE P.R.O.C.E.S.S

THE VIEW IS WORTH THE CLIMB

In 1953, something remarkable happened. The first two people to ever climb to the top of Mount Everest made their mark in history. Edmond Hillary and Nepalese Norway reached the top at 11:30 a.m. after weeks of climbing. Any climber who climbs above 8,000 feet could get

mountain sickness. There's the obvious danger of falling to your death. The bitter cold took the lives of many who had tried before them. Because food sources are rare on the climb, the teams must plan, purchase, and then carry all of their food and supplies with them up the mountain. Most teams hire Sherpas to help carry their supplies up the mountain and Nepalese was one of them. Edmond and Nepalese planned for months and established a team of 11 elite physical candidates and established 9 camps.

This was an incredibly dangerous mission. In fact, two men before them reached 300 feet below the summit but had to turn around due to a snow storm. Edmond and Nepalese enjoyed the view at the summit of Everest but only because they didn't give up during the climb.

Now think about this: they were on the top of that mountain for 15 minutes. 15 minutes! Now it's reported they said the view was "worth it," and I believe that. But listen, Christian leader! Heaven is much longer than 15 minutes! Heaven is eternity and based on what Jesus teaches us in His Word, how you spend your life here affects what you experience there. Your incredible view in the New Jerusalem will not last 15 minutes but for decades and decades and decades! Eternity! The climb of becoming the person God wants you to be—becoming like the Son—is worth it! The view is worth the climb! For all of eternity, you'll be in the presence of Jesus, not only worshiping Him but also ruling and reigning with Him. Don't you think you and I should do everything in our power to give it our all while we have this life, what David calls "a morning mist" on earth? There's a process to this climb. There are treacherous paths with cliffs

on either side, but you will hear a voice behind you saying “This is the way, walk in it,” and the Holy Spirit will guide you into all truth if you’ll just trust Him.

If you’ll trust God and truly hear what you’re about to read, you’ll get to the end of your life as a leader, knowing that you impacted culture for Jesus Christ in a profound way without losing your salvation, your family, or your integrity. Now *that* is something to aim for! Don’t you think? So, what’s the *process*?

There are seven stages in the p r o c e s s of a leader. They are:

P PROMISE

R REALITY

O OBSTACLES

C CHARACTER TESTS

E ENDURANCE

S SUCCESS

S SONSHIP

While you'll get the heart of the book in this introduction, it's in the stories of David, Daniel and Nehemiah that you will find your story. We'll peel back the curtain of history and take a close look at the lives of our Biblical heroes. We'll often find ourselves in their story and I'm believing God is going to speak to your heart and draw you closer to His.

We're going to see this process play out in the life of David, Nehemiah and Daniel, and even Jesus. We'll be made aware of where we are in the process of becoming a leader—namely the leader God wants us to be. Anyone with influence is a leader. Do you have influence over a group? Then you're a leader. Are you a parent? Then you are a leader, the leader of your home. Are you on staff at a church? There are those who are looking to you for answers and hope. Are you a manager or executive at your company? God has given you that position and you have the potential to not only influence them for Christ, but be someone they can trust and look up to for years. This is the meaningful life, the abundant life Jesus offers!

Do you want to have great influence, remain in leadership, and lead the way GOD intends you to lead? Then read on. That's the aim of this book.

My prayer is that you'll see that every leader whom God raises up in the marketplace, in the ministry, or on the mission field will all go through a similar process. What determines who will complete the process and remain a leader? How is influence measured? Why is integrity so important to leadership? And why is it important to know the process? This is what we're going to discover together.

If you don't know the process, then you won't endure it. If you don't endure the process of leadership, you won't truly become the leader God intends you to be, or at best, you'll fall far short of the potential within you. I want to help you endure the process. I want this book to encourage and equip you to fight the good fight and *finish* the race. There's no reason you should get to the end of your life and have any regrets. Sure, we'll all have a few. But too many Christian leaders have started out strong but then had a major blunder, and that doesn't have to be your story. Too many leaders have potential, stored up energy, and power given by the Holy Spirit, which never gets used and then broken lives remain broken.

This book is aimed at helping you reach your full potential, avoiding the pitfalls and becoming the leader God destined you to become. You can reach your full potential and have major impact on the world without losing your family. You can reach that pinnacle without compromise. It can be done. I've seen it. I want to help you do it too! I'm not saying you'll be perfect. Only Jesus is perfect. But you can learn to submit to the Spirit of Jesus who will purify you and empower you to build His Kingdom.

More important than the leader you'll become is the person you'll become in the process. That's what God cares about most—your heart. Sadly, too many leaders worry only about the destination or next quarter's goal and never pay attention to their own heart and the person they're becoming. God cares more about friendship with you than blessing you with "success." It's true God wants to prosper you, that we know from Scripture. It's more important to the Lord, however, that you develop a love for Him so you can say like David, "In my integrity, you hide

me in Your presence.” That friendship with God, that kind of relationship happens when you are willing to go through the process. Knowing Jesus is the treasure!

The bedrock of this book will be an acronym for the word *process*. There are seven stages we’ll take as a leader toward our destination of fully understanding what God wants most—sonship. Our destination is this: our full potential as a brother or sister of Christ, unmarred by asterisks.

The seven-stage P R O C E S S that I believe every Christian leader will face:

Promise | Reality | Obstacles | Character Tests | Endurance | Success | Sonship

This process will, of course, be repeated throughout the life of a leader. Once you arrive at any level of “success,” you’ll once again face obstacles—problems you and your team need to solve creatively with the help of the Holy Spirit. You’ll undoubtedly face character tests well into your years of experience as a Christian leader. You and I will be tempted until the day we go to be with the Lord to give up in moments of weakness, to give in in moments of temptation, and to give glory to ourselves instead of God to whom all glory belongs.

I just want you and every young leader called into ministry or leadership to be able to say like the Apostle Paul said, “I have finished the race. I have kept the faith.” I want this for myself. Paul, in essence, said, “I have completed the process of being poured out for Christ. I’ve come as close to knowing Christ on this side of heaven as possible.” I pray that we will be able to say the

same thing when our days are near their end. I pray that we keep a pure heart, knowing we've obeyed the Master in everything He asked of us. I don't pretend that this book was my idea; I truly believe this is a message from the Lord to leaders. I pray it speaks to you.

Promise Reality Obstacles Character Tests Endurance Success Sonship

PROMISE

God gives us an amazing promise. For each of us, it's a little different. If you're like me, you had a moment (or two) where God spoke to your heart and gave you a glimpse into your future—a future that would honor Him and make your life meaningful and significant.

All of us want our lives to be meaningful. Sadly, many people assume that sense of meaning, happiness, or joy will come from achievements or climbing the ladder. While this book does give you some advice that, if followed, will empower you to keep climbing, that's not what life's about. A life that is meaningful is one that is serving God by serving others and believing the promises God has spoken about. You won't feel your life is meaningful because of a certain balance in your bank account. You won't feel your life is meaningful when you are finally given the role of _____. Fill in the blank. Your life takes on true meaning and joy when you know Jesus Christ personally and step into your calling—the promises over your life.

This promise God has given you (or is going to give you) is special and unique. It's different than mine, different than your parents likely, and different than maybe anyone you

know. One of the first pitfalls many leaders fall into is chasing after another person's promise. Only God can give you your identity. No man can do that. No company can do that. No ministry or minister can do that. Your calling and "promise" is unique. So how do we find it?

Your promise is often related to a conflict in your heart. Why? Your calling is often related to your conflict. Your promise is related to your problem.

I'd like to ask you a question. What's the problem that bothers you the most? What is it that keeps you up at night? What is it that causes you to say to yourself, "Someone needs to do something about that!" That "someone" might be you! That conflict is an indicator of the area you're likely called to. That conflict is leading you to a promise that God wants to give you for the benefit of others!

Sometimes there's a small burning ember covered in dust deep within you. Maybe you know what I'm talking about. Maybe you have a dream, a promise, or a picture in your mind of what "could be" in your future. It's possible God put that there! Maybe there's a problem you want to solve or least you think, "Someone should do something about that!" Maybe you are that someone.

A PROMISE IN MY LIFE

I remember in 2004 in Pensacola, Florida, standing in a Christian Music Store (remember when we had those?) and on one of the TVs came a service of a live album recording at Hillsong.

I remember standing there. All I was doing was wasting time a bit because I was going to be 30 minutes early for work. So I had gone into the mall to kill time. Next thing I know I was crying in a bookstore. God gave me a “suddenly” that I wasn’t expecting. There was already an ember burning in my heart—a desire to write songs that people could use in worship. After all, that’s a big reason why I was attending Bible College at the Brownsville Revival.

I looked at the TV and I saw someone kneeling down in this huge auditorium filled with people worshipping Jesus and singing about their love of Jesus with passion. I suddenly heard the Lord say loud and clear, “I’m going to do this in your life, if you’ll let Me. I’ll give you songs for the nations.” I was in tears. I was shocked, and I certainly didn’t know what all that meant. I still don’t know all that it means. I just know that God gave me a promise that day. It was echoed over the years in other situations, where prophetic words were given to me, promising me that God was going to use me, my music, and my instruments. All of these words were from people that usually didn’t know me.

I felt totally inadequate because I had failed five auditions to be a worship leader! I was not feeling “confident” about that sort of calling. To be honest, I was getting close to quitting. Nonetheless, the promise was there, whispered to my heart with the booming voice of a gentle Father. Two decades later, I’ve had the opportunity over and over to lead people into worship to Jesus and it’s one of the most beautiful things in life. To hear people pour out their praise to Jesus, the Lamb of God and to sense His nearness, there’s nothing like it! God made good on His promise despite my insecurities and fears!

I've written down many of the promises Abba Father has given me. Some of them have happened right in front of my eyes and some are yet to come. I hold on to those promises that are yet to come with total assurance that God is going to bring them about, not because of my abilities but because of His! I know that He is the Author and Finisher of my faith.

“He who began a good work in me will bring to completion on that great day.”

Philippians 1:6

I pray about my role in these promises. I wrestle with God as Jacob did. Like Jacob, I often walk away with a limp. I think more people need to walk with a limp—an unsettling need to contend with God for His purpose and promises to be fulfilled in their life.

I'm learning just like you are. I'm wrestling with the will and purposes of God. I'm leaning in to hear His voice, and sometimes His voice scares me! Later in Chapter 1, I'll share with you about our church planting vision and how God spoke to me through people. God shared a promise with me that shook me to my core and tested my faith in Him. God is now fulfilling that promise right before my eyes!

My wife, Danielle, received this word about being a “mother” over and over in the last few years. What did God do next? God put a burden for foster care in both of our hearts. We suddenly felt *this* was a problem that had to be solved. We had a conflict in our hearts thinking “These kids should've have to endure feeling unwanted or even neglected.” That sense of

conflict, that feeling of “this isn’t right” led us to our calling. You, too, have a calling—a promise of God on your life—and it’s likely connected to a conflict in your heart.

Too many leaders are settling in, content with status quo. Too many leaders are leading with the wrong motivation. Too many are leading from a place of obligation, guilt, duty, or, even worse, greed. These motivations may be there, and you see a level of success, but the questions I’d ask are: Is God pleased? Are you being faithful to what *He* asked of you? Finally, can you stand before Jesus one day with a clear conscience that you were a leader for the right reasons—to serve King Jesus and extend His family? This book aims to get your heart to that place.

Too few are leading from a place of promise. The ones that endure, the ones that have joy, they are the ones who live from the identity of sonship. They’ve been given a promise from Father God. That is their “why” and that is the only “why” that doesn’t fade.

GOING NOT KNOWING

I’ve often asked God what I’m supposed to do to be obedient to His call regarding a word from Him. Then I try my best to walk in obedience to His voice. Like Abraham, we often “go not knowing.” I want to have that kind of faith like he did. Don’t you? The faith that compels me to just pack up and walk if God tells me to walk. Sometimes I wish God gave us a GPS and a detailed route! He doesn’t though. But, hey, where would the fun be in that?

Like David, I want to dream in the face of fear. I believe that God is faithful to fulfill His word over my life and I refuse to accept average as normal. Faith in the God who merely spoke the earth into formation won't allow me to settle for average or accept a mundane Christianity as "normal." Normal faith in Jehovah God and His beloved Son Jesus will take us on adventures we didn't anticipate and summits where we'll enjoy the view of His majestic design.

Like Gideon, I want to see battles won and God glorified! I want to see walls fall—like the ones of Jericho in the Promised Land. Don't you? I may sound a bit like a 10-year-old, but maybe it's time we become childlike again. Maybe I'll pick up some superhero jammies to inspire me. Maybe you should, too. Adventure awaits!

BURRIED TREASURE

Selah, Elli, Eva, and Eden, my four little girls could hardly contain their excitement! I had taken a wooden microphone box and placed all kinds of treasures in it! Chocolate. Suckers. Stickers. It was filled with treasures! I had taken a compass and drawn a course on a map that led through the woods behind our house, over the creek and straight to a buried treasure.

When I told them about this buried treasure and handed them the map along with the compass, they lit up in anticipation! "Where is it? Where is it?" they shouted! I said "You have to follow the map and use the compass. The map will tell you what landmarks to look for. The compass will tell you if you're going in the right direction and I'll come behind you and speak up

if you get lost or confused. They ran off in a hurry to which I shouted “Wait! You have to look at the map!”

They slowed down, found the treasure on the map and said, “There it is!” They fought over the compass then finally agreed to a plan. They went toward southwest for 30 steps and looked for the mossy tree and so forth. They went too fast a few times and I had to speak up and tell them to pay attention and nudge them in the right direction. Once they found that huge X in the dirt, they shouted and started digging with sticks. One of them started digging with their hands! They opened the buried treasure and split up the loot. It was a memory we’ll share forever!

That buried treasure is like the promise of God on your life. Your calling is there. You know it. You know there’s a divine purpose for your life and you want to find it! That map, that’s like the Word of God. If you’ll pay close attention to it, you’ll be on the right path. That compass, that’s the Holy Spirit nudging you in the right direction. He’ll speak up when you’re a little off course. He’ll not only use people and pastors to nudge you when your character needs corrected but also will even speak to you regarding your next step. Don’t run ahead. Slow down and listen for His voice. As their father, I had such incredible joy in guiding them. I knew that they could do it! I knew if they paid attention to the map, the compass, and my voice, they’d reach that treasure and have a blast!

Leader, God, the Father has great things in store for you! There's a joy of discovering purpose. There's a joy that only comes in the journey. You'll grow fonder of your Father's voice and in the end, you'll love your Father more than the treasure.

ALL GROWN UP

Too many Christian leaders are all grown up. There's no more time to be curious like a child. There's no time to ask, "Why?" And there's no grace for risk-taking or mistakes. Everything is safe. Every dollar is accounted for. Every move is measured. Everyone is safe at the company. Everyone is safe at the church. And everyone is ... bored. What happened? We got all grown up is what happened. We forgot to dream like a child. We forgot to be curious like a child. We forgot to believe that our Father God has all the money we'll ever need to enjoy all the gifts He's going to give. We forgot that our Father is unlimited. We forgot that our Father wants a big family, like the ones with the crazy uncle and the smelly grandpa. We forgot that Jesus invites everyone to the party, the hustler, the homeless, and the "holy." We forget this when we forget who He is. God is a loving Father who gives promises to His children. God wants to be a Father to so many more and wants you to extend the invitation by using your unique personality and gifting. He has a promise!

In time, God will fulfill His promise. He does it though in HIS timing, not ours. When the angel showed up in young Mary's home that day, God was giving quite an update as to His plan and promise being fulfilled. He promised that the long-awaited Savior was going to be conceived in *her* and that she would bring Jesus into the world! WOW! What a promise! What a miracle!

*See Luke 1:31–33 God wanted to add another layer of assurance to His promise by adding, “No word from God will ever fail.” What a promise and what an exclamation! You can almost hear the confidence in the Angel’s voice!

Before the promise is seen, there’s a process.

P R O C E S S

Promise Reality Obstacles Character Tests Endurance Success Sonship

REALITY

The reality is that we can’t get to where we want to go until we come to grips with where we are. It’s been said and wisely so that the number-one job of a leader is to define reality. People often know there’s a problem but have difficulty defining it or describing its root cause. Leaders define reality. You can’t overcome an obstacle that you don’t define. You can’t defeat an enemy you don’t define. Leaders define reality, with all its ugly facts.

Leaders who won’t get honest about the real problems facing the organization being the church, nonprofit, or company they lead, are seen as too optimistic. If you’re a leader and you only paint a pretty picture, avoiding any facts regarding real problems, your optimism is seen as flaky. People are looking for leaders who will define reality and a plan to change it.

People are observing you, watching to see if you're honest with the problems you and the team are facing. Your team is watching you. If you're not honest with the obvious problems, your level of trust goes down. Trust is built when leaders not only have a promise and vision for the future but also a willingness to define reality and the steps needed to overcome that reality.

You must define the reality of the problems you face—where you are *now*. This is the first thing a leader does in leading.

It's like when you want to travel somewhere. In the age of iPhones and copycats (uhummm Samsung) we all have a GPS or Maps app on our phone. The app simply won't give you a route to reach your destination until you allow it to locate your current location. In fact, "enable location services" is one of the first steps we all take when we get a new phone or install a new app. Why? You can't reach your destination until you are honest and clear about where you are *now* and the problems that surround you.

The problem with many leaders, whether they are the CEO, President of the nonprofit, or Pastor is that they won't be honest about the real problems that exist in their organization. They won't admit the moral being so low within their teams. They won't admit the last product launch bombed. They simply gloss it over with overtly positive comments and empty metaphors. They'll blame it on "the culture right now" or the team member who didn't work hard enough.

The problem with many pastors can be similar. I'm a pastor so I would know. We don't want to admit our areas of weakness, because that means admitting that we need to learn and

grow. If we admit where we are weak, then we look *less* like a leader, right? If we “show our cards” and admit where we lack and what we need to do to improve, we look like a weak leader, right?

The ironic thing is, we are at our best when we will admit our worst. When surveyed, the majority of people said that they would rather have a leader who is honest than perfect.

As pastors and leaders, we’re constantly in the position of helping others grow. We are constantly relied on to help others reach their goals, so we can begin to assume a lie. What’s the lie? That we’ve “got it all together” that we’ve “arrived.” What’s the truth? The truth is that our systems of reaching people for Jesus or making disciples or making disciples who make disciples can improve! Our company can become better and more competitive in our market. Why? We can always improve and learn. If you feel you don’t need to learn or change, then *that* is your first problem. Just because you see problems, doesn’t mean you misunderstood the promise. With every promise from God, comes problems to solve. That will require humility—from you and your team.

Learning and making needed changes can be the most fun and rewarding—even unifying steps you and your team can make together. But if you won’t face reality, then you won’t reach your final destination because you can’t determine a route, a course of action until you “enable location services” and establish *Where Are We Now as an Organization*.

I want to give a shameless plug for my next book, *Leverage Leadership*. It'll help you establish reality—where you are in relation to your vision—where you want to be as a company or ministry. This book, of course, is not about systems, teams, and organizational health. It's about personal health. It's about you. Yeah, the one in the mirror. The one who gets up early every morning to lead the charge and tackle the day.

REALITY REQUIRES OBSERVATION

Observation is hard today, because we live in such a distracted world. Too many leaders never make an impact, because they don't even know the reality around them or they're not observing because they're too distracted by their phone or agenda. Slow down. Observe. Face reality. Facing reality is about being honest. This stage requires honesty and observation. Observation could be overlooked. (Don't miss that pun ... it's funny ... and yet true)

In today's world, observation is at an all-time low. We're constantly bombarded with screens and information. If you can't stop long enough, if you can't put your phone down long enough to look around you and see the culture and its moral trends, you won't ever begin your leadership journey. If you don't take the time to pray in the morning and ask God to show you the reality of genuine pain in those around you, and then you won't do anything about it. If God's stirring your heart regarding the pain of those being trafficked, don't ignore that stirring. Don't numb the voice of the Holy Spirit with just another episode on Hulu or Netflix. Stop the entertainment. Stop the social media. Stop the email. Close your eyes and think: "Lord, what's my reality? What's a problem facing me and my friends spiritually? What's the reality of my

own heart? Is there jealousy in me that needs addressed? Am I thinking thoughts such as “I wish I had...,” “I wish was him,” “I wish I was her,” or “I’ll never be able to...” What are you afraid of? Stop reading the book and ask yourself: “Is there anything I’m afraid of? Am I afraid of not... Am I afraid of becoming... Am I afraid of being replaced because...?”

THREE REALITIES

You’ve got to face three realities if you want to reach your full potential as a Christian leader.

First *I’m Still Growing*

Second *Our Team Can Do Better*

Third *My Promise Is Unique*

FIRST REALITY—*I’M STILL GROWING*

You have issues. I do, too. I’d like to say that I don’t. But that’s not reality. I do. I have insecurities. I have moments of weakness. I have thoughts that cross my mind that I wish hadn’t. If you say “Weird. I don’t.” Then you’re not facing the first reality. What I would recommend you to do to face the first reality is ask people who work with you every day a few questions.

That's, of course, if you're brave enough. You know, if you're not "chicken." See what I did there, I appealed to your ego to get you to do it. Hey, whatever will get you to face reality.

Questions for Colleagues and Friends

1. Is there a bad habit in my life that bothers you? I want you to be honest with me because I'm learning that I can't grow as a person or leader if I'm not willing to face reality, and that includes any bad habits that I have. Do *not* defend yourself when they respond. I was given this advice in a marriage class at our church, Rock of Grace. It was so helpful to my marriage that I figured it could possibly be applied in work settings as well. Why not? Why not improve our workplace moral by addressing any bad habits I need to break to lead them more effectively?
2. Is there an elephant in the room that I don't know about? Is there something you need me as the leader to address that I've been unwilling to address or maybe even ignorant of?
3. Is there a way I can better lead you to make you more successful?

Questions for God

1. Lord, is there any wicked way in me?

- a. David as a young king prayed this prayer and it's one of the greatest things you could ask of the Lord. His Holy Spirit will point out to you anything that isn't holy. Keep this in mind: if the Holy Spirit does correct you regarding a certain belief or behavior that isn't pleasing to Him, that proves that He loves you and that you're His! 1 John tells us that when He corrects and reproves us that shows us that He is our Father who loves us. *See 1 John 1–2.
-
2. “Lord, I believe, but will you help my unbelief?”
 - a. One of the greatest prayers ever prayed came from a Roman Official in the army. We can read the full story in Mark 9:14–30, but I'd like to summarize it. The disciples are unable to help a young boy who has seizures and is often burned by a nearby fire. The dad is desperate and his faith is all but run out. If you had been asking God for a miracle for your child for 10–12 years and hadn't seen it yet, your faith would be on the brink, too. The boy's father is confronted by Jesus' declaration, “All things are possible for those that believe.” His response is beautiful. It's honest, yet hopeful. It's humble, yet confident. “I believe, but help my unbelief.” Too often we won't acknowledge our own struggle with doubt. Did you know God just wants you to be honest with Him? More than your perfection, He wants your honesty.
 - b. In Hebrews 11, we read about every hero of our faith and how they believed in the promise God had given them. Even when it was hard, they believed, and that belief is

connected to their righteousness. Did you realize that your belief is connected to your righteousness?

SECOND REALITY—*OUR TEAM CAN DO BETTER*

People in your city, in your neighborhood, and on your street are suffering from a lack of hope and purpose. You have the answer! You have Jesus! You have a vision, a promise from the Lord. It may be for a company that causes positive change. It may be a vision for a church. Here's what I know. You will need a team to accomplish that God-given promise. You will need to surround yourself with people who have gifts that are different and stronger than yours. If you're unwilling to surround yourself with people who are incredibly gifted then we need to go back to *Reality 1*. If you aren't willing to place incredible people on your team because you're afraid they might outshine you then there's some serious insecurity and fear of man that the Holy Spirit wants to remove from your heart. If your promise is truly a dream given by the Lord then it's very likely you'll need a team of people whether that's volunteers or paid staff to see that dream come true.

Maybe you already have a team. Even if it's a small team, I want to encourage you to steward that team well. People are your team need to talk to you. You as the leader, need to open the door to that conversation. Face the reality that if you don't rise to your calling and begin to serve God where you are, others will suffer. Define reality. You'll need the help of others to do this. Define what's holding your team back and be willing to admit what's broken.

The Promise God has given you will never be fulfilled until you face reality.

The reality of your insecurity will keep you from giving away authority to others. You'll crave authority instead of giving it away. The reality of your insecurity will keep you from taking risks—risks your church or organization needs to take. The reality of your inner demons, the fear that keeps you from even dreaming about growing your team will limit your impact. Those fears, if ignored, will stop you from reaching your potential. Those realities of your heart need to be faced. It's time to look in the mirror and face reality. You do have what it takes! You just need to let God remove some of the garbage inside of your heart.

GOOD HATE

I believe there is a good kind of hate. You've got to hate the problems in your current reality. If you don't hate the problems around you, you won't do anything to solve them.

True leaders not only notice the problem but also have an emotional reaction to the problem. For them, it's personal. They hate the effects of the problem. They hate the way the problem hinders people or keeps them imprisoned. The problem could be a mindset, a perspective. The problem could be political. The problem could be physical. It could be financial. It could be a negative growing trend in society or even your town. Regardless of the problem, leaders see not only the problem but also the long-term negative effects of that problem on real people who have real hopes and dreams. Real leaders face reality and hate the problem enough to act.

Danielle and I believe that every child deserves a safe, loving home. We are committed to that. We are emotional about that. We are called to that. We're discovering our promise. We have a good hate. We hate that there are kids who are neglected or abused and we hate that they often repeat the cycle. We hate how sin destroys a family. God put within us a table-turning mission, a mission to stop the generational curses and show kids and their parents what real love looks like. It's hard. It's exhausting. It's also the most meaningful thing we've ever done. We didn't know all the answers when we started. We just started.

Real leaders act. They act *now!* They know that doing something is better than doing nothing and that the first step is the most important. Christian leaders are no different. They realize that they will never have all the answers before they begin. They simply begin, trusting God to fill in the gaps when needed.

YOUR PROMISE ISN'T FOR YOU

Keep in mind, sometimes you won't even see the full extent of the promise God's given you. Why? It's not so much for you. It's for others. Abraham was given a promise of a new land where his children and family would become so blessed and so extensive that they'd be hard to number! He didn't get to see the full extent of this promise fulfilled! Moses didn't enter the Promised Land. He had trouble with the Character Tests. He had trouble enduring and trusting God. He was used by God in incredible ways, of course. Don't get me wrong. But he did not enter the Promised Land. What if he had discovered that mentoring Joshua and seeing them all enter the Promised Land together was his highest privilege? As you go through the process of a

leader, you realize that your leadership has very little to do with you. It has everything to do with them. God has a message of liberty for those you lead. You're just the messenger.

THIRD REALITY—*MY PROMISE IS UNIQUE*

You've got to take an honest assessment of the talents God's given you, begin to thank God for them, and use them to build His Kingdom. Understand that your promise and purpose in life is uniquely tailored for you. The gifts God has given to you are uniquely tailored for you to accomplish your promise! Many leaders fall short of their purpose, because they begin to compare themselves to others. This is a classic trap of the enemy.

Take ten minutes and read Luke 19:11–27.

After you read, face the reality that is yours alone. Answer these questions:

What problems are around you?

What is the conflict in your heart? What is it that makes you say, "That isn't right!"

What assignments has God already given you?

What do you have in your hand?

You have something King Jesus can use!

David had five rocks and a sling.

Moses had a staff.

Gideon had a horn.

Samson had a donkey bone.

Daniel had a gift of interpretation and wisdom.

Esther had beauty and wit.

Elisha had a mentor (and his coat).

Peter had a big mouth.

Paul had an amazing intellect and a gift for communication.

Silas had a gift of prophecy.

Martha had a gift of hospitality.

Lydia had an entrepreneurial gift.

We must believe that God *is* good and knows what He's doing. We must believe that if God put us in charge, then He believes we have what it takes. We must be motivated by love and not fear. Too many leaders are afraid, afraid of the outcome, afraid of what people will think, afraid of really letting God investigate their heart, afraid to face reality. There are fears in you that need to be given to Jesus. After a leader faces the reality of their own fears and weak areas, they can more clearly see the obstacles standing in front of the promise has given.

PROCESS

Promise Reality Obstacles Character Tests Endurance Success Sonship

OBSTACLES

Obstacles appear when we begin our leadership journey. What is leadership without leading people or teams over an obstacle?

We've all been there, haven't we? Things are going great and then BAM! Out of nowhere, the contract is broken by the client or business partner. Our IP is stolen right out from under us. Our closest friend on the team goes AWAL, or worse, spreads dissension in the team undermining our good name. This happened to Moses. This happened to David. We'll look at some of those stories in this book. These obstacles are difficult. The new ministry program did

not go as planned. The worship leader played in the key of B while the team played in Bb for a solid minute because he put his capo on 4 instead of 3.

(Yup, I've seen it.)

The one person you delegated the most responsibilities to for the event simply didn't show up or call to cancel. The ministry or company website went down. (And none of the data was copied and saved elsewhere.)

Everyone hates an obstacle. Everyone.

This may sound harsh, but hear me out—for simplicity and the sake of understanding this stage, an “obstacle” can be a dilemma. I want to differentiate “reality” from “obstacle” briefly. Usually, a reality is something within while an obstacle is something on the outside.

The truth is an obstacle can only have two results—it can stop you or make you stronger. Period. If I'm on a path and suddenly have a twenty-foot-and-two-mile-wide wall in front of me, blocking my path, I can stop in my tracks and quit. Or, I can figure out a way to get over that obstacle. In doing so, I'm only going to become smarter or stronger or both. If I get a rope and climb over, I've built my arm muscles. I've become stronger. If I get a plane and fly over, I've learned to fly. If I find a pilot to fly me over, I have a new friend. If I inspire a team to get over it together, I've made new friends and memories... and probably had a few good laughs too!

If I quit, I fail. The adventure ends, and there's certainly no reward.

Every one of us on our quest for leadership will face obstacles. The sad thing is that there are leaders who quit at the smallest of obstacles. Their journey ends just as it's beginning. They quit because they didn't respond correctly to the very thing God had given them to make them stronger or smarter.

A leader doesn't see an impossible obstacle when they see a twenty-foot-high and two-mile-wide wall. They see an opportunity. They see something to conquer. If you are naturally pessimistic, I encourage you to put on different perspective, the perspective of faith. When you face a problem at work, address the problem, and yes, face reality, but then work hard at creatively finding a solution. In fact, anytime you submit a problem to your boss, submit a suggested solution. Leaders turn obstacles into opportunities. That's not just "leader talk" either; that's what faith in God does. Religion focuses on what we can't do. Faith focuses on what God can do and has done.

But what do we do when that twenty-foot wall is a person? What do we do when a person is the obstacle? Keep in mind, a person is never the obstacle. Often the disciples would say, "Jesus, make these people go home." In other words "They're in the way." If people are in the way of your dream, then you've got the wrong dream. You've mistaken a promise from God for pride in your heart. People will give you problems, there's no doubt about it. Even your own team may create obstacles for you. But *they* are never the enemy.

Jesus said, “If they hate Me, they’ll hate you.”

If they lied about Jesus, they’ll lie about you. If they were combative to Jesus, they’ll be combative to you. Jesus knew that this was simply the sin within them. If Jesus was able to forgive them and focus on their potential, then you can too! If Jesus was able to lead them despite the obstacles they provided Him, then He can help you lead them, too! Team mates will falter. Friends will walk away. Those you lead and serve may turn and bite you. But remember that hurt people hurt people. Loved people love people. Know that those who seem to be creating obstacles for you may just need to know how deeply they are loved by Father God and even by you. Be reminded of how loved you are and from that place of security, love and forgive people and keep leading them.

P R O C E S S

Promise Reality Obstacles Character Tests Endurance Success Sonship

CHARACTER TESTS

Before Michael Hyatt was the CEO of Thomas Nelson and best-selling author, he was a new staff member promised \$27,000 with the understanding of getting a raise of \$3,000 after ninety days if he did well. He hustled and killed it. When the time came for the raise, the company instituted a wage freeze. His boss had such integrity that he paid Michael the \$3,000 out of his own pocket. WOW! Now that’s integrity. That’s character.

Character is underpromising and overdelivering. Too many leaders make big promises then underdeliver. That breaks trust, the bedrock of every relationship. Instead, when you are given an opportunity to commit, give it your all and overdeliver on what you've committed to do. Character is showing up on time or early. Character is doing the right thing, just because it's the right thing. Character is choosing to go the extra mile to do your part, even if others are being lazy. Character gives 110 percent and makes no excuses. Character means you say what you mean and mean what you say without being mean. You follow through and can be counted on. Character is a defining characteristic of every great leader. Without it, you simply will not last. People will only follow a leader they know they can trust—someone who is reliable and truly has their best interest in mind. When your team sees you pass a character test, it inspires them to keep following you. If you flunk a character test, admit it. Your team will forgive your mistake. They won't forgive your unwillingness to admit a mistake. Don't try to disguise your character flaw or mistake with charisma. Admit it when you could've done something better or missed the mark. Your team will value that honesty and that moment will ironically, build more trust among the team.

Overcoming obstacles can soon become addictive. It can put a smile on your face. A good smile. You know the kind where you've reached a goal or solved a problem in the church or company you're in. The next week presents a new obstacle and God gives you wisdom to solve that too! It's a joy to go to God in prayer, ask Him for wisdom, then leave the prayer closet and get to work together!

The problem with overcoming an obstacle or even many in a row is that you're tempted to believe that you're invincible, that nothing can harm you. You can do no wrong. Nothing could be further from the truth. When you reach a place of success, when you overcome a big obstacle—be it through your own diligent efforts, team unity, even a stroke of luck, or simply the hand of God giving you a miracle—then you're tempted to think that *you deserve more* than you do. And this is where the next step in the process begins. Your character is tested. When you begin, the cure for this is gratitude. Gratitude says, "Everything I've been given is enough." It says, "I don't want more. I need less." Gratitude says, "Because I'm so thankful that God helped me reach this goal or overcome that obstacle, I'm going to remain humble and teachable. If He helped me with this, He can be counted on for wisdom again." God remains the noun, the one at the center, the actor with the lead role. Your character will be tested the minute you overcome an obstacle or defeat a common enemy.

Character is missing when you believe you deserve more than you do.

Character is missing when you assume your success is only the result of what you've done.

Satan wants you to believe that you succeed all on your own—that your success is man-made. You must recognize what a Christian leader recognizes: "Others paid the price for me to enjoy this moment of success."

You did not arrive where you are on your own. Trust me. Someone taught you how to work hard. Someone taught you not to steal or take someone else's credit. Someone taught you how to persevere. Someone likely created the environment in which you serve. Someone paved the way. Someone demonstrated for you what it means to lead well. Are you a pastor at a church? Someone planted it. Are you the new Vice President of your firm? Someone started that firm. Are you the starting guard? Your coach saw your potential, gave you the disciplines to be fit enough to last the length of the game and learn the plays. He's the one who put you in the game. Gratitude is clear sign of a great leader who will increase his or her impact. It's a sign of character, which leads to endurance.

You are where you are as a result of your effort *and* the efforts others. Never forget that. When you do, you'll fall into the temptations that Satan presents you with and you'll fail the character tests. The Character Test is the next step in the process and it always comes immediately after the victory of overcoming an obstacle. Did you just reach a milestone? Did you just conquer a huge task and hit it out of the park? Awesome! But watch out! This is the moment when Satan will whisper, "You deserve....," and a character test is now before you.

When God gives you favor, be careful. With favor comes attention, and with attention comes temptation.

Proverbs 16:18 says it like this: "Pride goes before destruction; a haughty spirit before a fall." We've all seen it. Another leader becomes another statistic. Don't let that be your story!

Guard your heart and remain humble and broken before God, ready for Him to correct you when you need it, knowing that He corrects His children whom He loves.

“The arrogant one will stumble and fall.” Jeremiah 50:32

Sadly pride blinds you to your own needs which are obvious to everyone around you. When you're proud, you're the only one who doesn't see it. Pretty soon, people simply don't want to be around you anymore. If that's the case, you've lost your influence, and therefore your leadership. Find a place to get on your knees, humble yourself before the Lord, and allow His grace to give you a fresh start.

The Christian leader in danger of failing the character tests is the one who feels he will never fall. “Take warning unless you fall” 1 Corinthians 10:12

Satan knows when to time his attack. He often gives his greatest blow just after a great victory. Soon after Elijah defeats 850 false prophets, Jezebel has him running for his life and be suicidal. King David was experiencing victory after victory. In fact, he hadn't yet known defeat. When does Satan place Bathsheba in front of him? In a season of success.

After the greatest revival to ever occur in the city, Jonah's character was tested with the lie of victimhood and self-pity. After being promoted by Potiphar and overcoming obstacles, Joseph faced his first major test of character. We'll get to his story soon.

James 4:6 says “The Lord gives grace to the humble and resists the proud...” In commenting on this scripture K.A. Richardson says:

“Quoting Pro. 3:34, James recalled for his audience that God is determined to resist the proud. Those who wrap up their selfishness and self-sufficiency in arrogance will receive the full measure of divine rejection. Such is the universal announcement throughout Scripture and the extra-biblical writings. Pride is frequently listed among the human vices and is closely associated with the sin of envy. Earlier in James’s Letter the story of the proud rich and the envious church leaders and their followers (2:2–4) shows both God’s opposition to the self-promoting rich and their self-serving welcomers as well as God’s preference for the humble poor. Pride stirs up the desires of all those who have succumbed to various temptations of the heart. Pride leads to boasting. The sin of haughtiness not only tends to boast in what it has and in its own life but even boasts in what it does not have and takes credit for someone else’s accomplishments. Arrogance totally obscures the faith that trusts in things unseen, hidden in God.

On the other hand, God shows favor to those who humble themselves. All of James’s hearers were invited to join the ranks of the humble who trust in God. The term here for the ‘humble’ is rooted in the condition of lowliness and poverty. Biblically, God is particularly interested in reversing the hierarchies of status in the world. This is why God has ‘chosen those who are poor ... to be rich in faith’ (2:5). The close connection between the condition of lowliness and the virtue of poverty is reflected in the story of Saul wishing to make David his son-in-law in 1 Sam 18:23. David’s simple response was, ‘I’m only a poor man and little

known.’ But precisely this attitude, which he maintained in spite of gross sin throughout his life, made David a man after God’s own heart, that is, favored, graced. David exemplifies what the proverb is intended to teach: God is always ready to accept those who accept him and to give them more grace. Should we sin that grace might increase? No! But grace does more than meet the challenge of our sinful desires.”

Richardson, K. A. (1997). James (vol. 36, pp. 181–182). Nashville: Broadman and Holman Publishers.

Every great leader, whether it was Joseph or David or Gideon, knew that they were but a broken human in light of a holy, Creator God. Moments of weakness, in view of poor choices, always bring this reality to the surface. The great leaders are willing to recognize it for what it is and admit their sin and need for grace. Leaders who don’t admit fault simply won’t last.

Humility in a leader not only follows the example of Christ but also attracts others, as it connects with them on a basic, human level. When the leader acts as if they’ve never failed, they distance themselves from the team they lead, and because of that distance, the leader can’t truly know his team or those he leads. And when you don’t know those you lead, you can’t lead them well.

In Donald T Phillips’s classic book *Lincoln on Leadership*, he writes:

“By today’s standards, the moniker ‘Honest Abe’ might be considered pretentious or even contrived. But the fact is that leaders who tell their subordinates the truth, even when the news is bad, gain greater respect and support for ideas than their less virtuous counterparts. Even though he had some detractors, Lincoln attained success, admiration, and a positive image by maintaining his integrity and honesty. Those who questioned his upbringing and education, or even his political affiliations, tended not to doubt his integrity. Lincoln showed the same degree of fairness and decency whether disciplining or congratulating a subordinate. Emulating his style will earn leaders the trust and respect that ultimately fosters passionate commitment. This approach shows that the truth is a common denominator for all interactions, among any group, and with people of varying personalities.”

In my first book, *Truth And Love*, I stress the importance of being honest with others to form Godly, lasting relationships. I’m so tired of seeing Christians leave churches because they didn’t know how to handle conflict Biblically, especially lay leaders. As a leader, this is true on a much greater scale. If you can’t be honest with your staff as to where they’re not meeting expectations yet speak in love, you’re not yet leading like Jesus. Jesus was unafraid to correct His disciples and do so in love. He was more concerned with His success in terms of obeying the Father in training up disciples than He was with simply being liked at all times. The same is true for you. Be honest. Be sincere. Teach your team the importance of being real and being humble. You will teach them best by displaying humility. When you’ve blown it, admit it. When you could’ve done better, admit it. Be eager to “own it” and show a desire to improve. They will follow your lead and you will all be better for it.

Be transparent. Admit mistakes. Apologize quickly. Compliment others. Don't take all the credit. Take responsibility. This is what real leaders do. Real leaders know that humility is required to pass character tests. If your perspective is blinded by pride, you won't even see the character tests for what they are; you'll succumb to temptation thinking that you deserve whatever Satan is offering you. You'll think you deserve more than you do.

When you feel you deserve more than you have, you've lost sight of the commandment "Do not covet." Coveting is wanting what isn't yours—what God hasn't given you. Sonship is knowing that all the Father has given is more than enough. Forgetting the goodness of God will cause you to covet. Coveting will lead to sin—a failure of the character tests. As leaders, we are always pushing ahead and asking for more but we need to be very careful to guard our hearts against asking God to give us something just because another leader has it. Coveting or wanting a platform the Lord hasn't given you or hasn't given you yet is a slippery slope. Instead, let gratitude fill your heart for what you've been given.

Being thankful for what God *has given you* will keep you out of trouble. Hear me, leader! Being thankful for what God has already given you—the job you have, the spouse you have, the home you have—being thankful will keep you out of trouble. Thankfulness is like having a tour-guide in the precarious land-mines of character tests you're bound to face as a leader.

How many more headlines do you need to read to believe me? When a leader rises to the top, then has an affair, being duped by Satan into believing that he or she deserves more than they have, we all feel a little pain. The entire Body of Christ feels that pain. We feel for the

woman who was committed to him in marriage. We feel for the kids who have to suffer now, watching their parents fight and possibly separate. So much pain comes from a leader's moral failure. That failure began when the leader assumed they deserved more. Wanting to make a bigger impact for Jesus is one thing. Feeling you deserve more is another.

Success is that feeling we get when we've overcome obstacles. Success is no more deadly than when it's in the public eye. When a man or woman is complimented over and over, it can soon "go to their heart" and not just "go to their head." When that happens, soon what was once off limits is now "ok." What was once "No!" is now "Maybe it wouldn't hurt."

Leader, don't forget who made you. Don't forget who called you out of darkness and into His glorious light! Don't forget that Jesus paid a terribly high price to redeem you and restore you to friendship with God! Don't forget who you really are—a child of God, a prodigal come home, a cherished son of a loving Father. If you forget that you'll strive to make your name great, and in that aim, you'll compromise and fail the character tests. On the flip side if you remember who you are and whose you are, you'll make it! If you'll remember that Creator God created you and thereby has the final say on your intrinsic value, you won't strive for another accolade or feel the need to be seen as something you're not. Find joy in simply knowing Jesus and being close to Him. If you'll discipline yourself to fuel that relationship by meeting with Jesus each and every day, opening His Word and "hiding His Word in your heart," you'll be able to "keep yourself pure" as the Psalmist said and you'll be glad you did!

Why does God even allow for these attacks or tests of our character? I think we need to be reminded of two things. First, that God's Spirit is able to use anything to continue to purify us as the Bride of Christ Jesus. One of the Spirit's primary roles is to find and prepare a Bride for Jesus. Jesus used this metaphor of a wedding often. Apart from initially drawing men to Christ, the Spirit's next role is to continue to purify that person for the coming Wedding Supper of the Lamb. In the words of Paul, we are saved and being saved. So there's the purification aspect we can't forget. Second, we realize that when our character is tested, we are strengthened as Christian leaders. We don't like the test; we don't enjoy it, but we are certainly stronger because of it. In the same way, the athlete doesn't so much enjoy the pains that plague his stomach as he runs eight miles during training. Yet, every time he pushes past the pain, he's a stronger runner afterward. Your test makes you stronger.

PROCESS

Promise Reality Obstacles Character Tests Endurance Success Sonship

ENDURANCE

We *all* get tired sometimes. Every leader, even you, will face fatigue. You may be fatigued right now and not even know it. If you're lashing out at coworkers or staff, you may be fatigued. If you're blaming your short-tempered outbursts on someone's inability to perform, you're fatigued. If you find yourself demanding unrealistic performance from those you lead,

you're likely fatigued and near burnout. You need rest. You need to find strength in spending time with Jesus.

I would encourage you to read an amazing book called *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* by Peter Scazzero. I require all our Staff Pastors and Campus Pastors to read it. Why? Because in it, Peter describes in detail his life coming to a tumbling crash without his ability to see it coming. He describes the insecurities that plagued his heart and how we can surrender those to God and let Him become the focus of our lives. Go on Amazon right now and buy it. Don't worry. I'll wait.

You may know the story of the great prophet Elijah being suicidal. He was hiding from Jezebel who was chasing him with death threats. Now you'd think that after seeing God display His power with fire falling from Heaven that you'd be celebrating on a mountain top, right? No fear in sight, right? Nope. Although he was coming off a spiritual high, he was physically drained and needed a break.

God brought him ravens with meat to nourish him. God forced him to nap. He didn't need another conference. He needed a nap and a meal. When's the last time you took a siesta? Leader, do you realize that you simply just need a nap sometimes? As a leader, you're probably like me, driven and task-oriented. But with that drive, passion, and possibly a go-go-go personality, you must learn the discipline of rest. Your soul needs it. For your marriage to be healthy, you need rest. For your relationship with your kids to be healthy, you need rest. For your

ministry to be healthy, you need rest. For you to endure the process that God has for you, you need to rest.

In Elijah's encounter with God, notice that ravens are meat eaters. My friend in ministry, Andre Van Zyll, points out, "God will provide meat eaters to not eat the meat so that you can get what you need. He loves you that much!"

Sometimes the most spiritual and efficient thing you can do is rest.

God designed rest into the order of the Universe. He called it *Sabbath*. The fields yield greater crops when they rest every seven years. We yield greater energy and "performance" when we rest on the Sabbath and truly give the entire day to doing nothing, nothing except acknowledging that God is truly Creator and worthy of our worship and admiration. We get our emotional tanks refueled when we rest and take some "me time" as it's often called now. "Me time" isn't selfish. Taking time to close your eyes and enjoy the weather, a sunset, or a walk with your spouse is not only wise, it's honoring to God and obeying the order of life that He established. To endure the process of a leader, you must learn how to rest for in rest, we are acknowledging the end of ourselves and the work of God, despite the end of our energy.

Four Ways to Prevent Fatigue and Burn Out

1. Friends outside your ministry/company

Friendships that are authentic, honest and fun are absolutely necessary for you to avoid burnout. A big part of refueling is being with friends who don't drain energy from you but add energy to you. You can feel it. I can feel it. We all know that feeling when we are drained after being with someone, be it a client or church member or anyone who simply needs you to help solve an issue. Yes, that's meaningful, but it's also draining. You need friends who leave you feeling reenergized after hanging out with them. There must be time when you're accomplishing nothing. Even if you have to reframe the hangout time, tell yourself that you're accomplishing the goal of being refueled by accomplishing nothing. Reframe the idea of "downtime." You're not being lazy. You're refueling.

2. Hobby

I had two mentors tell me the same thing when I became a lead pastor. "Jordan" they said "Whatever you do as you enter this new season of becoming a senior pastor, do not quit making music all together. You have to carve out time for that. Otherwise you'll suffocate." That was some of the best advice ever given.

I was writing and producing music three days a week for eight years before becoming lead pastor. Let's just say "I LOVE MUSIC." There's nothing like it. To lock into a pocket and create a melody that rings in the ears of people, causing them to praise and be thankful, is simply amazing. I still make music every Friday, and I guard that time like a bull dog guarding a new bone. Why? I get to continue to be fully "me." If you don't create some time for yourself to just enjoy something, you'll lose some of the joy in your life. Leader, it's a great idea to have a hobby

outside of your church or business. Take time for something enjoyable that will give *you* fuel. If you just “burn the candle at both ends” you’ll burn out. Burning the candle at both ends doesn’t make you look spiritual and burnout certainly isn’t God’s plan for you. It is not part of the process He has in mind or what your spouse or children desires.

3. Your Daily Time with Jesus

Your daily devotional life must remain of highest importance. Without it, you’ll begin to strive in your own strength and gradually depend on God less and less. This will leave you feeling worn out and burned out. Jesus died not to make you a successful leader. He died so you could be His friend and brother and know the Father on a personal level. This relationship of love must be preeminent. Nurture it. Guard it. Take care of your time with the Lord and don’t let any goal interfere with it. Don’t let any demand from any person steal it. Don’t let social media or the need to scroll keep you from knowing the One who holds the stars. Don’t give up the inheritance for a bowl of soup. Value what Jesus paid for. Spend time daily with Him and you’ll find you’ve got more than enough energy for the day and confidence to face what comes your way.

In the Old Covenant, there was a light in the tabernacle. When you look at the Menorah and the function it served to give light to the Tent of Meeting, you may notice that it had to be continually filled with oil from above for that wick to not burn out. Likewise, you are called to shine the light of Jesus Christ as a leader in your community, but unless you take time to let God

fill you with the oil of His Spirit, you'll soon burn out. The wick needs the oil. Likewise, you need the oil of the Spirit and that only comes through waiting and resting in God's presence.

Years after Moses and his tabernacle, we find David discovering the beauty of knowing God one on one. Let's follow David's example and discover the joy in knowing God intimately each and every day by spending time in His presence. No leader plans to quit or throw in the towel one day. We all want to succeed and put a smile on God's face. We want to endure. A key to endurance in your public ministry is your worship in privacy. Follow the Apostles' example and take time to wait on the Lord to fill you and refill you on a regular basis. The leader who doesn't take time to pray and be filled is the leader who leads in his own strength and man's strength will always come to an end. But in the Spirit, there is newness of life and an ease that enables you to keep going and keep going strong. "It is not by might, nor by power, but by My Spirit' says the Lord." Zechariah 4:6

4. Exercise

Do you want to endure? Take care of your body. The simple act of leading yourself, disciplining yourself into a routine of exercise trains your brain to feel the following: "I'm in control of my life. My life is not out of control or out of focus. Other people and their demands are not dictating my every move. The Holy Spirit has given me the fruit of self-control and He can help me with health."

It's so rejuvenating to work out and put your body in its proper place of health. Like most people, I'm not 100 percent diligent in this, yet I know that when I am, I feel much, much better. I've got more energy to lead and lead well. Thousands of studies have proven the various benefits of exercise. It increases your ability to think clearly, reach goals at work, and for most people, it leaves them feeling energized and ready for what lies ahead. Many of the greatest leaders in our day are also athletes or in the very least, disciplined to exercise weekly. That's not coincidence.

When your body, soul, and spirit are being taken care of, you're much more likely to endure the difficulties of leadership. You're more likely to manage criticism properly, and if you're a leader, criticism will come. It's an occupational hazard. If you aren't healthy and at peace, body, soul, and spirit, the criticism will cause anxiety and lead to all kinds of trouble.

As a leader, not everyone will like what you say or the decisions you make. Know that upfront. You're a leader. You lead. It's what you do. The very act of leading implies that you will be making changes. Maybe you've heard the old saying ... "The only place that consistently rejects change is the cemetery." The people you lead are alive ... I'm assuming anyway.

That said, there will be decisions you make that require them to change and some of them simply won't like it. They'll criticize you. They'll tell you that you're wrong and may even say you're not "hearing from God." Whether it's the wall color or a location change, those you lead won't always be in 100 percent consensus, and they may be critical of your decisions or even

motives. In those moments, don't get defensive or angry. Know that they likely are questioning only because they care about the organization you're leading.

Now if someone is simply critical or negative more often than not, you likely need to cut them loose. Some leaders don't have the courage to confront or release staff who are simply toxic and thereby forfeit everyone's success. Those people need to go. And that's ok. Leaders need to endure but I'm not saying you should become a doormat.

The majority of time, those who offer critique are not being negative or rebellious toward you. Don't take it personally. They are simply wanting what's best. Be the leader who takes their criticism and questions and genuinely listens to their concerns with an open mind and an open heart. Endure criticism. Even welcome it. I've told my team often, "Tell me if I'm wrong or being unreasonable in any way..." or "Guys, let me know if you think that could've been better." I also ask, "Is there any habit I have that is frustrating you that you'd like to tell me about?" When given the permission, they'll sometimes share something that's a blind spot to me. I have even opened my sermon or lecture to my leadership team and asked some of my staff, "Please look this over and tell me what I'm missing or how it could be better."

Great leaders don't only endure criticism, they welcome it because they want to be continually growing. After God gives you a promise or a dream, reality must be faced. In facing reality, there will be many obstacles to overcome and even tests of your character. If you endure it by humbling yourself and constantly looking to Jesus in prayer, looking to your team for feedback, you'll likely experience what the world would call "success," where you've either

achieved your goals or have a following of some sort. For many, the stage of success can prove to be the most difficult.

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SUCCESS

This is one of the hardest stages for any leader. Ironically it's also the easiest. That's what makes it so hard. You see when you have "success" in eyes of people, things start to get easier for you. People start to treat you with honor and respect, and the Bible teaches us to honor and respect those whom God has placed in authority so that's fully expected. You may even get more perks now that you're "in charge." You may be commended so much that it goes not only to your head but to your heart.

Keep in mind that every leader who is successful isn't in error. It's very foolish and dangerous to assume that. There are many leaders who have a large following and are simply doing a great job with total integrity. Why do I share this? I share this because, for some reason, I'm seeing a trend in the last few years. Many Pastors who have "mega" churches are attacked more and more. Often the accusers are assuming something untrue. It's almost as if they assume that if you have a large crowd, then you must be compromising or are a "false teacher." But if you go by that standard, Jesus would have been a compromising false teacher, and we know

that's not true. A crowd does not equal compromise. A crowd also doesn't equal true success in the eyes of God.

So what is success? In the Kingdom of God, it's obedience. It's faith.

We know what it looks like in the world's eyes. We know that to many, success means moving up the ladder at work. It means reaching goals that you set out to reach. It means achievements, accolades, and being "at the top."

In the Kingdom of God, success is simply this: obedience to God's voice.

Earlier, you read Luke 19. Now go back and ask yourself, "What stopped the servants from creating a return on investment for the Master?" Fear. Fear will always stop you from obedience, and obedience to the Lord is success in this life.

The success doesn't come after the obedience to the Lord. We often think that success or failure is what is determined after we try. That isn't the case with God. Success or failure doesn't come after you try. The "trying" *is* the succeeding. The faith to say "yes" *is* the succeeding. Your success as a leader in the Kingdom of God is determined by one thing and one thing only—humble obedience.

If you will simply obey God out of a true heart of thankfulness and love for God and let *Him* worry about the outcome, you'll begin to see miracles all around you! You'll begin to see

God move in powerful ways! You'll begin to see financial miracles for you and those around you! You'll begin to see your church, company, or nonprofit move forward with more progress than ever before. We, as Christian leaders, need to learn that "big risks" are all *small* risks when we serve such a big God! The better you grasp your identity as a loved child of God, the bigger risks you'll take. To God, failure is never fatal.

The Gospels tell us that there was a man whose son was possessed by an evil spirit. It'd throw him into the fire and his son was constantly in danger. Can you imagine that fear as a parent? Can you imagine the worry you'd feel all day, every day? The man approached Jesus, probably thinking, *This is my last resort! Nothing else has worked so far!*

"Nothing is impossible for he who believes!" Jesus said! Nothing is impossible!

If you say "Well our company moral is so messed up right now, it would take a MIRACLE for it to change for the better!" Good news! Jesus still performs miracles! Begin to pray and ask God, "Lord, do a miracle at my work and turn the hearts of those who are angry and bitter into hearts of clay, humble, and broken. I ask You, God, to do the impossible and turn our company around for Your glory! May every staff member and employee suddenly find the joy of working together to serve our customers! May each employee begin to THANK GOD for their job and serve in their role with passion! In Jesus' name AMEN!"

If you're a pastor and thinking "I can't make any progress in this church. I've been praying for months and nothing has changed." Pray again! Pray that God pours out His Spirit and revives hearts that are far from Him. Pray that God opens their eyes to see what's possible!

God may not answer prayers like that until you pray and ask! God may not turn your church around until you simply ask Him to and believe that He will! God can do what seems impossible! And He can do it fast!

Ask the addict who is set free from the addiction through Jesus Christ in a Teen Challenge center. I've heard hundreds of men share about God's miracle-working power to set them free from cocaine, heroin, and alcohol addictions. I've seen them cry tears of joy describing how God took their desire for their drug away completely in an instant. God can do it! If God can deliver a man from an addiction, don't you think God can deliver a company from apathy? Pastor, if God can deliver an addict, don't you think He can deliver your members in your church? Believe Him for it! Ask Him for it! Believe it until you see it!

The trap many leaders fall into is the trap of success. They cling for approval, likes, listens, and views on their last video. If you're not careful, you'll end up checking how many likes you have on your last post—you know—to see if you're a valuable person or not.

Now that may be blunt or a bit harsh, but if we're honest, we're all a bit insecure. We all, at times, crave attention or the need to be "liked." Pun intended. In our social-media world, it would seem that our success can be quickly calculated by the number of shares, views, or likes

on our posts. But is that truth? Is that how God sees us? Is that what God wants from us? Sure, making an impact on many people or more people is a great thing, but to crave or even need to sense we're "successful" is not what God wants.

Pastor, Leader, Staff Member, I've got news for you. God, the Father, doesn't want you to be successful—at least in the way the world defines it. He wants you to be successful in the way He defines it. He wants you to be significant. He wants you to simply be His son or daughter. He wants you to know how incredibly loved you are by Him. He wants you to comfort and love people in their time of need, expressing His unwavering love for them. He wants His love to so fill you that you actually overflow with His love. He wants your cup to run over with His goodness. When this happens, when you invite His presence to be the most important and the most treasured part of your life, you'll discover that your friendship is significant in the lives of people. You can only be significant in the lives of a few even if you're successful in the eyes of many. Here is where you'll find your greatest joy and truest calling: just being loved as a son/daughter of God and then sharing that love with a brother or sister in God's family. Sonship is where it's at. As leaders in God's Kingdom, we are sons and daughters aiming to bring more people into the family! We are aiming to bring more people into an awareness of Father God's love. Anything more than that is polluted.

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SONSHIP

Being a child of God is the greatest joy and honor for us. If you miss this truth, you miss the meaning of life and you'll miss the joy of leading people.

If you aim for greatness as a leader but forget that you're first a child of God, you'll push people down to get to the top, only to find "the top" a very lonely place.

If you aim for greatness as a leader but forget that you're first a child of God, you'll believe the lie that you are great all on your own. You're only great because God made you great. You're only gifted because God gave you gifts.

If your joy and happiness in life is tied up in only your achievements, you'll be missing the joy God intends you to have—joy that can only come through relationship with Him and relationships with others. Life is about people, not projects. You'll strive and strive and although you'll hit goals, you'll be constantly longing for more. When you get a revelation of sonship, knowing that you're already completely loved by Father God, you'll have peace and contentment that last far beyond the goals reached or missed, success of a product or program or failure of a product or program.

Ironically, the quicker you understand this, the more risks you'll take. Why? When you know you're loved by Father God no matter what happens, you're liberated to take risks!

Romans 8:29 “For God knew His people in advance, and He chose them to become like His Son, so that His Son would be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.” I wonder if we as leaders would be more concerned with being a son instead of a “success,” how much trouble that would save us? I wonder if we leaders valued sonship and the heart of this scripture more than being “right” or “successful,” how much more peace we’d have in our hearts and minds.

I remember the Saturday night when I was scared to death. It was late February and I had just become the Lead Pastor in January of Rock of Grace church in Kinsman, Ohio. It’s an amazing church that my dad and mom brought to a place of health over their 26 years pastoring there. I was going to share the vision for our church buying a building in a neighboring town to plant a church, and eventually, a ministry training center called David University.

I remember thinking “God, I’ve only been pastor for 8 weeks and they’re going to think I’m crazy! Lord, what if I fail!? What if they actually believe me? What if they receive this vision and what if we buy a building, plant a church and nobody comes!?! Lord what if...?”

These questions continued to race through my mind all the way until Sunday morning. I remember literally saying out loud, “I’m not going to say it. I’m not going to mention the buildings or all the ideas. I’ll just say, “Church” I’ve only mentioned it to a few people so it’s not a big deal. As I rambled on and on to the Lord telling Him why HIS plan isn’t going to work, all of sudden I heard the Lord interrupt my racing thoughts. He said “Jordan, you are my son. I’m

going to love you no matter what. No matter if this “fails” or if it’s a huge success. My love for you won’t change. What we have together, that’s not going to change.”

And I thought, WOW, Father. You are so right! Why would I be so concerned with being a “failure” in the eyes of people if everything didn’t work out great? Why was that causing me to worry? Father, I’m at peace and full of joy just in knowing You!

Why worry and fear about looking like a failure when Proverbs clearly tells us that the fear of man is a snare. When I feel that I’ve heard from the Lord, I want to come to a place where I just instantly obey and trust Him completely. I want to fully trust that He’s able to help me accomplish what He’s asking me to do. I think that’s a big part of what faith means. I think that’s what many of today’s leaders are missing—the faith to believe the promise God’s given them.

Does God ever interrupt your racing thoughts of fear, worry, and self-induced anxiety? I hope He does. I hope you let Him speak. *See 1 John 3

Jesus Made Sonship Possible

When God sent Jesus into the world to die for us, it was to rescue us from the sin that was leading us to eternal death. We were on our way to be separated from God and His light and life forever. But then Jesus came! Jesus is the “new and living way” and He’s the only one who lived a sinless life, therefore He’s the only one who could do what He did. He died in our place, in my place, in your place! “The punishment of our peace was upon Him. By His wounds we are

healed!” Inside and out, we who’ve accepted Jesus Christ as the one who saved us have been changed into a new creation! We have gone from enemies to friends and friends to family!

We are the children of God! We sit at His table! He provides for us! He cares for us! He is our Father, our Abba, whom we love more than anything. And here’s the point I want to make: we did nothing to deserve that. In fact, we deserved death. We deserved eternal separation from God due to our sins and all the times we’ve chosen to be selfish instead of generous, rude instead of kind, and demanding instead of giving.

We did nothing to earn “sonship.” Jesus earned it. Jesus paid it all. Jesus achieved this liberty from sin for us! Jesus endured the cross so that we could be adopted as sons and daughters of God Himself!

SONSHIP IS EVERYTHING

The ironic thing is that although this is the “last stage” of a leader’s journey, it should be the first also. Why? The culmination of our lives is to be a child of God and stand in that truth. This is who you are before you’re a leader and before you’re gifted. Sonship isn’t achieved, it’s received. It’s a gift—a gift of identity given by our Father in Heaven.

Before you’re talented, before your awards or achievements, you are loved as a son or daughter of God and THAT is the most invigorating, life-giving truth that brings meaning to your existence. If you miss this, you miss it all.

If you are “successful” and achieve your goals and yet never find friendship and intimacy with God as Your Father, you’ve missed not only the meaning of leadership but also the meaning of life.

If you make millions as a Christian businessman yet forget that you were blessed to be a blessing because your Father God is Abraham’s Father God, then you will have missed it all.

If you’re a pastor and your church becomes a mega church reaching thousands every weekend and you buy into the lie that your identity and value is determined by the number of people listening to you, then you’ve missed it. Let God return you to the joy of sonship.

Maybe you started out on the right path, eager to please God, but when you began reading this book, you felt the unsettling conviction in your heart. Maybe you’ve begun to pray these brave prayers. Maybe you’ve found in the reflection that there are insecurities and fears that race through your mind daily. Then I encourage you to give those to the Lord and find your identity completely in Him and in Him alone. Find your identity as a leader first in sonship!

Abide in Christ alone. Don’t try to abide in your position at work or your perceived place of “success.” Instead, find joy and rest in knowing that you are unconditionally, unequivocally loved by Father God, the One who made you. You are fully known and yet fully loved, Scripture says. Whether you “succeed” or not, God your Father loves you to pieces. Your picture is on His fridge!

Yes, He has “plans to prosper you and make you successful” as the prophet Jeremiah said. Yes, He has plans to “make you the head and not the tail *if* you obey Him.” While that’s true, God’s first priority for you is your heart, not what your hand can build. He wants you to know Him! He wants you to make His Kingdom *first* in your life! He wants to extend His love to the nations through you!

Jeremiah 29:11 | Deuteronomy 28:13 | Mathew 6:33

But before He blesses you, before He uses you, He just wants you to be His! More than anything else, He wants a genuine relationship with you. He wants to hear from you. He wants to know your concerns, what makes you tick, what your dreams are. He wants it all. He wants to talk with you. He wants to befriend you. This is why Jesus gave His life! He did it not just to give you Eternal life *then* but to give you real life *now!* You can know God personally! Talk to Jesus!

UNIQUELY LOVED

I have four daughters. Yeah, pray for me. I’m already giving awkwardly long, scary looks to the neighborhood boys, trying to scare them away. I recently slowly cocked a long-barrel pellet gun in my driveway as they rode by on their bikes. They didn’t know it was a pellet gun. Hey, it’s suburbia. You do what you gotta do.

My daughters are each so different and so uniquely loved. I am IN LOVE with each of them. They are the joy of my heart! It doesn't change my love for them if they every break a sports record or become a "success" in the eyes of people. It doesn't matter if they get a PhD. Would I be proud of them? Of course! Would I commend them? Of course! But would my love for them change? Nope. Not one bit. If they became a successful minister or leader or doctor or businesswoman, I wouldn't love them more. Their achievements have ZERO impact on my love for them. Guess what? Even their biggest blunders will still have ZERO impact on my love for them. Why? They are my daughters! Period. When they know this, they can find so much joy and rest in that truth—the truth that mom and I love and like them, no matter WHAT happens. The same is true for you and me. Leader, you are liked and loved by God well before you do anything to impress Him.

Your guilt and your goals have zero impact on God's unique and personal love for you. Zero.

While this book is going to encourage you to make a greater impact for Jesus, it's never at the expense of sonship. In fact, it's sonship that becomes the cause. My goal is that your ministry and leadership takes on a whole new motive. My prayer is that you are motivated to be a great leader not to impress God but to obey God. My prayer is that you don't aim to impress people, or appear great. But my prayer is that you are motivated to be a great leader simply as a response to Father God's great love for you and for the world. My prayer is that your motive changes to simply bring more children into God's family.

APPLY IT

Group Discussion Guide | P.R.O.C.E.S.S. | Week 1

I'm asking that you take some time every week with a group of Christian leaders and discuss the questions below. There are some things we simply can't learn without the authentic community of other believers. As leaders or soon-to-be leaders, you'll be able to relate to one another in a unique way. Others have experienced a trial or life lesson that they could share with you. They have had a revelation of God's love in a different aspect than you; I'm certain of it. Discussing what we learn in each chapter will enable you to go further faster. You'll learn from one another's mistakes and mountain-tops. Don't skip the "Apply It" section at the end of each chapter, even if it means going through the questions alone with self-reflection.

I encourage you to set aside time when you can gather for just 20–30 minutes to discuss with other Christian leaders what you're reading together.

1. Do you agree that most Christian leaders go through the P.R.O.C.E.S.S. outlined in Chapter 1? Who is a leader you can name who went through the "process" before attaining the influence they have today? Describe what took place.
2. Without delay, name a leader that you look up to, someone you respect the most. Now, around the room, what are the character traits that you like about them? You may find the

same character traits in Jesus are those that you aspire to the most as we read this book together.

3. Let's make this personal. What part of the "process" are you in right now? There are times when we'll hit these different phases again and again. Is there an obstacle that you faced years ago that tested your character and integrity? Is there an obstacle you're facing right now?
4. Why is it tempting to want to be known as "successful" and what is it about this that reveals our sinful nature? Why do we sometimes crave accolades, "likes," position, or power?
5. In your group, read Matthew 4:1–11. Discuss what Satan offered Jesus and why? Is it possible that Satan was actually offering something to Jesus that was already His, given to Him by the Father? Satan offered Him what? Power? Fame? Tempted Him to "prove" himself. Jesus already knew His identity—a loved child of God!
6. In your group, someone read the story in Luke 15 of the Prodigal Son. In this story, consider the following questions: Why was the older brother mad? What did the Father do to celebrate the son that came home? What does this tell you about God the Father's love for you? If you had to pick, which character in the story most resembles you and why? Do you see yourself as the forgiven and thankful son or the jealous older brother? Discuss this statement: Religion is when you try to earn what the Father has already given. Then the

follow-up question: Which leader would your team enjoy following more: the thankful one or the religious one?

Action Steps

This week, I'm going to be intentional about telling my team members, _____
_____, _____,
_____ that their success is my success. I'm going to ensure they know
that I am more excited about them reaching their goals than I am about me reaching mine.

The leader I mentioned in Question 2 is _____.

The reason I look up to them is because they are
_____. These are character traits that I am going to ask God to
strengthen in my leadership.

If I had to list one where I'm at in the process of a leader right now, I'd say I am in the
phase of (circle one).

Promise | Reality | Obstacles | Character Tests | Endurance | Success | Sonship

If I was asked “What is the impossible thing that I feel God is asking me to do?” Or ...
“What is the picture of the promise God has placed in my heart?”

As you carry this promise within your heart, I’m praying that you boldly say “YES!” to God’s invitation to step out in faith and enter the promise! It’s going to be messy at times. You’ll probably get hurt in the process. But God will be glorified and your region will be impacted for the Kingdom of God!

CHAPTER 1 | DAVID

“For the battle is the Lord’s, and He will give you into our hand.” —1

Samuel 17:47

David is my personal hero. He just is. No one else in the Bible is quite like him. He loves God passionately, and yet is far from perfect. And the best part about that is that he realizes it. The very thing Jesus said was most important to have—a childlike sense of humility—David has it. He’s sincere at all times, and he presumes nothing. Even when he’s elevated to the throne as King, he remembers where he came from and shows kindness to all, even his enemies. He literally looked for people to bless! Now that’s a great understanding of what it means to be a leader. Godly leadership is about one thing—finding a people to serve and committing to serving them well. Speaking of his leadership, he’s known as the greatest King to have ever lived. So how did he get to the palace?

David’s story begins as a young shepherd boy. His older brothers are simply built for battle and skilled in warfare. Not Dave. Picture him. He’s “ruddy” and “good looking,” the Bible says. He is one of the little guys. For that he’s given the role of shepherd and placed in the fields with sheep. He has to defend the sheep from wolves, lions, and any predator that would attempt to harm them. This is where he learned the art of the slingshot.

Though David lacked in physical strength, he was given a keen and innovative mind to create weapons and even instruments. Amos. 6:5, 1 Chronicles 23:5, 2 Chronicles 7:6 and 2 Chronicles 29:26 all imply or state that David created musical instruments for the praise and worship of Yahweh! This is another reason why I love David. His inventive and creative mind was used by God to shape culture through the songs he wrote, the instruments he created, and the

leadership he displayed in creating a Kingdom where everyone's trust was not in David or any man but in David's God, Jehovah!

DAVID'S PROMISE

Let's go to that moment when David's life took an unexpected change. Like us, David is anointed before he was appointed. We read about this in 1 Samuel 16. Before we read, understand two things. First, that Saul's anointing or power to serve as King was removed by God as a result of his disobedience to a direct order through the prophet and his constant need for man's praise. Second, that God had searched the earth and found someone with a pure heart to serve as Saul's replacement. David, in the solitude of the fields, had attracted the attention of God in Heaven. David would talk to God, sing songs of worship to Him, and he had discovered God to be real and actually very personal. David knew that God *cared*. God wasn't a foreign, impersonal deity without feelings. To David, God was his best friend. God was close and personal, interested in David's life, and all of it! God was also filling the void his father Jesse was creating. Jesse considered David the outcast as you're about to find out. Let's pick up at 1 Samuel 16.

The Lord said to Samuel, "How long will you grieve over Saul, since I have rejected him from being king over Israel? Fill your horn with oil, and go. I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite, for I have provided for myself a king among his sons." ² And Samuel said, "How can I go? If Saul hears it, he will kill me." And the Lord said, "Take a heifer with you and say, 'I have come to sacrifice to the Lord.' ³ And invite Jesse to the sacrifice, and I will show you what

you shall do. And you shall anoint for me him whom I declare to you.”⁴ Samuel did what the Lord commanded and came to Bethlehem. The elders of the city came to meet him trembling and said, “Do you come peaceably?”⁵ And he said, “Peaceably; I have come to sacrifice to the Lord. Consecrate yourselves, and come with me to the sacrifice.” And he consecrated Jesse and his sons and invited them to the sacrifice.

⁶ When they came, he looked on Eliab and thought, “Surely the Lord’s anointed is before him.”⁷ But the Lord said to Samuel, “Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him. For the Lord sees not as man sees: man looks on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.”⁸ Then Jesse called Abinadab and made him pass before Samuel. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.”⁹ Then Jesse made Shammah pass by. And he said, “Neither has the Lord chosen this one.”¹⁰ And Jesse made seven of his sons pass before Samuel. And Samuel said to Jesse, “The Lord has not chosen these.”¹¹ Then Samuel said to Jesse, “Are all your sons here?” And he said, “There remains yet the youngest, but behold, he is keeping the sheep.” And Samuel said to Jesse, “Send and get him, for we will not sit down till he comes here.”¹² And he sent and brought him in. Now he was ruddy and had beautiful eyes and was handsome. And the Lord said, “Arise, anoint him, for this is he.”¹³ Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers. And the Spirit of the Lord rushed upon David from that day forward. And Samuel rose up and went to Ramah.”

ESV

So let me get this straight. The most important man in the land is coming to your house, and you gather your sons to meet him and you somehow forget about your youngest son? Forget!?!? Or maybe you don't see David as good enough to even be invited to the occasion?

Either way, it's clear. David's very own father rejected him, and it hurt.

David spoke of this rejection in Psalm 27. He begins the chapter first by celebrating the presence of the Lord saying: "One thing I ask of the Lord, the one thing I seek most, is to live in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, delighting in the Lord's perfections and meditating in His Temple. He will conceal me when troubles come; He will hide me in His sanctuary." *Vs 4-5

In verses 8-11 he says: "My heart has heard You say "Come and talk with me," and my heart responds "Lord, I am coming." Don't leave me now; don't abandon me, oh God of my salvation. Even if my mother and father abandon me, the Lord will hold me close."

David had a deep father's wound in his heart and yet found not only approval but also friendship in Father God. This friendship gave him the security and self-awareness needed to be King of Israel.

GOD GIVES THE PROMISE

It's important to note that Scripture is very clear that God chose David. There are at least four passages that indicate that it was God choosing David to be King more than David choosing to be king. Jesus chose the disciples, they didn't choose Him. They said "yes" to His invitation. The same is true for you. Your God dream is a promise given to you by God! Don't underestimate that or believe that you "picked the wrong career."

AVAIL PULL QUOTE: What if you valued the process of becoming like Jesus and the journey of sanctification as much as you valued "the end" or the destination?

IMPOSTER SYNDROME

There's something called imposter syndrome. It's the idea that once you've been given a position that you simply aren't worthy of. The thoughts you have are "You shouldn't be there" "You're fake," or feeling that "someone else should be doing this or someone else would do better." And with it comes the temptation to quit. Friend, it's true that you're not the perfect leader. Welcome to the club. But don't believe for one second that this position of leadership was your idea. God put you in this position of leadership and has given you a promise, and God always makes good on His promises! You are not an imposter. You're a broken, flawed human operating in the grace given to you by God to serve people by using the gifts and talents God placed with you. Those imperfections, fears, and worries don't make you an imposter. Those fears and worries makes you human. You are aware of your need for God to give you grace— grace that enables you to serve in the role given to you. Just like Paul said, "By the grace given

to me to be an Apostle...” Paul knew that it wasn’t so much that he chose God or Kingdom leadership but that God had chosen him.

Romans 13 says that all authority is given by God. That promise that God gave you, that picture of the future that’s blurry in your mind yet more real than the air you breath, that picture that you will lead people to a deeper place of knowing God—that’s GOD’S promise to you! Don’t ever forget that. Yes it was a man who had appointed David to be the King, but it was God who anointed him to be the King. It was God who prompted Samuel to say, “Do you have any other sons?” It was God who spoke to Samuel’s heart when he saw young David saying “This is the one!”

It is GOD who has given you a promise! Hold on to it! Don’t let go! Even if it’s been years! GOD has given you a promise, and He is a man of His word! When David received this promise, we can assume that it was totally unexpected, because David was simply minding his own business, serving God by serving those sheep. Often that’s the case when God “looks for a man,” as He did in the story of David. He finds someone who is simply being faithful, someone whose only concern is to be faithful, not successful.

Although that moment likely surprised David, the promise was as real as the oil that slowly dripped down his face that day. Similar to our promises from God, they don’t come pain-free. We often face some grueling reality.

DAVID’S REALITY

In 1 Samuel 17, we see the story unfold of David and Goliath. For forty days, the Philistine giant and armies behind him were taunting Israel. David was faithful to simply guard the sheep he was given charge over yet, his father Jesse had asked him to take some crackers and cheese to his three older brothers who were out on the battlefield. David heard the jeering and slander of his God, the God of Israel, and simply couldn't stand for it.

You may know the story. He wanted to fight. But he was not comfortable when he was offered Saul's armor. It simply doesn't fit. And because he was so secure in who he was as a child of God, he was willing to fight Goliath in the gifts and talents he already had. Some of us may have heard incorrectly that David was a scrawny pipsqueak. Scripture doesn't say that though. While it's true that Saul was "head and shoulders" taller than every other man, and that David didn't fit in his armor, it's likely you and I wouldn't either. Scripture indicates that David was quite scrappy and strong, even if he was much shorter than Saul. He killed lions and bears alone in the pasture! This gave him the courage to face whatever might come his way. Why did God allow you to face the hardship? It's possible that He was preparing you for what's to come—your next season!

David was confident that God would enable him to defeat Goliath! He heard the taunting and had enough. Listen to what he said to King Saul as a young, recently anointed Shepherd boy. David appeared before King Saul to ask if he could go out to kill Goliath.

"Your servant has struck down both lions and bears, and this uncircumcised Philistine shall be like one of them, for he has defied the armies of the living God." 37 And David said,

“The Lord who delivered me from the paw of the lion and from the paw of the bear will deliver me from the hand of this Philistine.” And Saul said to David, “Go, and the Lord be with you!”

ESV

THE LORD WILL DELIVER ME

That’s a message that needs to settle in deep into the heart of every Leader. If you’re reading this, you are likely a leader or soon-to-be leader. Maybe you lead in a church, a nonprofit, or a business. Wherever you lead, you need to know that your identity can’t be tied up in your ability to save yourself or your ability to get the job done. One of the wisest things you can do right now is admit this—if God put you in this role, then it is clear that He will enable you to do what you need to do to lead well. Do you have accusers or as we call them today ... “haters”? The Lord will deliver you! Do you have naysayers—people telling you that your vision is too big? The Lord will deliver you! Do you have people lying about you? The Lord will deliver you!

You’ve got to know that when you serve in your role, it is not your strength or your abilities apart from God that will make you successful! It is the Lord who gives you strength and the ability to succeed. David knew this, even at a young age.

Notice how David could easily endure criticism from his brothers who accused him of a delusional pride, sarcastically asking him, “Who did you leave those few sheep with?” They, like so many today, found their identity in their position, pride, and possessions. David, on the other

hand, found his identity in God alone. He was God's. Period. And if he was God's then God would help him beat this lying, vulgar Philistine!

Notice too how David gave glory to God for his previous victories. "It was the Lord who delivered me from the lion...." Like Joseph who knew that the Lord could interpret dreams through Joseph and that it wasn't Joseph alone, we find David with the same humble confidence in the Lord's ability within him.

"Then Saul clothed David with his armor. He put a helmet of bronze on his head and clothed him with a coat of mail, ³⁹ and David strapped his sword over his armor. And he tried in vain to go, for he had not tested them. Then David said to Saul, 'I cannot go with these, for I have not tested them.' So David put them off. ⁴⁰ Then he took his staff in his hand and chose five smooth stones from the brook and put them in his shepherd's pouch. His sling was in his hand, and he approached the Philistine." ESV

David wasn't confident using another man's gifts or weapons. He was confident and comfortable with what God had already given him. Like we said before, we all fight insecurity to one degree or another. Leaders who live with an insecure mindset ensure that you know that they are friends with the upper-class ministers and that they've approved of their ministry. The name-dropping I've heard some ministers do is somewhat nauseating. They sometimes even copy the ministry patterns of others in effort to be successful.

You may not even realize you do that, but stop for a moment. Ask the Holy Spirit to search your heart. Have you been trying to impress people lately? Have you been thinking through that mindset instead of the mindset of love?

Maybe you're copying what other leaders do instead of finding *your* gifting. Maybe you're coming from a sincere place of "wanting to do a good job for God" yet maybe you just haven't yet found your sling and staff. It's possible you haven't yet discovered what David did—how the Lord has uniquely prepared you to serve and fight the battles you will face.

I want to encourage you to go in the strength of the Lord, but in the gifts He's already given you. If a certain method, approach, ministry style, or even ministry title doesn't fit you, then don't wear it! Wear the title and gifting God *has* given you, even if it looks different than all the others! If it looks like business, do business. If it looks like a para-church ministry, do that. If it looks like pastoral ministry, do that. If it looks like sports, do that. Do what it is God is putting in *your* heart to do! Lead people in the realm He's calling you to! Ignore the criticism of those who don't understand!

Your promise isn't someone else's promise. You aren't asked to be faithful with another person's promise. You're asked to be faithful with yours. Face the reality in front of you head on with all the courage the Lord will give you and ignore the critics! Just this month while I'm writing this, I heard that a Christian leader within our own church had told an outright lie about me to another leader on our team. Why? I can't understand why some people do what they do. Is it a lack of understanding the importance of integrity? I don't know. For a week or so, I let that

bother me, deeply, but I've come to realize that if they don't understand my dream and my promise, and therefore judge it incorrectly, or accuse me of things and slander my name, it doesn't change the promise from the Lord to me. No amount of false accusations can rid me of this dream in my heart—this promise of the future. GOD put it there, and the only thing that can stop it is me—me not believing God is faithful and able to bring it to completion.

God put the promise in your heart, and you can't let immature people stop you from entering your Promised Land. It's easy to focus on the naysayers. I've fallen into that trap too. We all have. But leaders who rise to the occasion and keep moving forward in faith ignore the critics and trust God to be their defense.

David runs out to battle with nothing but his staff, sling, and five smooth stones. Free from the weight of heavy armor, you can almost hear his footsteps hitting the ground as he races onto to the battlefield, heart pounding, hands sweating. With every step, his heart is racing a little faster.

Our minds think incredibly fast—especially in times of trauma and adrenaline. I wonder what crossed his mind as he ran out to battle? Were there glimpses of the lion he tore apart out in the field when God gave him just the perfect angle and method of attack? Was there a memory of the moment he killed the bear only months before? Was the rocky theme song playing in his head? I mean ... maybe.

Goliath sees David emerge from the battle lines and begins stepping toward him. He's shocked at how small David is and begins to mock him. But David isn't having it. We pick up at verse 45.

⁴⁵ Then David said to the Philistine, "You come to me with a sword and with a spear and with a javelin, but I come to you in the name of the Lord of hosts, the God of the armies of Israel, whom you have defied. ⁴⁶ This day the Lord will deliver you into my hand, and I will strike you down and cut off your head. And I will give the dead bodies of the host of the Philistines this day to the birds of the air and to the wild beasts of the earth, that all the earth may know that there is a God in Israel, ⁴⁷ and that all this assembly may know that the Lord saves not with sword and spear. For the battle is the Lord's, and he will give you into our hand."

⁴⁸ When the Philistine arose and came and drew near to meet David, David ran quickly toward the battle line to meet the Philistine. ⁴⁹ And David put his hand in his bag and took out a stone and slung it and struck the Philistine on his forehead. The stone sank into his forehead, and he fell on his face to the ground.

⁵⁰ So David prevailed over the Philistine with a sling and with a stone, and struck the Philistine and killed him. There was no sword in the hand of David. ⁵¹ Then David ran and stood over the Philistine and took his sword and drew it out of its sheath and killed him and cut off his head with it. When the Philistines saw that their champion was dead, they fled. ⁵² And the men of Israel and Judah rose with a shout and pursued the Philistines as far as Gath and the gates of Ekron, so that the wounded Philistines fell on the way from Shaaraim as far as Gath and Ekron.

⁵³ And the people of Israel came back from chasing the Philistines, and they plundered their camp. ⁵⁴ And David took the head of the Philistine and brought it to Jerusalem, but he put his armor in his tent.” ESV

Can you imagine that scene? David tells Goliath that with God’s help, he’s about to kill him and begins running at Goliath. While running, he begins to sling that rock around and around—gaining momentum with every circle. At just the right time, he slings the rock at Goliath and it hits him just right. It knocks the giant down and David knows that he may not be unconscious for long, so he grabs Goliath’s own sword that he could probably barely lift over his head and swings it down to cut off Goliath’s head.

The battle was over and Goliath was killed. The enemy armies ran for their lives and Israel had an infusion of confidence and chasing the Philistines down. This is the moment that changed David’s life forever.

Months earlier, he was given a promise to be King. He knew that promise had not come from just a man but from God. His reality was that his people were being oppressed by the Philistines for far too long. He faced reality. He didn’t cower in fear. He didn’t make excuses as to why *he* shouldn’t be the one to step up, to do something. Leaders are often discovered in times of adversity. They simply rise to the occasion. They are primed for that moment by years of thoughtful reflection and the idea that they can do something. David’s confidence in the Lord had been building over time; this made him ready for this moment.

Don't miss the "why" in the story. Why did David risk his life that day? The Bible tells us "that all the earth may know that there is a God...." David risked his life for his friend, God. God, the one he loved, was being mocked. God was more than His Lord; He was his friend. David wasn't about to stand by and let that mocking continue.

Why do you do what you do? What is worth fighting for in your life? I pray that you are leading and tackling problems with the motive of obeying God's voice, living in the promise He made to you and courageously pushing back the darkness with the light of Jesus! That must be our motivation. If our "why" is to be successful or known as a "leader," then we have missed the mark entirely.

This taunting from ruthless enemies was a problem—a reality for the whole nation of Israel. These are the moments when leaders are "born." Leaders see problems as an opportunity for a miracle. Leaders see threats as an opportunity to *fight back* and do something! Leaders inspire everyone around them in their faith, and God always responds to faith!

To recap this whole ordeal, we find not one but three realities for young David:

1. His family didn't believe in him.
2. His nation was under threat.
3. He was advised to serve outside his gifting.

His father ignored him. His brothers mocked him. His God was being slandered for forty days! When given permission to fight, he was told to use what everyone else uses. But David knew better. David used what was already in his hands. He defeated Goliath, and Israel was victorious that day.

This battle was only the beginning of David's obstacles. What began as an obstacle became his greatest opportunity for God to reveal who David really was. The obstacles always reveal who the leader is. It's God's way of using the *process* to develop us and shape us into the man or woman He wants us to be.

DAVID'S OBSTACLES

His next obstacle would not be a giant with a sword but a king with a spear. David had to learn how to serve Saul even in the midst of Saul's jealous rage.

King Saul wasn't content with young David receiving praise for his military feats. Saul had a gut-sinking feeling that his kingdom was slipping out of his hands. He could hear it in the cheers of his people as David would come home from winning another battle. He was envious of David. In his heart, he may have envied David's strengths or skills, or simply wanted the praise that he felt he deserved. Yet, in reality, he envied the anointing for it was the anointing on David's life that made him successful in all he did.

Envy is an ugly thing. I've seen envy turn a good man into a sour mess. Envy says, "*I need what you have. I need to be in your position. I want what God gave you.*" Envy is like a small domino standing in the back of your heart. If pushed in the right direction, it can bring downfall to the rest of your heart. That domino needs placed down with careful and precise action. Envy has robbed many good leaders from ever becoming great.

Envy is at the root of four of the Ten Commandments. "Don't covet your neighbor's wife. Don't steal. Don't covet your neighbor's possessions. Keep the Sabbath as unto the Lord and rest; finish your work in six days..." I believe envy is at the root this commandment. Why? If someone says "I will not take a day of rest because I need to work all seven days of the week ... to get what I want..." it is really a form of envy.

Saul's envy burned within him until he did his best to kill David, even ignoring his governing duties to chase David for days into the desert. His jealousy blinded him to the role of even being King. In these moments, David's integrity would be tested like never before; the King is out to slay him with the sword!

1 Samuel 21 tells us that while David was fleeing for his life from King Saul, he stumbled upon a Priest named Abimelech. David was starving because he had left in a hurry and didn't bring food or even his weapons. In this prophetic moment, the priest had no common bread but only the Bread of Presence from the tabernacle. "So the priest gave David the holy bread, for there was no bread there but the bread of the Presence, which is removed from before the Lord, to be replaced by hot bread on the day it is taken away."

Leader, when people have treated you unfairly, lied about you, even rose up to harm you or harm your good name, God will give you the bread of His presence! Only the bread of God's presence will sustain you in these times of accusation and confusion. You will be satisfied and strengthened in ways you can't imagine. Jesus has become the High Priest and the Bread of Life (see Hebrews 9–12). Because of what He did on the cross and rising to new life, He made available the rich, nourishing presence of God at all times. Jesus' flesh was like the veil that was torn in the temple, giving us complete access to God. When you're in heartache, when you're facing obstacles outside of your control, find strength alone in the presence of God! The presence of Jesus Christ is the most real, beautiful thing there is! Nothing can take the place of the presence of God!

DAVID'S OBSTACLES

When God has called you into leadership, you will face obstacles. You'll have to make difficult decisions, decisions that you know simply won't please everyone. In those moments, God will give you the courage to lead, the courage to ignore the critics and listen close to what the Holy Spirit is saying to you.

As I write this, it's the day after Easter, 2021. Last year we went through a pandemic just like you did. In many ways, we're still in it. Last Easter, many churches were forced to close the doors and, like every other pastor, I was suddenly faced with many dilemmas. If you were a pastor during this, you'll remember it all too well...

Do I keep the doors closed and show sensitivity to those who are ill or becoming ill or could become ill because of this virus?

Do I show that we have faith that Jesus' blood really does have the power to cleanse and heal all sickness just like the Bible says it does?

Do I ask everyone to wear a mask and undoubtedly hinder their worship (the singing form of worship)?

If I require masks, am I stopping them from expressing praise to Jesus when I *know* the power of vocalizing our praise to Him?

If I don't require masks, am I ignoring the governing authorities?

If Trump is president and as president is over a governor, do I simply follow his guidelines? Since our president insists it's up to the individual and shouldn't be mandated yet our Governor asks us to, am I rebellious for not enforcing it?

There was no easy answer to any of these questions!

I knew the stories. I knew the Word of God. I had read dozens of times before where the religious elite made it hard to come to God burdening people with all their rules and protocols and yet Jesus would break the law and touch the leper. This same Jesus told me that we had the

same power and would do “even greater things.” So how could I now make it difficult for people to pray for one another, to hug, to have singing in our worship services...?

I chose not to enforce a mask mandate, but I had them available and even sent a letter home to the church asking them to wear a mask while they came in and spoke with people and while they exited. I told them that once in the sanctuary and spread out, they could remove their mask during service. I didn't have a sign that read you “must” wear a mask and I told them I wouldn't enforce it as it is up to them. Like every other health decision they have, it's their decision, not mine. There wasn't any perfect decision in all this, but this was my decision based on council from elders, the board, and ministry partners and hours in prayer.

This is what I felt like the Holy Spirit gave me peace about as I went to Him in prayer. For some reason, it wasn't enough for three of my staff pastors. I was told by a pastor in his twenties, “You're leading the entire church into sin!” He told me this twice in two separate staff meetings in front of the team. I won't go in to the other things he said, but let's just say that I never expected to face the obstacle of a pandemic or young pastors on my team doing their best to persuade other team members of my “poor leadership.” Over and over I was told I needed to be a stronger leader. By “stronger” they meant “do what we say and require masks.”

One core leader told another core leader that I took a COVID test that came out positive and that I lied to the whole church. That never happened. Having my good name dragged through the mud was horrible. It was another obstacle I never anticipated. I couldn't understand why Christian leaders within our church couldn't simply make their own decisions based on their

walk with the Lord instead of being so judgmental of mine. What can be most difficult about Christian leadership is dealing with people who should know better, who should know how to be understanding, gracious, respectful, and kind.

I had to choose to step over that obstacle—to not let it stop me. I have to be honest, but it wasn't easy. I started to discover that this wasn't just a human thing. This was a spiritual battle going on. I knew that when I posted a video of our church planting mission that summer. This same pastor said, "We told you not to talk about church planting. We told you not to post that video." His audacity and divisive comments were growing and I had to make hard decisions to protect the unity of our team. In prayer, I realized that Satan wasn't happy that we were seeing orphans adopted, people saved and disciples becoming disciple-makers. Satan did his best to discourage me to quit.

As the leader, you've got to determine that if God put you in that seat, then God will enable you to make the right decisions and then to stick with them. Don't be bullied into doing something you don't want to do. If you've prayed about something and you *know* it's what the Lord is telling you to do, go for it! Cast that vision! Make it clear and watch God move. Sometimes, He will need to remove some people like He did in Gideon's case, and that's okay. He will bring people that are 100 percent behind your vision and the promise God gave you. God gave David a small but powerful army that started out in a cave. If God is with you, you have nothing to fear!

There were many obstacles to face, and I was only in my second year as a senior pastor! Navigating a pandemic was *not* on the syllabus at Bible College! A condescending, young pastor causing confusion, division, and mistrust was not on the syllabus either!

So what do you do when you're facing an obstacle you've never faced? You do what David did. You go to the Lord in prayer. You call out to Him for wisdom, strength, and creative solutions to your obstacle.

A year later now I can truly say that I want nothing but the best for those who accused me and brought me such pain. I've prayed for them often and asked God to help me see them the way He sees them. He's answering that prayer. When Satan tempts me to go there in my mind to replay the conversations and the hurtful things said to me, I have to stop and "take every thought captive unto the obedience of Christ. I have to say "Lord, I won't let their opinions control how this day goes for me. I will be joyful and full of gratitude for all You are doing."

You see, if you don't cross over the obstacle properly, you'll replay the obstacle of the past in your mind, and in doing so, you're letting the past ruin the present. Don't forget the promise of God! Hold on to it! Go for it! Don't give up when the obstacles come!

YOUR CURRENT ASSIGNMENT

After David was anointed, he continued to serve his father Jesse by going back into the fields to care for the sheep. Why? He valued faithfulness over fame. He knew his current

assignment hadn't fully come to a close yet. He wanted to end well. And so should you. After his heroic act with Goliath, he was called upon to lead the army. He didn't say, "Well God promised me I'd be king. I'm not risking my life on the battlefield!"

He was faithful to serve wherever God had appointed him in the moment. I wish every aspiring leader understood this truth! God is more interested in you being faithful to overcome the obstacles you currently face than He is in hearing what you'll do for Him in the future. *Be faithful where you are and God will take you to where He wants you to be next.* Don't ever think "I'll be able to do so much more for the Lord when... I'll be able to make an impact when..." You can make an impact NOW! Look around you. What church are you in now? What talents do you already have? What resources do you already have? What skill can you learn and teach yourself online at home? Who can you impact for Christ now? So many leaders miss their God-designed promotion, because they gave up on their devotion. Be devoted to your pastor where you are now. Be devoted to your boss at work now. Let God handle when, where, and if you're to be promoted. Be more concerned about being faithful than being famous.

Early in Bible College, I remember wanting to lead worship and feeling the call toward worship ministry. I went to Seminary knowing that I was called into ministry at the age of fourteen. The first time I auditioned to lead worship for one of the four worship teams, I heard "No, we need you on lead guitar." I thought, *Ok, they need me.* The second semester I heard "No, we need you on lead guitar." I thought, *Well, this stinks. I want to sing. I want to lead worship.* This was repeated for 7 semesters. I would audition and get rejected (in love) but nonetheless, it

felt like rejection. I had to learn a few things. First, I had to learn to sing better. I had to practice. I had to do my part. So don't mistake some obstacles for being "the devil." Sometimes God just wants you to do your part and sharpen your skills.

Simply because God has called me into a certain ministry or vocation, it doesn't mean that He'll prepare me without my effort. Our effort and submission to Him is involved in the preparation.

You and I can be faithful to do what we're asked to do to the best of our ability. My faithfulness is my success. Obedience *is* success to God. After all, why was the anointing for Kingship removed from Saul? It was removed because he deliberately ignored the instruction—the word of the Lord. By simply aiming to be faithful to the word the Lord gave you, you are showing your "success" in the eyes of God!

I had to learn what it means to persevere through obstacles and wait on the promise. On my seventh audition, they finally said "yes" and let me colead and lead on a few trips. To this day I'm not sure if I actually got any better at leading worship or if I simply wore them down.

KARATE KID

Here's what you need to understand about obstacles. They are God's way of not only testing your faith and perseverance but also used by God to prepare you unknowingly for your next season of life and ministry. Like I've said before, we are all called into ministry in some

degree or another, so if you're a business leader, don't let that word throw you off. There's something in the future that God's preparing you for now.

Remember the movie Karate Kid? As a ten-year-old, it was the best movie I had ever seen. I jumped around the house doing that one-legged karate kick for hours every time I'd watch it. I channeled Daniel LaRusso. I was him and he was me. I'd imagine kicking the butt of those bullies who tortured him. Getting my girl back. Riding off into the sunset ... on my bike. Just like Daniel LaRusso. But how did he finally beat his bullies? It was through the unconventional teaching of Mr. Miyagi. He'd make Daniel wash his car to build up his muscles and ability to defend the punches that would come his way. "Wax on! Wax off!" With each wash, he was being trained for the next obstacle. The current one was simply to obey the one training him. In the obedience came training for the fight of his life.

You see when I was in the studio here in Ohio, I had a revelation one day. It was 2012 and I had just finished building the studio the year before. I was playing guitar, adding tracks one at a time on Innovate Records' second worship album. It was then that suddenly God spoke to me. It was out of the blue and clear as day "This is why I said 'No'."

God's voice was so clear, so sudden that I immediately stopped playing. I set my guitar down and began to "pray" by saying "What?" I was taken to all those failed auditions where I was told "no" and I heard God whispering to me: "Jordan, you wouldn't have become a great musician if I had said "yes" when you were told "no" to leading worship at Brownsville, you

went to your room and you practiced and practiced hard! You wouldn't be able to do what you're doing right now! I prepared you for *this* moment!"

I was so thankful! I was thankful that God had told me "no." I was thankful that I had pushed through it and spent so much time practicing guitar and piano. I remember almost giving up entirely.

WAX ON. WAX OFF.

You never know what God is training you for in the midst of your current obstacle! God is always preparing you for what He has prepared for you. Ephesians 2:10 says that He has created you for certain "good works" destined by Him and Him alone! He is training you even when you don't know it! Every obstacle is another lesson that's twofold: making you more Christ-like and preparing you for your next season.

I WAS DEVASTED

"You shouldn't have kids." That's what the Doctor told me in my third visit to the Hospital. It was my third year in Bible College. I was seeing miracles at church where hundreds of people would fall on their faces and weep in repentance. I'd watch in wonder as people would testify of being healed. I'd watch as they'd leave the Baptism tank at the Brownsville Revival and declare how God had set them free from drug addiction and removed all desire for it. I

watched as a lady's swollen ankles reduced to normal size and I heard her screech with joy and dance right in front of me!

But then I'd go home and be in a lot of pain. For two months this went on and the Doctors were all saying something different. I wanted to have kids. I always had. I knew I was going to marry Danielle and dreaded having to make that call to give her the news. It was the hardest conversation of my life. I remember it like it was yesterday. She told me "Maybe God is testing you ... you know ... like Job." That didn't quite encourage me the way she intended it to. But in my heart, I knew it was true.

Weeks later I was totally healed and in the clear. I was told, "You can absolutely have kids. You're totally fine now." I'll never forget that obstacle. I couldn't do anything about it. There was no sin I had to resist, no sin I had to repent of. Just an obstacle. Something difficult that was out of my control. Maybe that's all God wanted—me to give up all control to Him. Total surrender—with or without the blessing.

CHARACTER TESTS OF DAVID

1 Sam 24:1–22 tells us that twice David's men tried to convince David to kill King Saul. It was definitely tempting, because Saul was trying to kill him! I mean we would call this "self-defense," right!?! But, in every case, David knew that it was up to God's timing to elevate him to authority, not him.

David actually had a few chances to kill Saul, the man who was trying to kill him! Saul camped out in the desert of Zips on the hill of Hakilah. King Saul was lying asleep next to his commanding officer Abner with the army camped around them.

Abner and the guards were NOT doing their job in keeping the King safe, and they fell asleep. David and Abishai, one of his mighty men, snuck down into the camp unnoticed. Abishai whispered to David, “Let’s kill King Saul now! God is giving you this chance!” But David said, “No,” and simply took Saul’s sword and water jug as proof that he could’ve killed the King.

The next morning, David shouted across the valley to King Saul, telling him that he had the chance to kill him, but he let him live. David had committed in his heart: “I would not lay hand on the Lord’s anointed.” 1 Samuel 26:23b

David also had a chance to kill Saul when he walked into the very cave to go to the bathroom where David and his men were hiding out. David had the chance to kill him, yet he chose only to cut off a small piece of his garment. These are character tests. David chose not to assume his place of ministry before his appointed time.

It’s sad to me when I see someone unwilling to serve a leader wholeheartedly and show honor when they disagree with that leader. It happens in companies. It happens in nonprofits and even in churches. Not David. David had a good understanding of honor, and he knew that if God had made Saul a king, then it wasn’t his job to kill him—with words or a sword.

David ignored the voice of even friends who would tempt him to harm the king. They even used Christian jargon saying, “God is giving you this chance to kill him!” But David paid attention to the Holy Spirit’s voice that told him to honor King Saul, simply because he was king, even though King Saul was trying to kill him! David let God be his defender. David was careful to honor the authority that God placed above him. And it should be no different for you and me.

So what’s this mean for you and me? You are undoubtedly under a leader in some way. Maybe it’s a pastor. Maybe it’s a youth pastor. Maybe a parent or a teacher at school. Maybe it’s your boss at work. It’s possible that all those are true.

You are to honor those leaders in every way you can. This means you need to be careful about what you say about your leaders. You should be careful to honor them in the way that you talk to them and more subtly in the way that you talk about them with coworkers and friends. I’m surprised how many Christians ignore this basic Biblical mandate. The Ten Commandments reference it. The Apostle Paul teaches on it. It’s clear that honoring authority means a great deal to Father God. In the list of 7 things “the Lord hates,” one who causes division and strife is top on the list.

Just because you wouldn’t do something exactly as they would doesn’t mean you need to voice that opinion when you’re around others. I’m convinced that a number of people don’t get the next position that they want because they’re not willing to honor the person who gave them the position they’re in.

Let's say you're serving a pastor as the worship leader and he were to ask you to learn a new song. You should simply learn it and do so with a great attitude. If they ask you to consider something for the stage, consider it. Don't assume that they don't know what they're talking about. Sure, they may be less informed than you in a certain area, but that doesn't mean you can't consider their requests and speak to them with honor. I did that for my dad and it fostered a great relationship. Our worship leader does this for me and I so appreciate it.

If your leader asks you to watch a video, watch it. If they ask you to read a book, read it. Whatever they ask of you, honor God by honoring them, for it is God who has placed them as your leader. The reason I know this is a problem is because I've met hundreds of worship leaders when I'm teaching The Seven Theory at conferences. I'm not exaggerating when I say a good ten to twenty percent of them can't mention their senior pastor without throwing in a dig. I'm not sure why so many have a hard time biting their tongue and honoring their pastor. I've seen this numerous times. The chance to honor or dishonor your leader is a character test that you will repeatedly have throughout your life. Choose honor. Choose character. Choose to give the honor and grace that you'd like to receive.

What would Satan want for your church? Division. What would Satan want for your company? Division and lower moral. Do you know what "division" is? It's TWO visions. Division means two and vision says, "This is the plan and direction of where we're going."

Let's not ever give people the impression that our vision or idea is better than the leader we serve. The Holy Spirit works through humility to bring unity. That reveals itself in honoring

your authority—whoever it is. There is no unity without humility, and humility will cause you to honor your pastor and leaders. On a side note, it's in the place of unity that beautiful presence of God manifests in a more powerful way. "There the Lord commands His blessing." Ps 133:3

Humility leads to honor. Honor leads to unity. Unity leads to blessing. Without the blessing, the touch of the Lord's presence, what do we have but powerless meetings and empty words?

AVAIL PULL QUOTE **Humility leads to honor. Honor leads to unity. Unity leads to blessing.**

CHARACTER TESTS IN THE PALACE

Once David was appointed King, the character tests didn't end. It's possible they were only beginning. You and I need to know that. Just because we're promoted, it doesn't mean we're less prone to have a wandering heart or a carnal nature that is somehow now subdued. That won't happen until we are on God's eternal shore. For now, we will face temptation and be "prone to wander" even after promotion. And it's possible now that we're promoted that we will face it even more, it's just a different type of temptation when you're leading.

The Bible tells us, "In the time when Kings went out to war, David stayed home." Three verses later we read that he noticed Bathsheba naked on the rooftop. So just think, he's lounging

on his rooftop deck, ignoring his duty as King to lead the charge and lift the moral of his soldiers in battle.

David saw her and asked about her. He was warned, “Don’t do it. She’s married.” David insisted on meeting her, ignoring the voice of the Holy Spirit warning him to stay away. He let his guard down for a moment. He chose selfishness over integrity, lust over restraint.

You may know the story, but I’ll summarize it by saying that this one act of sin caused a domino effect, inflicting harm on all in its path. Ultimately his sin not only led to the murder of Uriah, Bathsheba’s husband, but also death in David’s own family. His family became a nightmare following this affair and murder.

When we ignore what God’s calling us to do, when we begin to be lazy, we tend to be more attracted to what Satan offers. A simpler way to point out the obvious here is that “bored people do dumb things.” At least that’s what I’ve noticed over the years.

Blaise Pascal, the renowned mathematician and theologian, wrote “All of humanity’s problems stem from man’s inability to sit quietly in a room alone.” We are living in a time when stillness or rest is virtually obsolete ... unless that is, you have the fruit of self-control, given to you by the Holy Spirit. You don’t need to check your social-media accounts incessantly. That could be an addiction you don’t realize you have. I’ve had to tell a few friends about it and they didn’t realize it. I have been told to put my phone down by my wife and guess what, she was right. It was family time, not scroll time.

The only one who doesn't know he's an addict is the addict. The family always knows. The friends always know. The coworkers know. Don't let a smart phone or anything demand your attention. Only let the Lord's voice fill that role.

Again, bored people, including bored leaders, do dumb things. Let the Lord fill you with wonder again! Do what you have to do to find that wonder! Spend a few days in prayer. Go sightseeing and take in some of God's creation. List on paper what's amazing about God. But when you feel yourself getting bored, that's the yellow light before the red light of a collision. Be filled with wonder at the goodness of God in the life of Jesus! Find what God's called you to do and stay faithful in it.

Holiness is about letting God separate you from the world. This doesn't happen just once at our salvation. Yes, we are born again and receive a new nature! But just like one who is born, there is growing up to do, there are things to learn. We are saved. We are being saved. And one day, we'll be completely saved. That is how the Apostle Paul put it. God has "given us everything we need for right living" and we've been "given a new nature" through Christ. But we must allow the transformation to take place in the environment of a fallen world.

If we could invite Charles Spurgeon to the table and ask him to talk to us about this idea of character tests and allowing God to make us "holy," he'd say something like the following, taken from a devotional he had written in 1896:

"Who hath saved us, and called us with a holy calling." 2 Timothy 1:9

The apostle uses the perfect tense and says, “Who hath saved us.” Believers in Christ Jesus are saved. They are not looked upon as persons who are in a hopeful state, and may ultimately be saved, but they are already saved. Salvation is not a blessing to be enjoyed upon the dying bed and to be sung of in a future state above, but a matter to be obtained, received, promised, and enjoyed now. The Christian is perfectly saved in God’s purpose; God has ordained him unto salvation, and that purpose is complete. He is saved also as to the price that has been paid for him: “It is finished,” was the cry of the Savior when He died. The believer is also perfectly saved in his covenant head, for as he fell in Adam, so he lives in Christ. This complete salvation is accompanied by a holy calling. Those whom the Savior saved upon the cross are in due time effectually called by the power of God the Holy Spirit unto holiness: they leave their sins; they endeavor to be like Christ; they choose holiness, not out of any compulsion, but from the stress of a new nature, which leads them to rejoice in holiness just as naturally as aforesaid they delighted in sin. God neither chose them nor called them, because they were holy, but he called them that they might be holy, and holiness is the beauty produced by his workmanship in them. The excellences that we see in a believer are as much the work of God as the atonement itself. Thus has brought out very sweetly the fullness of the grace of God. Salvation must be of grace, because the Lord is the author of it: and what motive but grace could move him to save the guilty? Salvation must be of grace, because the Lord works in such a manner that our righteousness is forever excluded. Such is the believer’s privilege—a present salvation. Such is the evidence that he is called to it—a holy life.

Spurgeon, C. H. (1896). *Morning and evening: Daily readings*. London: Passmore & Alabaster.

We're all called to a holy life and Spurgeon invites us into that life of holiness, the life that glorifies God. If we are to be *holy* and if our lives are to glorify God, then we've got to be willing to heed the voice of the *Holy* Spirit when He warns us to stay away from sin, be it pornography, greed, anger, jealousy, pride—you name it.

Like you, I've had my character tested on many occasions. In these moments, God is changing me from the inside out—calling me to trust in Him more deeply and sincerely. His Spirit speaks to my spirit in the midst of conflict in my heart and says, “You're better than that! That's not you! Don't give in! Let Christ live in you! Let my Son's character and purity be formed in you!”

ONE CLICK

I remember in 2010 going through something so difficult, something I didn't expect at all. I had been serving Jesus wholeheartedly since I was a young teen. I was called into ministry at age 14 and passionately pursued God all my life. I was 5 years into ministry after Bible College when suddenly I found myself arguing often with my wife and tempted to view porn. It began with one click. Just one click after believing the lies that Satan told me. (1) It wouldn't hurt anyone; after all it only affects me. (2) I deserved it. (3) God in His grace would forgive me. Let's address each of these lines that Satan used to bait me.

First of all, it did hurt not only me, but my wife whom I love so dearly. I felt such a lack of peace. I felt so hypocritical in my ministry. Here I had been teaching teens to follow Jesus, to trust God, to run from sexual sin for 5 years as their youth pastor. I had led worship hundreds of times and meant every word I sang—in private or in public. But suddenly I found myself in a place where I took Satan’s bait. I felt awful, distant from God. I knew His Spirit was grieved. I wanted to break free, but I felt I couldn’t. This went on for a few weeks before my wife stumbled upon a webpage I had been on. I’ve never seen my wife so hurt and so crushed and I vowed to never do that to her again. Which leads me to the second lie Satan told me: I didn’t deserve it. Regardless of what our spouse is doing or not doing, it does not give us permission to sin. Our holiness is always our responsibility. Despite what I felt was “fair,” it was wrong to look at other women. Leaders, you must remember that your character can never be dependent on another person’s actions—even those of your spouse. Your character is *your* character, despite what anyone around you does. There are things you can control in life and things you can’t. The Holy Spirit can give you control over yourself if you’ll let him.

Third, would God forgive me? Yes. God’s grace is truly amazing. But we dare not trample on the blood of Jesus and grieve the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Grace. Notice how the Word gives us instruction regarding this idea of perpetuating sin thinking that “God will just forgive us.”

Hebrews 10:26–36 “For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins,²⁷ but a fearful expectation of

judgment...³⁵ Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. ³⁶ For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised.”

WOW! There's so much truth there that simply isn't brought to our awareness too often. It is clear that we can “shipwreck” our faith and we can “throw out our confidence.” It is clear that it's possible for us to profane the Spirit of Grace and grieve the Holy Spirit of God by choosing to sin and reject God.

We learn about this in Jesus' Sermon on the Mount in Matthew 5. When we choose to lust, we commit adultery. When we keep anger in our hearts, we choose murder over grace. When we steal someone's good name by gossiping and talking negatively about them, we are indeed a thief. When we say “yes” to homosexuality and condone it instead of clearly condemning it as sin, we ignore God's Word and “deliberately” disobey the Lord. That word “deliberate” is so important. You can't lose your salvation, for losing implies an accident. God is so kind and loving. I believe His Word makes it clear that once you accept Jesus as Savior, you are HIS until you willfully reject Him and begin to deliberately sin. It's clear that after salvation, we can later choose to reject God. It's clear that we can choose not to “endure” or choose to endure. We can choose to “hold on” to grace as Paul put it, or let go and reject our need of it.

I want to encourage you as a leader reading this book. You will be tempted to sin. I can promise you that. Your character will be tested, and, in that moment, your leadership will be tested. A great leader passes the character tests! A great leader doesn't give into temptation! A

great doesn't buy into the lie of that moment that the temporary pleasure outweighs the long-term consequence. This is one of the reasons I have written this book. My heart grieves seeing leaders who implode and fail the character tests. I want to tell them and I want to tell you: "Satan has a target on your back, because you're valuable! Being tempted is normal!" Jesus was tempted in every way like we are. Understand that when you are tempted to sin, it does not inform your heart that you are a failure or sinful. You *will* be tempted. But God will give you a way out and you will pass the character tests!

You will be tempted to believe the lies that the sin won't hurt anyone and it's inconsequential. But those are lies Satan tells you. Why? To take you out! Satan does *not* want you to go through the process of becoming God's man or God's woman. He does *not* want you to succeed. God plans to prosper you and give you a hope and future. Satan plans to thwart God's plan, and he does that by tempting you to live for yourself, thereby living for him. The lie is subtle but real. "Live for yourself. Please yourself. It won't hurt. It's not a big deal. You deserve vengeance because of what they did. You deserve this extra money even though it's not earned or given. You deserve this pornography or this affair because you..." Fill in the blank, but the lies are the same.

Leader, I implore you. Pass the character tests! Don't give in to sin! Run from sin, especially sexual sin "*for no other sin affects the body*" like sexual sin does. The Bible is clear about that.

To believe the lie that says, “Because we are in an age of grace, God’s love covers all our sins so it doesn’t matter how we live” is to ignore God’s Word that tells us otherwise.

1 John 3:9–10: “No one born of God makes a practice of sinning, for God’s seed abides in him; and he cannot keep on sinning, because he has been born of God. ¹⁰ By this it is evident who are the children of God and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not practice righteousness is not of God, nor is the one who does not love his brother.” ESV

The reason it says, “He cannot keep on sinning...” is because, at least in my experience, when I sin, I feel God’s Spirit telling me “NO!” “Don’t sin! You’re mine! You are to be holy and pure!”

When a Christian leader ignores this voice of the Holy Spirit from within and chooses to sin and deliberately silence the voice of truth, he is telling the Spirit of Truth (God), “I don’t need you in my life.” If this continues, the voice of the Holy Spirit becomes harder and harder to hear and their hearts and “consciences become seared” to the point where they no longer even hear or discern God’s voice.

There are leaders who start out great—full of integrity and passion for Jesus, yet, over time, ignore the voice of truth and allow their hearts to decay and their sensitivity to the Spirit’s voice grow numb. Your gifts and talents will get you promoted to leadership, but it’s your character that will *keep* you in leadership. Too many leaders end up with an asterisks by their

name. When you see or hear their name, because of their moral failure, it's almost as if there's an asterisks by their name as if to say "They were doing so well, but then..."

If a character test is before you, I encourage you, pass the test and allow the Holy Spirit to give you a way out of that temptation just as He promised He would. Don't be a leader with an asterisks. Don't be a leader who is anointed by God, appointed to walk worthy, then falls into sin. You *can* pass the character tests! You *can* become the man of God the world needs!

Every region needs leaders to rise up and move with the Holy Spirit to change that culture from one of death to one of life, from one of apathy to one of passion for Jesus. You can be that leader! You can be that man or woman of God. If you're reading this, it's likely that you *are* the person God has chosen to impact your region and lead a revival of hearts turned back to Jesus Christ!

If you have failed and you've sinned, take the path of David and repent. Repent before God and before your spouse, if you're married. Be honest. Be humble. Be broken. Let God heal you and restore you, then get back to serving Him as King and Lord of your life.

I have written this book to encourage leaders who've blown it to not throw in the towel. Leader, I want to say it again, there's a huge target on your back. Satan knows how valuable and dangerous you are! Once Satan gets you down, he will want you to stay down and try his best to convince you that God doesn't want you anymore. Nothing could be further from the truth! God's love for you hasn't changed, and His plans for you haven't changed. Be a man or woman

after God's own heart! Repent. Shake the dust off. Find a mentor. Next time you're feeling pulled away, talk to your mentor about it. Open up. Be honest. Let God restore you and begin to work through you again!

THE ANOINTING PROPELS US TO CONTINUE

The anointing of our calling will propel us and urge us to continue, to press on after failure or fatigue. Remember the moment when God anointed you! Think back! Hold on to the promise!

Understand that the anointing upon your life is not so that you can have goose bumps. The anointing is not so that you can have crowds that listen to you—so you can be “the speaker.” The anointing is not so you can be quoted on Twitter. The anointing is not so that you can feel better about yourself. The anointing is the power to serve in the role you'll be appointed to serve in. It's the power to serve God by serving people in the unique gift given to you by God. It's the power to live like Jesus.

The anointing is the grace gift of God, the empowerment from Heaven, to do the work God has called you to do.

It may seem strange to you when you hear a pastor or speaker say, “I can really feel the anointing right now.” But they mean it. I know exactly what they mean as I've said the same thing, trying to describe what's happening in that moment when it seems as though the anointing

from Heaven is being poured out over me in a powerful and fresh way to enable me to preach, prophesy, or serve in a role that God is asking me to fulfill in that moment.

When I prophesy and share a word of knowledge or a prophetic word with someone, I can feel the anointing on me in that moment for that purpose. It can begin as a simple nudge from the Spirit leading me toward someone, someone His Spirit is highlighting to me. As I walk toward them or open my mouth to simply greet them, it seems as though I feel the anointing on me increase, that is, the power from Heaven to prophesy life and the truth that breaks the enemy's lies. So many people are living in defeat around you. There are hundreds and likely thousands of people in your city who are living in a constant state of fear, heaviness, and worry. Jesus can break that and give them peace. The anointing in you is the power to deliver that peace—the peace and presence of the Anointed One!

David felt the anointing oil run from the top of his head, down onto his clothes, all the way down to his feet. He didn't just feel the olive oil, but he felt the presence of God in a powerful, life-changing way. He may not have shouted the name "Jesus!" But trust me, he was feeling the anointing of the Anointed One! There was David's life up until that moment of anointing and there was David's life after the anointing. The same is true for us. When God finds us faithful and chooses to give us a new assignment to serve the Kingdom, He anoints us and it seems that everything changes from that moment on! For David, the anointing was only the beginning of the P.R.O.C.E.S.S. It was the promise that he would become King of Israel and pioneer of Jesus' reign.

The Holy Spirit ministered to David even after a character test had been failed. God would invite David to forgive himself, learn the lesson and get back up. We have that same Holy Spirit, but now in even greater measure! Paul contrasts the former glory with the glory of the new covenant and God's Word tells us that we now have God's anointing in even greater measure. We can be forgiven! We can pray! We can approach God, confident that He will hear our prayers and speak with us! WOW! This unity with God, this nearness is all made possible because of what Jesus did on the cross! David was not perfect and neither are you. Jesus is the perfect one. Keep your eyes fixed on Jesus, and like David, let your character be built in times of testing, let it be tested in fire and be proven gold.

1 Peter 1:7: These trials will show that your faith is genuine. It is being tested as fire tests and purifies gold, though your faith is far more precious than mere gold. So when your faith remains strong through many trials, it will bring you much praise, glory, and honor on the day when Jesus Christ is revealed to the whole world.

When your promise seems hindered by your reality, when you're hit with another obstacle and when your character is tested, it's the promise, the moment of anointing, that moment of God's choosing, that will propel you to continue. Let your calling keep you. Let that memory of God's voice and touch on your life hold you through the difficult times. Let it cause you to endure! Keep up the faith and keep running your race!

DAVID ENDURED

There were many times when David could've just given up. There were moments when friends betrayed him and comrades abandoned him. This happened to David, this happened to Jesus, and this will likely happen to you. You may have someone you invested in turn their back on you. You may have to even cut ties with someone. Even Jesus had Judas. But whomever you are able to lead, lead them well and care for them deeply. Follow David's example. Follow Jesus' example.

True leadership cares not just about the success of the team or the organization. True leadership is about caring for the people whom God's entrusted you with. True leaders care deeply not just about succeeding in their goals but also about the team members succeeding individually—as a dad, as a spouse, as a person.

Leadership isn't about having the highest position. It's about having compassion on those you lead and being positioned to serve them. It's not about having power over others. It's about empowering others. It's not about being the smartest person in the room. It's asking the right questions to evoke the best advice from the smartest people in the room—those you've put in the room because you know they're smart. True leaders surround themselves with people more talented at certain things than themselves. True leaders, like David, are not threatened by other people's gifts and talents, they're thankful for them.

AVAIL PULL QUOTE: Leadership isn't about having the highest position. It's about having compassion on those you lead and being positioned to serve them. It's not about having power over others. It's about empowering others.

True leaders care deeply about the team they've assembled. A real leader doesn't take credit, they take responsibility. They want the team to succeed. They take the blame when there's a setback, and they give the credit when there's a victory. That's the type of leader David was. That's the type of leader people will follow for decades. Let's be that type of leader!

Let's be the type of leaders who endure criticism and truly take into account people's concerns whether they're from a customer, a coworker, a guest, or a church member. Be open to what God will teach you and endure!

A leader who allows God to take them through the process is constantly self-evaluating. They know that they are constantly in need of improvement. They are intentionally self-aware and willing to admit shortcomings. They are open to feedback and constructive criticism, especially from their team. They are constantly searching their heart, asking God to make them more like Jesus.

In 2 Sam 16:5–14, we find this strange encounter where a guy named Shimei is yelling profanity at David and his men and even throwing stones at them. David doesn't retaliate, he endures. David was instead, reflective.... "I wonder if God is using this man to speak truth to me?"

When accusations come to you, whether they are given rudely in public or with kindness in private, how do you respond? Do you get defensive and upset?

Don't retaliate or get revenge. First, be quiet long enough to hear the concern. Ask yourself "Is any of this true? Is there anything I should be doing differently?" If the Holy Spirit gives you peace and says "No," then fine—you're on your way. But we learn from David, there's no need to overreact. David's men said, "Can we go cut his head off?" David said, "No!" Those guys were intense!

When his own son Absalom betrayed David, he had compassion on his son! He didn't lash out and take vengeance. In fact, when David's men tracked him down and killed him, it left David in a dilemma. He mourned the loss of his son while being thankful that his men were protecting the throne against anarchy. While the crowd didn't understand at first, they learned from David that a life is a life. A person who's alive is a person valued by God, created by God, loved by God, no matter how they're acting. David knew what so many psychologists have discovered: Hurt people hurt people. David knew that Shimei was likely hurting inside. He was likely hurt by an authority figure in his childhood, maybe even a parent. King David had an uncanny ability to have compassion on those who were combative.

David prayed for his son Absalom. He wanted Absalom to give whatever hurt and anger that resided in his heart to Father God just like he had done as a teenager. David knew that hurt people hurt people and loved people love people. This is why he choose to only love people.

What would it look like for you to not defend yourself when people accuse you or lie about you? What if you were so secure in God's love that it didn't matter if someone didn't like you? What if it didn't matter that someone tried to hurt you? How cool would that be? Let me

repeat that: What if you were SO secure in the truth that God loves you and is taking care of you and think you're awesome? What if your relationship with Jesus is SO RICH, that when you discover someone doesn't like you, it doesn't even bother you? That can be your reality. That, my friend, will cause you to endure.

Endurance is a part of the process of a leader. It's just like a marathon runner who sets a predetermined time goal for their finish. They know that it's going to be painful to reach that goal of finishing at that time. They know the reference points are also going to be simultaneously painful and rewarding if they are reaching them at the appropriate pace. The runner knows the pain in their side is part of running the race. They know that the pain is a part of the process!

Did you know that marathon runners statistically finish one minute before their timed goal. *This study in Prospect Theory covered nearly 10 million marathon finishers and analyzed their data. This was a powerful study yielding very interesting findings. We humans are wired by God to make numbers matter, to make goals matter, to set our mind on some predetermined goal, and then finish it. There is a race that God has set you in. There are goals you are to reach as a Christian leader. There will be pain along the way. Understand now that pain is a part of the process and endure! Jesus said, "Those who endure to the end will be saved." As followers of Jesus, and especially as leaders, you'll be ousted, lied about, persecuted, and misunderstood. When it comes, and it will, don't let that stop the process of a leader! You're becoming the man or woman God wants you to become!

Mt 10:16–28: “Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, ¹⁸ and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles. ¹⁹ When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ²¹ Brother will deliver brother over to death, and the father his child, and children will rise against parents and have them put to death, ²² and you will be hated by all for my name’s sake. But the one who endures to the end will be saved.... ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather fear him who can destroy both soul and body in hell.” ESV

Don’t fear the misguided opinions of a person! Fear the Lord knowing only His opinion is the one that counts.

*Work Cited: Faculty.ChicagoBooth.edu “Goals as Reference Points in Marathon Running: A Novel Test of Reference Dependence” by Alex Markle, George Wu, Rebecca White and Adam Sackett, Jan 5, 2018

DAVID’S SUCCESS

Success is often determined by the crowd. But like we learned in the life of Joseph and Gideon, success isn’t the goal, sonship is. God wants you to be like His son Jesus more than He wants to make you successful. Success can sometimes be the last stop on the train for many

Christian leaders, for it's there that the open-door policy begins to shut. It's often the successful leader who forgets who made him or her successful in the first place.

David was successful in so much of his endeavors. His first day-in battle, he beheaded the enemy's fiercest warrior. That began a domino effect of victory upon victory for David. God was with him and gave him the victory.

He could've believed the lie that his success was due to his innate abilities. But he didn't buy it. He knew the truth. He knew that anything good in his life was a gift from God. The same is true for you and me.

Pastor, when you give someone the exact advice they need in the moment they need it, that's not because you're just simply awesome. That's because Jesus is simply awesome, and He's working through you. When you preach the lights out, that's because of God's grace gift on your life!

Business leader, when you seal that deal you prayed for, that's God's grace and gift on your life! Thank Him for it. Don't take credit. Give God the credit.

Staff Member, when someone on the team does an amazing job, credit them, congratulate them, and celebrate them! Don't worry about your own reputation. Let God take care of that.

James 1:17: "Every good and perfect gift comes from above, from the Father of Lights."

The truth is that we don't always succeed. We all don't "perform" well now and then. We make a mistake or bomb the presentation or.... Fill in the blank. That's normal. That's human. Those you lead want to know that you know you're human. They want authenticity, honesty, and humility. They want to follow a leader like David. You can be that leader! People don't want to follow a leader who is always successful. They want to follow a leader who's always sincere. You won't always succeed, but you'll always be a son or a daughter of Father God.

David knew that his strength came from the Lord and that his value wasn't determined by his performance. He knew that his ability to lead came directly from fearing the Lord.

2 Samuel 23:2–6 (ESV): “The Spirit of the Lord speaks by me; his word is on my tongue. ³ The God of Israel has spoken; the Rock of Israel has said to me: When one rules justly over men, ruling in the fear of God, ⁴ he dawns on them like the morning light, like the sun shining forth on a cloudless morning, like rain that makes grass to sprout from the earth. ⁵ “For does not my house stand so with God? For he has made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things and secure. For will he not cause to prosper all my help and my desire? ⁶ But worthless men are all like thorns that are thrown away...”

David was confident not in his own ability to make great decisions to lead Israel toward success as a nation. He was confident in GOD. He was confident in his fear of the Lord. He knew that his fear of the Lord and his respect of God was what caused him to be righteous and the nation to prosper. He knew that he had a role to play. David understood that while God made the covenant to him—a promise to bless him and his family—it was up to David to continually

ask for the Lord's direction and repent when he felt his heart become prideful, especially in moments of success.

We've all seen it. A Christian leader becomes successful and you have a meeting with them. Whether it's one on one or in a group, suddenly you notice things you didn't expect. Maybe they're incredibly rude to a waitress or maybe they dismiss an appointment and refuse to take blame. They do something noticeably wrong and you think "someone should tell them." But then almost instantly you think "Ah, I bet no one has the nerve. Or maybe he simply doesn't accept constructive criticism well."

Successful Christian Leaders can develop poor habits, and if they lead in isolation or in pride, then those habits will go unchecked and only get worse.

TWO WARNINGS IN LIGHT OF SUCCESS

1. Isolation
2. Pride

ISOLATION

Allow me to ask yourself a few quick questions

“Do people ever challenge your views?”

“How do you respond?”

“What is it that a friend has told you that you didn’t want to hear lately?”

“Who in your life loves you enough to tell you the truth?”

“Whom did you give full credit to for the last victory?”

If you came up blank on one or all of those questions, you’re likely a leader leading in isolation and that is a dangerous place to be. If leaders who serve under you came to you with concerns years ago but you reacted with anger and became defensive, then is it any wonder they haven’t been honest with you since?

It was after David was consistently successful that he felt it would be ok to be isolated from both his comrades in battle and his counselors in the palace. 2 Samuel 11 tells us the story of Bathsheba we mentioned earlier. He first isolated himself from the warriors in battle where he was supposed to be. Next, he isolated himself from his friend and counselor, ignoring his advice to resist meeting her.

PRIDE

It's pride that will cause a leader to ignore basic counsel. It's pride that will cause a leader to prepare less and lean on his own understanding. It's pride that will cause a leader to begin to believe that he is the smartest person in the room. And it's pride that will begin to repel good people.

A humble leader will give God all the glory in a time of success. He knows that the blessings are from God and God alone. A humble leader will give the credit to his team and celebrate their contributions and achievements. A humble leader is one who sees himself first as a child of God caring for brothers and sisters. That is the kind of leader you want to be and the kind of leader people want to follow.

As we read about in 2 Samuel 8, David consistently won battles, consistently worshipped God, and gave all the glory to God. It's when we begin to want the glory that we get in trouble.

SINCERE, NOT SUCCESSFUL

Often when leaders hit a certain level of success, they begin to think that they can make no mistakes. Even if they began their leadership with introspection, it's gradually eroded, and all that's left is a pile of ambition and blame.

Don't blame others for the sins you've committed. Instead, own up to them. Don't blame others for the goals of your company or church not being reached. You're the leader. Ultimately

it's on you. Remember, leaders take responsibility. Yes, leaders give requirements and delegate tasks and projects but in the end, leaders take responsibility if something doesn't go well.

Don't blame others if something makes you look "unsuccessful." Instead, fear the Lord and begin to ask GOD to make you right with Him again. Ask GOD to guide you. As leaders, we should be doing this every single day. You can pray a simple prayer like this:

Father, I pray that today you'll help me avoid the temptation to lead from a place of insecurity or fear. Help me to lead like you. Remind me today that I am fully loved. I repent of every sin. I repent of _____ (whatever comes to mind) and ask you to wash me clean today. I want to put You, Jesus, at the center of my organization and give all glory to You. When we have a victory, it's your victory. I know that any and all success comes from You. It is You who blesses us with good ideas and great team members. It is you who causes us to succeed. Every good and perfect gift comes from You! Lead me, Holy Spirit, as I lead my team today. In Jesus' Name, AMEN!

DAVID AS GOD'S SON

David undoubtedly had anger in his heart toward his dad, Jesse. Anger is an ugly thing. It's grows from the seeds of unforgiveness, planted by hurt. All David's brothers were invited to meet the prophet Samuel that fateful day. But not David. David was left out.

Have you ever been left out, uninvited? You're in good company, David's company. But notice how David found that the love of Father God could heal the father wound in his heart.

“For my father and mother have forsaken me, but the Lord will take me in.” Ps 27:10

ESV

David knew the pain of a father who didn't approve. The shame. The inability to measure up. These feelings were replaced with the joy of being loved by Father God and sensing not only His nearness and love but also approval and encouragement. Did you notice those words “take me in”? It's as if David is saying, “When my parents abandoned me, the Lord adopted me.” David's insecurity left with the joy of adoption.

Maybe this is why one of David's first acts as King after expanding the territory of Israel far and wide is to adopt Mephibosheth, the grandson of his enemy Saul. David knew the pain of a father who didn't care and David didn't want any child to live with that pain. David wanted to honor his friend Jonathan and somehow show kindness to Jonathan's family members.

He adopted Mephibosheth, and the young man “ate at the king's table as one of Dave's sons.” Because he was lame, Dave even awarded this young man 35 servants to care for him and show him kindness! In this way, God used him to illustrate His great love for us. This adoption also should serve as a sign to us twenty-first-century believers that it is the church who should solve the orphan crisis in America.

God first put adoption on the heart of our hearts in 2019. I had done some research into what it would look like to plant 10 churches in 10 cities in 10 years because of prophetic words that were spoken to me regarding my assignment. I mentioned this briefly in the chapter on Gideon. In my research, I found that 140 kids in my county, Trumbull County Ohio, were waiting to be adopted and more were being added weekly, sometimes daily, due to the opioid crisis. God put a passion in us to do something! We began an initiative called Transform Trumbull, a 10-year plan to revitalize our region with the love of Jesus Christ! We feel that if believers will let God turn them into disciple makers who will follow Jesus together in churches we plant, we could see four distinct marks of transformation in our cities by the year 2030. Check that out at www.TransformTrumbull.com

KING'S HOME

I remember also lying on the floor with a migraine one day and a song coming on that celebrated God being our Father. I wept like a baby. God was birthing something in me that I could not shake. This is also how King's Home Properties came about.

King's Home Properties is a company I started so I could use philanthropy to express the Father's love. I had renovated a few homes from 2012 to 2017, before becoming a full-time pastor at church. I learned what to do and what not to do. I realized that if I do this right, I can buy homes every couple years, renovate them, and use the income to place orphans in forever homes. This is my goal. KHP will use its profits to build orphanages in China and support local

efforts of churches and individuals to adopt children in need of Father God's love. The mission of KHP is *buy a home, give a home*. Follow our progress at [Facebook.com/KingsHomeProperties](https://www.facebook.com/KingsHomeProperties)

In Ps 27:4, David also expresses his thankfulness for God's presence being so rich. "One thing have I asked of the Lord, that I will seek after: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to gaze upon the beauty of the Lord...."

As I read through first and second Samuel, I saw vividly how in many ways David's actions reflect what we see in Jesus. It's not surprising that the prophet Samuel prophesied to David that he would be the "Head of Nations." David himself prophesied unknowingly about Jesus as he spoke about himself in many of the Psalms we've grown to love. One of those being Psalm 18:43–48: "⁴³ You delivered me from strife with the people; you made me the head of the nations; people whom I had not known served me. ⁴⁴ As soon as they heard of me they obeyed me; foreigners came cringing to me. ⁴⁵ Foreigners lost heart and came trembling out of their fortresses. ⁴⁶ The Lord lives, and blessed be my rock, and exalted be the God of my salvation—⁴⁷ the God who gave me vengeance and subdued peoples under me, ⁴⁸ who rescued me from my enemies; yes, you exalted me above those who rose against me; you delivered me from the man of violence." ESV

God, likewise, subdued Jesus' enemies under Him and exalted Him above all. God delivered Jesus from the grave! God made him the "Head of Nations" and Lord of all and gave Him all authority and all power. God made Jesus the firstborn among many Hebrews tells us!

You are the brother or sister of Jesus when you accept Him as Savior! You, like Jesus, are raised from the grave and “seated in Heavenly places” with Him!

This is also why Jesus was born to a carpenter named Joseph—Joseph was in the lineage of King David. It was said numerous times that Jesus would be the “son of David” and this even became a sort-of nickname for Jesus as he traveled to certain towns such as Bethlehem, David’s home town. People would call out to Jesus “Son of David!”

As I read about David’s successful leadership in preparing for this chapter, I see some character traits that I want to have in my life. I hope you’ll also allow God to take you through the process of a leader and begin to think and live like David.

TEN SIGNS OF SONSHIP FROM DAVID’S LIFE

1. WORK HARD WHERE YOU ARE

David was working hard tending his father’s sheep. Do whatever is in front of you now to the best of your ability. I feel many people miss their promotion from God because they were either jealous for another man’s position or quit on their current job God had given them. You can miss your God-given promotion if you quit your devotion.

Work hard NOW and don’t stress over THEN. Work hard in the present and God will take care of the future. Trust me, God has a way of finding you when you’re heart is right.

Samuel said “Are you SURE this is all your boys?!” The Holy Spirit told him, “There’s one more.” Ask yourself: Where does God have me employed right now? Am I working hard and giving it my all there? If not, how can I change that? What can I begin to do differently? Am I allowing God to begin a process in me?

2. BE BRAVE AND TAKE RISKS

1 Sam 17 tells us that David went up against Goliath, a GIANT, and killed the dude! I’m not going to say he was unafraid. Because that’s likely not true. David did have common sense. Trust me he was afraid of death that day. But he went out to fight Goliath, and he did it afraid! Why? He trusted God! The more you trust in God’s ability to watch over you, the greater risks you’ll take. David was brave in defending God’s reputation, not his own.

3. HONOR THE AUTHORITY GOD HAS ESTABLISHED

David trusted that God would protect him and give him the throne that He had promised in His due time. David chose not to slander the people in charge, harm the people in charge, or even be a part of the conversation when it would happen. Why don’t you put this book down for a moment and find a way to bless someone in authority over you. They have to make a lot of hard decisions in order to lead well. Find a way to bless them—maybe with a simple “Thank-you” card.

4. ADMIT WHEN YOU’RE WRONG

Multiple times, David blew it. But every time, he repented. Sincerely with brokenness and tears. With Bathsheba, he blew it, then repented. When he took a census and 70,000 people died, he blew it, knew it, and repented. Admit when you're wrong. In the process of a leader, you'll face character tests, and if you fail, admit it. People want to follow a leader who's always sincere, not always successful.

5. CELEBRATE OTHERS AND THEIR STRENGTHS

David honored and complimented every great warrior who won battles and fought well. David publicly commended every great General who led well. David complimented every person and prophet who gave him great advice. What we see here is that David's humility and willingness to let others get the credit served him well, served the nation well, and certainly pleased the Lord. In today's culture of "me" even in the church, many are unwilling to give the credit where the credit is due. Follow David's example! Share the stage. Find ways to give credit to others and let others have the limelight! Find ways to honor people on your team. Find ways to give away your authority to team members. Even Jesus gave away His authority! He gave them ALL authority to do what He did and even more John 14 says. By the way, winning is more fun when you win together.

6. WORSHIP GOD REGULARLY

- Read 2 Sam 24:18–25

- Read 2 Sam 22:4–20

We remember that David worshipped God as a young boy but what we find in the Bible and in society today is that often the pressures of life and leadership will cause leaders to stop worshipping God and gradually look to be worshipped themselves. David remained a worshipper. David didn't take the bait of Satan and begin looking to get the glory. With every victory, David worshipped God.

This is often the temptation in a season of success. On the mountaintop, remember that it is God who got you there.

ALLOW GOD TO DEFEND YOU

David allowed God to defend him. So did Jesus. Read 1 Peter 2:23 and Hebrews 12:3. People will come against you when you decide to lead. It's inevitable. Don't let it define you. Don't let it stop you. Listen to their criticism, see if there's any truth. If there is, be willing to change. If there isn't, then move on.

8. UNDERSTAND THAT YOU ARE RESPONSIBLE FOR YOUR HOLINESS

David knew that he was responsible for his personal holiness and his walk with the Lord was not something he could delegate. David knew that the condition of his heart mattered. He repented when he was wrong. He aimed to be righteous, and he knew that GOD was the one who

made him righteous. The same is true for us. You need to know that your character matters.

Whether you do the right thing or not on a daily basis matters! It matters to God! Your personal life is not separate from your public life in the eyes of God. Your life is your life. How you treat your wife or husband, whether you disrespect them or honor them—that matters to God and your holiness is up to you. You've got to let Jesus forgive you, give you HIS righteousness, and take daily inventory of your heart. "Guard your heart for out of it flows the springs of life." Leader, if you don't guard your heart, after a while, there won't be many to lead. A guarded heart, a man or woman of integrity, who is genuine, is usually someone anyone can follow. They'll forgive your performance. They won't forgive your negligence.

9. PUT YOUR FAITH IN ETERNITY, NOT EARTH

In 2 Sam. 12:15–23, we find that David lost his son. In the midst of that grief, he wanted to see his son again and he shouted "I will go to him but he will not return to me." As Christians we have our faith rooted not in what we gain on this earth but what we gain in heaven. As Christ followers we put our faith and hope not in what we can accumulate here on earth but what we'll experience in Heaven—the presence of Jesus, the fullness of life THERE and THEN. Yes, we experience a taste of it here and now—but the Bible is clear—there will come a day when we are united with Christ THERE and THEN, and all will be made right. We will undoubtedly face trials, sorrow, and tragedy here on earth. But like David did, when we experience tragedy, we can put our hope in God—in eternity.

Nothing is more depressing than seeing a leader who's overwhelmed with a sense of failure. Maybe you've seen it. I know I have. Trust me. It ain't pretty. That doesn't have to be you! When you experience a loss, be it personal or in your company/organization, take that frustration to the Lord and simply give it to Him. That's what prayer is about. As a Christian leader, especially those of you who are pastors reading this, please hear me. The "big project" that simply flopped doesn't change your inherent value! You're still loved! You're still called! You're still chosen by God!

10. VALUE SONSHIP OVER SUCCESS

David wanted the smile of Father God more than He wanted the smile of people. Let sonship be your goal! Remember, you are first and foremost God's son! Let that define you, not your failures. You are incredibly loved by Father God, whether you hit it out of the park or strike out. You only fail when you give up. You only succeed or learn. In the Kingdom of God success is obedience to the word given. If you feel God has told you to do something and you try your best to do it, that's success in God's eyes!

In 2 Sam. 22 and 23, we see the last recorded words of David as King. He knew he was serving a higher purpose by being a king. He knew he was serving the purposes of God. He knew he was a part of a greater Kingdom than the kingdom of Israel, which he had the privilege of governing. Something on the inside had told him, "There is an Everlasting King coming!"

God used Dave's life to show us the power of God's grace. David allowed God to take him through the process of a leader. David's leadership painted a picture for us of what the leadership of Jesus would look like. It's one of compassion, love, and victories celebrated together. Broken and lame, like Mephibosheth, we're invited to the king's table and called son!

Whether it was Saul's disabled grandson or a middle-aged man without purpose in life, David had a way of inviting people in. He'd invite them into his life, making them a part of it, giving them a role to play in God's Kingdom. Dave wasn't as interested in building his kingdom as he was in building God's Kingdom. He wasn't in it to be famous but instead, to make God famous. As leaders, we would be wise to pattern our lives after David and let God take us through *the process of a leader*.

I don't make music albums to be a successful artist in the eyes of people. I make music because my Abba Father put it in me, and I enjoy making it for Him. He put a love for music in me, and I simply love to create to glorify Him. The albums and their sales are simply a by-product of my love for Father God and my desire to use the gifts He's given me. Plain and simple. I don't sign an artist to Innovate Records because I think, *This artist is going to make me successful*. No, I sign an artist to Innovate Records when, after hearing them, I pray and ask the Father, "Is this someone you want me to produce?" If He says, "Yes," then I move forward with them. My entire business revolves around pleasing the Father. My entire life revolves around pleasing the Father. Why? Because He loves me so much and I love Him in return. I want to be a faithful son and a good steward with what He's given me to do.

I don't prepare and work hard on a sermon so that I can look "smart," not to impress people. I don't do it to be a "success" as a Pastor. That would be an empty and vain pursuit, and honestly it would leave me void of joy and my message void of passion. I don't prepare a message out of compulsion, guilt, or need for approval. Instead, I prepare and work hard on a sermon, because Father God has asked me to and I know it pleases Him. I write a sermon or write a book because I'm so filled with His love, it's then my joy to do what He asks of me. This is one of the reasons I took so long to decide to become a Lead Pastor. I took inventory of my motives for months to ensure that I was doing it for the right reasons. I wanted to make sure that if I said "Yes" to this that it was purely a response to God asking me to enter a new season. My goal is to be faithful more than successful.

I don't plant a church to achieve a status among other pastors. A pastor once accused me of that. Friend, once you get a promise from the Lord in prayer and say "yes" you need to know that you likely will also face absurd accusations or opposition. I started planting churches because Father God put a vision for it in my heart. He confirmed it through two people. I will not allow someone's tainted view of life stop me from being obedient to the Master. Neither will you. You will be filled with the Father's love and step out of in faith to serve Him with passion!

I don't read my Bible in the morning with a cup of coffee out of guilt or religion. I read the Bible every morning because Jesus wants to spend time with me and I want to spend time with Jesus. It's time spent with my Father that is most precious to me. He teaches me. He speaks to me. He helps me know what I need to know for that day. Jesus is the Living Bread, the new

manna from Heaven that is fresh every day, nourishing my soul. This nourishment, this friendship must come before everything else, before the agenda, before the building campaign, before everything else.

This idea of sonship gets to the motive—the “why”—and if you don’t know why you’re doing something, you should stop until you do. Why is more important than what. Don’t start your *what* until you know your *why*.

Jesus is our brother who earned and achieved for us the sonship. “How great the Father’s love for us that we should be called the children of God!”

Again, God’s desire for us is to embrace and enjoy sonship and Jesus made that possible for us! All we have to do is rest in it. When sonship is the number-one thing you’re thankful for, the striving and the stress simply dissipates. I had someone ask me recently, “Don’t you get stressed out having to lead the church and having to lead artists and stuff?” I said “From time to time, I’m tempted to stress, for sure. But most of the time, no, I’m not. I have so much fun in telling people about Jesus and how He teaches us to live and so much fun making music with my friends.” You see, the gratitude for sonship has a way of making stress disappear like a morning mist.

AVAIL PULL QUOTE: You see, the gratitude for sonship has a way of making stress disappear like a morning mist.

Jesus said to His followers, “I no longer call you servants but friends!” Isn’t it remarkable that Jesus called those He led “friends”? Why would He do that? Love. He is love and He truly loved being around them. He didn’t just fulfill an obligation to lead them because that’s what Father God instructed. He truly loved them as individuals, appreciating their unique personalities and quirks, their talents and tendencies. Can you say that about those you lead? Even if they don’t know they need it, offer them both your friendship and your leadership, your love *and* your leading.

When the disciples asked “How should we pray?” Jesus said, “Like this ... Our Father who lives in Heaven...” He said *our* Father. WOW!

Just stop reading, close your eyes, and thank God right now for making you one of His beloved children!

SONS ARE THANKFUL FOR BROTHERS AND SISTERS

Sonship is about the collective brothers and sisters, the family of God. A leader who understands sonship is more concerned with God getting all the glory than they are worried about being applauded. As we’ll see in the lives of David, Gideon, and the others, they learned to value the collective family of believers over themselves. They learned to put the collective

first and themselves second. This is what real leaders do. In the Kingdom, you can celebrate with or compete against, but you can't do both.

¹ John 2:11; 3:1-3; 3:14-18; 3:23-24

¹¹ "But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes." ESV

See what kind of love the Father has given to us, that we should be called children of God, and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.

² Beloved, we are God's children now, and what we will be has not yet appeared; but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, because we shall see him as he is. ³ And everyone who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.

¹⁴ We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brothers. Whoever does not love abides in death. ¹⁵ Everyone who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

¹⁶ By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us, and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. ¹⁷ But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? ¹⁸ Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth.

²³ And this is his commandment that we believe in the name of his Son Jesus Christ and love one another, just as he has commanded us. ²⁴ Whoever keeps his commandments abides in God, and God in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us.

When we succeed without brothers and sisters, have we really succeeded? No.

We only truly succeed when we can share the joy of success with others.

We can only do that when we value others more highly than ourselves and we only get that perspective when we assert that God is our Father and we are His child. That type of genuine leadership and servanthood only comes when our heart is renewed by the Spirit of God. Do you find it difficult to serve those you lead, or maybe even have lunch with them!? If so, ask God to help you.

Our ultimate purpose as Christian leaders is to reconcile people to God. God's Word makes that clear to us in 2 Corinthians 5:20. We are God's ambassadors and representatives to a lost world. Whether we are building a business that stands on Biblical values or building a church that preaches the Gospel, we are God's representatives to a lost and broken world. We represent Him best when we understand sonship. We represent Him poorly when we instead aim to perform. Jesus spoke of doing only the Father's will so often to give us an example of what it means to be truly human. He is the "perfect human" while being perfectly God. Yes, He is fully God, but Scripture makes it clear that He came as the second Adam to restore all things! What

does this “second Adam” call us? Brothers and sisters! Jesus uses the identification of “brothers” and family more than any other to describe us as His followers. Jesus uses the identification of “Father” to describe God more than “King,” “Creator,” or any identity or function of God. Why? He wants us to see Him in that light. When His team asked Him how they are to pray, notice how He began. “Our Father” Those two little words have arrested me and I pray they arrest you too!

You can use your gifts, whatever they are, to glorify Jesus and point people to Him and the hope you have in Him. You can reach a mountaintop by using those gifts and truly, I pray you do. Unfortunately, any mountaintop you reach alone will have been in vain. Sonship is about bringing others with you, deflecting the praise, celebrating together.

God loves your gifts. After all, *He* is the one who gave them to you. But hear me. Despite your gifts and talents, goals and achievements, product launches and quarterly bottom line, you and I are called to reconcile men and women to God, to see people as brothers and sisters. Sonship is what life is about, *not* success.

If you’re an entrepreneur, then that means that you can somehow incorporate the Gospel into your company business meetings. You can teach them that to respect one another comes from a Judeo-Christian heritage and belief system. You can briefly insert the hope of Heaven into conversations and know that the Holy Spirit can do more in two minutes of your comments than a thirty-minute sermon you *hope* they one day hear in a church.

It's time they see Jesus in you. It's time you no longer depend on your pastor to be the one to reach your colleagues or employees. Eph 4:9–12 tells us that pastors and teachers exist to equip *you* to do the work of the ministry! If you're a businessman or woman, pray about what this means for you. The beauty of the Gospel is that the Holy Spirit is our Teacher and He can teach you exactly what to do and how to reach them right there in the market place! If you're a Christian businessman, founder, or branch manager, realize that your calling is no less than the calling of the pastor at your church. It's simply different, not less. We saw that in the parables of the Vineyard and the Shrewd Manager. Stop comparing your calling to others and start asking God "How can You use me in my company to show people Jesus?" Trust me. You pray that prayer and He'll begin to open doors for you, and we'll see the book of Acts come to life where "many were added to the church daily."

"Be strong and courageous for you will go with these people into the land I have promised to their fathers and you will take possession of it! It is the Lord who goes before you. He will be with you! He will not leave you or forsake you! Do not worry or be afraid!"—Deut. 31:7–8

It's time to let your faith rise up! What is faith? Hebrews 11:1 "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen!" It's believing that the promise God put within you has a purpose. That belief prompts you to take steps toward the promise, action steps of faith, trusting that God is leading you!

Hebrews 6:9-12 “Though we speak in this way, yet in your case, beloved, we feel sure of better things—things that belong to salvation. ¹⁰ For God is not unjust so as to overlook your work and the love that you have shown for his name in serving the saints, as you still do. ¹¹ And we desire each one of you to show the same earnestness to have the full assurance of hope until the end, ¹² so that you may not be sluggish, but imitators of those who through faith and patience inherit the promises.”

Too many leaders are “sluggish” because they’ve forgotten that God can do the impossible. They’ve forgotten that God can take any problem and turn it into a miracle. God

Hebrews 11:6 “Without faith, it’s impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to Him must believe that He exists and rewards those who diligently seek Him.”

It seems that leaders who no longer have faith to believe God for the miraculous have stepped into one of two traps, apathy or arrogance. Both will leave you without joy and without the impact God desires.

As a leader, you can get trapped in the sludge of apathy. You can aim at nothing in your leadership because in the words of Paul, you’ve become “sluggish” and slow to believe that God still wants to do the miraculous through you. This is the mind trap of condemnation. You’ve forgotten that it is Christ who lives in you so God doesn’t see your shortcomings; He sees His son, Jesus! Rise up in faith and believe again! You are a beloved child of God!

The other trap is arrogance. You can aim to reward yourself or you can aim to let Father God do that. My prayer is that because of the process of sanctification that God takes you through, you'll remember that your entire leadership is meant to glorify God and not you. My prayer is that you'll let God reward you as you diligently seek Him in all you do instead of diligently seeking success. Let the Holy Spirit fill you with vision but empty you of ambition! If you're concerned over how many likes and shares you have on social media, then take that striving and nail it to the cross. Let the Holy Spirit remind you that He is at work.

The process of a leader is more about the person you're becoming than it is about the place you're arriving at. Don't focus on a "place" of "arriving" in your future. Instead, focus more on the person you're becoming. Is that person more like Jesus or less like Jesus?

AVAIL PULL QUOTE The process of a leader is more about the person you're becoming than it is about the place you're arriving at.

Hebrews 11:16 in the "Hall of Faith," as it's often called, we're told that Abraham, Sarah, Enoch, Noah, Jacob, all these leaders had faith in their hearts until their very last breath. We're also told that they didn't see the promise given to them by God completely fulfilled. They didn't begin their leadership journey built on faith and then gave up when they faced obstacles or tragedies. They endured. They paved a way for future generations to live in peace in the Promised Land. These leaders were "longing for a better country—a heavenly one—therefore God has prepared a city for them." Hebrews 11:16

What you are you longing for? Success. To be “at the top.” To aim high isn’t evil. In fact, I pray that more Christian leaders will aim high for excellence. Why you aim high, though, is most important. Why you lead is more important than what you lead.

You and I have the privilege to join the leaders in Heaven who paved a way for others to know Christ! Accomplishing this with the help of the Holy Spirit is an accomplishment that won’t burn away when we stand before King Jesus. Any aspiration and achievement that was just for us will simply be burned up and be rendered pointless. Yet when you begin to lead others for the sake of helping them enter God’s eternal Kingdom, you find joy that makes you speechless and your efforts are far from pointless. They last forever! I know if you’re like me, you want your efforts to *never* be wasted! In building the Kingdom of God, your efforts are never wasted!

“Therefore, since we are receiving a Kingdom that cannot be shaken, let us be thankful and so worship God acceptably with reverence and awe, for our God is a consuming fire.” As you go through the process of becoming God’s leader, I encourage you to “keep your lives free from the love of money and be content with what you have for God has said, ‘Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you’.” Hebrews 13:5

If you lead well, money will likely come as a by-product. Don’t let the by-product become the mission. The mission is honor God with what He’s given you and to reconcile men to God. The mission is never to make more money so that you can build bigger barns. When money does come as a result of your leadership, treat that money as God’s for it is. Give it away as soon as it comes. In doing so, you’ll be instructing your heart who is really in charge. This is why a

percentage of the proceeds of this book will go to David University, also known as DavidU. It's a ministry training center that I'm creating with a group of friends who are also passionate about raising up leaders and creating Kingdom culture. For more information on DavidU, visit www.DavidU.org

APPLY IT

Group Discussion Guide | P.R.O.C.E.S.S. | Week 4

1. What obstacles did young Dave have to overcome?
2. What temptations did he face with growing fame?
3. Someone read Psalm 8:1–4, then discuss: How does David's view of God humble him and give him proper perspective?
4. Someone read Psalm 18:16–19, then discuss: How does this express Dave's dependency on God? Do you think this sort of public humility repelled or attracted people to his leadership?
5. As a leader, why is it hard sometimes to admit when we need help?
6. As a leader, why would it be a great idea for you to pray and ask God for help publicly, in front of your team, with your team?

7. When we allow people to see our need for God, even admitting our weaknesses, it encourages them to respect God more than us. Why is this so needed and so important today?

8. When Dave admitted his failures and repented, God forgave Him and restored him. In your group, admit something God forgave you of. This removes the power from Satan to smother you in shame. With secrets come shame, with honesty comes freedom. Like Dave, you'll be surprised to feel a weight removed from your heart the minute you admit where God has forgiven you, exposing deep wounds that need to be healed. Someone read James 5:15–17
“...And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. ¹⁶ Therefore, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person has great power as it is working.”

9. How did David's leadership at home differ from his leadership of Israel? Is it possible to lead poorly as a parent, and yet succeed as a leader? What can we do to avoid that?

10. At the end of your life, will you be glad you were a great leader or a great dad/mom? What can you do now on a weekly or daily basis to ensure that you first succeed at home in leading your children?

11. How did David's relationship with God inspire his desire to adopt his enemy's grandson? How can our relationship with God inspire us to love another?

12. Do you believe it's the role of government or the church to solve the adoption crisis? Why?

Action Steps

I choose to first be a great parent (father-figure/mother-figure) to

_____ before my role as a leader in an organization.

I choose to do this by spending time every _____.

CHAPTER 5 | NEHEMIAH

“Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision.”¹⁸ And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, “Let us rise up and build.” So they strengthened their hands for the good work.” Nehemiah 2:17–18

NEHEMIAH'S PROMISE

The book of Nehemiah tells the story of a God-ordained leader and His work to aid the restored community to rebuild the wall around the city of Jerusalem. But more than that, the book recounts God's faithfulness to His promise to restore the fortunes of His people and grant them joy that comes through worshiping Him as a *people* dedicated to Him. God gave Nehemiah

a promise that He would work in and through Nehemiah to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. How could he do this when he's living as a cup-bearer in the palace, far removed from the Promised Land?

In 444 BC, the Persian emperor Artaxerxes granted Nehemiah the freedom to relocate to the Jewish homeland, even appointing him to be the governor of Judah. Once there, Nehemiah led the people, descendants of the remnant who had returned from exile a century earlier to rebuild the wall around Jerusalem. Under his direction, this task took only 52 days. But as we'll see in the story, it wasn't easy! Nehemiah, like all our previous leaders, faced obstacles, temptations, and character tests.

Nehemiah's aim was to restore the spiritual health of God's people alongside rebuilding the physical wall. He felt that God had given him a vision, a purpose, a promise! He felt that the wall was a visual representation of their spiritual plight. We know that he cared about their spiritual health, not just their economy because of how much he included Ezra in the process. He was committed to the sound of worship being restored to the temple. He was committed to seeing David's dream become reality again—nonstop worship through Levites. He, like every great Christian leader, wanted to see God's fame renowned and God's name lifted higher.

A PICTURE OF OUR DELIVERER, PROMISED

The exile to Babylon and the temple's destruction gave a picture of the consequences of sin. Every time God's people became oppressed by an enemy or even taken captive by an enemy,

it seems God raises up a deliverer, a leader, someone who will lead them back into truth, back into worship, and away from idolatry or apathy.

These leaders serve as a type of Christ. We'll get into this more in the last chapter but know this, leader: YOU are not the savior. Jesus is. YOU are not the Messiah. Jesus is. YOU are not the deliverer. Jesus is.

Maybe you're a pastor or a soon-to-be pastor. Don't buy into Satan's trap believing that you are the answer to people's problems. Yes, it's important that you obey God's voice and calling on your life. Yes, it's important to be available to hurting people. It's also important to understand that you are not the answer. You are the messenger. You are the voice telling about the answer. All kinds of heartache will come from believing that you are the answer for people. That's a calling reserved not for you or me, but that one is on Jesus and Him alone.

Nehemiah serves as an inspiration to us on what Biblical leadership looks like, but more importantly, he serves as a picture of Jesus. Nehemiah made personal sacrifices for the betterment of God's people. That's what Jesus did. Nehemiah restored the image of God's people to its proper place. That's what Jesus did. Nehemiah restored worship and thereby intimacy with God for people, because worship is the highway to intimacy. Jesus restored us to intimacy with Father God by removing the barrier of sin, calling us righteous and holy, giving us His righteousness! His love not only covered our sin but also removed it entirely! Jesus IS the answer. You are not. I am not.

In our story of Nehemiah, keep in mind that Babylon represents the world's way of thinking, driven by a lust for power. The King represents Satan who aims to hold God's people in slavery and convince them of lies about their identity. He tries his hardest and often succeeds in persuading God's people that they are indeed slaves and not the children of God. He knows that we behave according to what we believe. Nehemiah, like all the great heroes of the Bible, represents Jesus, the son of God, who rises up from within the people of God. He comes as a man to rescue man. He casts vision of what should be to those who will listen, those with humble hearts, and those with "ears to hear" and "eyes to see" the Kingdom. People who are willing to admit their need for rescue and change look to Jesus and are saved. As leaders, this is encouraging, because we often don't know what to do. The good news is that you and I can point people to Jesus! You are not the deliverer, Jesus is! You can point them to Jesus!

Jerusalem and its walls were in shambles. This was a picture of the spiritual state of the people, and God wanted His people and His reputation restored in the land. God wanted worship restored in the land. God putting the burden on Nehemiah's heart to rebuild the walls of the city showed that He had not forgotten His people.

God would remain faithful to them. God used prophets like Malachi to preach to them and call them to repentance. God used Nehemiah to lead the charge to rebuild the wall. The Wall was a symbol of the spiritual health of God's people. Did God choose the right guy, though? Nehemiah just was a cup-bearer for the King. He was simply a servant. As ministers or leaders, we cannot separate the Old Testament from the New. Jesus echoed this idea of the servants being

given the Kingdom in the parable of the stewards we mentioned earlier. The Master gave his property and wealth to his servants to manage, not the bankers! WOW! God gives His amazing Kingdom to us to steward! Trust me, we do NOT deserve it! For the King to give Nehemiah, not only permission but also finances to build the wall around Jerusalem was an incredible act of grace. God knew that Nehemiah would be a good steward. For God to look upon us in our need, in our shambles and send Jesus to restore and rebuild our lives was an incredible act of grace!

We often tend to look at the leaders of the Bible and think, “Well, that’s Moses! That’s David. That’s Nehemiah. I couldn’t ever do that!” Keep in mind that Moses was a fugitive with a speech impediment. David was an artist who was ostracized from his family. He said in Psalms “Even when my mother and father have forsaken me, You, oh Lord, will never leave me.” Nehemiah was a cup-bearer! Meaning, he’s the dude who drinks from the king’s cup first to ensure the drink isn’t poisoned! Can you imagine that job?

Palace Servant: *Hey Nehemiah. Did you take a sip yet? I’m just checking.*

Yeah, maybe an hour ago.

You’re not feeling sick?

No.

Feeling like you're gonna pass-out?

No.

Feeling like you're maybe gonna die from raging stomach ulcers?

Uh... No.

Cool. Cool. Hey Frank, the drink is good to go.

I mean what a crazy job! He was a servant! A guinea pig for the King. Yet, the Lord blessed and favored him and gave Him the promise to deliver God's people from the oppression of the Ammonites and surrounding Arab enemies.

REALITY SETS IN

Nehemiah knew that he had nothing to give. He knew all he had was trust in God. He soon learned, that was all he needed! Let's go back in time and imagine what that might have been like to be there in the palace approaching the king.

I took up the wine and gave it to the king. Now I had not been sad in his presence. ² And the king said to me, "Why is your face sad, seeing you are not sick? This is nothing but sadness of the heart." Then I was very much afraid. ³ I said to the king, "Let the king live forever! Why

should not my face be sad, when the city, the place of my fathers' graves, lies in ruins, and its gates have been destroyed by fire?"⁴ Then the king said to me, "What are you requesting?" So I prayed to the God of heaven.⁵ And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, and if your servant has found favor in your sight, that you send me to Judah, to the city of my fathers' graves, that I may rebuild it."⁶ And the king said to me (the queen sitting beside him), "How long will you be gone, and when will you return?" So it pleased the king to send me when I had given him a time.⁷ And I said to the king, "If it pleases the king, let letters be given me to the governors of the province Beyond the River, that they may let me pass through until I come to Judah,⁸ and a letter to Asaph, the keeper of the king's forest, that he may give me timber to make beams for the gates of the fortress of the temple, and for the wall of the city, and for the house that I shall occupy." And the king granted me what I asked, for the good hand of my God was upon me.

⁹ Then I came to the governors of the province Beyond the River and gave them the king's letters. Now the king had sent with me officers of the army and horsemen.¹⁰ But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

¹¹ So I went to Jerusalem and was there three days.¹² Then I arose in the night, I and a few men with me. And I told no one what my God had put into my heart to do for Jerusalem. There was no animal with me but the one on which I rode.¹³ I went out by night by the Valley Gate to the Dragon Spring and to the Dung Gate, and I inspected the walls of Jerusalem that were broken down and its gates that had been destroyed by fire.¹⁴ Then I went on to the Fountain

Gate and to the King's Pool, but there was no room for the animal that was under me to pass.

¹⁵ Then I went up in the night by the valley and inspected the wall, and I turned back and entered by the Valley Gate, and so returned. ¹⁶ And the officials did not know where I had gone or what I was doing, and I had not yet told the Jews, the priests, the nobles, the officials, and the rest who were to do the work.

¹⁷ Then I said to them, "You see the trouble we are in, how Jerusalem lies in ruins with its gates burned. Come, let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer suffer derision."

¹⁸ And I told them of the hand of my God that had been upon me for good, and also of the words that the king had spoken to me. And they said, "Let us rise up and build." So they strengthened their hands for the good work. ¹⁹ But when Sanballat the Horonite and Tobiah the Ammonite servant and Geshem the Arab heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, "What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?" ²⁰ Then I replied to them, "The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we his servants will arise and build, but you have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem." Ne 2:1–20

Talk about hitting the REALITY stage! Nehemiah must've thought to himself after viewing the walls "It's worse than I imagined!" Nehemiah stayed in the city for three days. Then he went alone one night to view the city walls and gates and noticed how terrible they were. The burden that God put on his heart to rebuild the walls was now heavier than before.

Vs 17: Then I said to them (the kings officials) "You see the trouble we are in: Jerusalem lies in ruins and it's gates have been burned with fire. Come let us rebuild the wall of Jerusalem

and we will no longer be in disgrace.” I also told them about the gracious (and generous) hand of God on me and what the King said (and had given him to do it)” The good news is that the people of Israel received Nehemiah’s rallying cry to rebuild!

Vs 18: The people of Israel replied “Let’s start rebuilding!” So they started this good work.” Despite the good news that the Israelites were ready to get to work, Nehemiah now had to face obstacles like false accusations, threats and ridicule from two men who were undoubtedly jealous of the King’s favor. Sanballat and his sidekick Tobiah, became a constant frustration for Nehemiah, slandering God’s people and their work, day and night.

Don’t give up when you face obstacles and opposition! God began a good work in you when you came to Jesus in salvation. God continued that work by putting a dream in your heart. There’s a promise within you. That’s why you’re reading this book! I want you to know that God will finish what He started! Don’t give up! God hasn’t given up on you!

Our assignments must flow first from our identity—from who we are. Just like Nehemiah knew that the King had given him full permission to go and care for His people and rebuild the wall, we must know that our King Jesus has given us our identity and we are secure in that far before we’re given an assignment to complete. The assignments that come with our promise must be done from a sense of identity. We must remember who we are and that we are sent by the King.

Each of us as leaders are given a promise, and that promise speaks to our unique assignments that the Holy Spirit has for us. Each assignment has a season. Each season will come and go. And that's ok. Your job is not to be perfect, but to be faithful in each season. Like Nehemiah, we are given an opportunity to be faithful to an assignment given to us by the King of Kings! Too many leaders mistake their season with their identity. Your identity doesn't change, your seasons do. Despite God changing your season, you're still the man or woman He called into leadership and you're still a beloved child of God.

God calls us His child once we receive Him as Lord and Savior that speaks to our identity. At that point, He has begun a good work! The more we follow Christ and read His Word, the more we discover that our collective goal as children of God is reaching lost people for Jesus—making disciples of Jesus—bringing more people into the family of God. That's the purpose of everyone! It's often been said like this ... *to know Jesus and make Him known!*

Each of us are given a unique promise from the Lord regarding the specific task(s) God wants us to do. Each of us in Christian leadership will enter new seasons and in each season, we will likely face this same process of a leader. We'll be given a new promise, new territory, new land to take for the Kingdom of God. We will be held accountable not for what we wanted to do but according to what God wanted us to do. We aren't accountable for what others were asked to do; we're held accountable for what we were asked to do.

Just like the parable, Jesus told about the Master who gave His wealth to His servants to steward and then given an account, each of us is given assignments to complete. There's a

promise put on the inside of each of us. We each have a unique role to play in bringing people into God's family. All of us have special gifts and skills given to us by God in order to complete assignments from Heaven to build His Kingdom and expand God's family. We're given unique grace gifts that empower us to serve. Romans 12 and 1 Co. 12 tells us many of the gifts given by God for the church to operate in. But Ephesians 4 tells us about gifts given for the Body of Christ. As Ministers, our aim is to "equip the saints for the work of the ministry." Take some time to read through those passages today and let the Holy Spirit speak to you regarding your role.

Nehemiah stepped right over every obstacle that Satan put in front of him. You can too! Nehemiah delegated the work to many families. Even priests and their children were involved in building gates and repairing the broken places in the wall. Nehemiah knew he was a servant of God and was grateful for the grace given to him. He didn't cower in fear when God put this vision within him. He didn't give up when Sanballat and Tobiah threatened him. He didn't quit when the workers were getting tired. He gave them a time for rest, then he encouraged them to get back to the work and complete it for God's glory. We must remember that God is incredibly patient with us. He works in us despite our brokenness. He gives us a promise despite our imperfections. WOW!

Nehemiah 9:17 says, "You are a forgiving God, gracious and compassionate, slow to anger and abounding in love." Aren't you glad that God is gracious toward you? Aren't you so glad that God is abounding in love? I am! If you believe God is angry, if you believe the Master is harsh, I've got news for you. GOD IS GOOD! God is full of goodness, and yet we are living in

a broken world. Although you and I experience pain and sorrow, it doesn't change God's goodness! Sin makes things broken. God restores all things as we turn to Him and put our focus on Jesus.

Nehemiah restored the walls that were broken down and restored the gates that were burned down. While I want you to mostly see yourself as Nehemiah in the story, let's also note that the stone wall here can represent our lives. We too can be restored to our former beauty. Maybe your leadership seems to be crumbling right now. Maybe your company is going further into the red every single quarter. Maybe your ministry has plateaued and you just feel stuck. God can restore this!

That's the beauty of the Gospel. Jesus restores us, first working on the inside. He not only removes the dirt and the grime but also fully restores us. He can also restore your organization to its former beauty! Nothing is impossible for Him! He can bring you the right people. He can give you new vision. He can inspire you with innovation! Go to Him in prayer.

Like a restored piece of art, He carefully and methodically removes anything that doesn't look like the original. He restores us completely, making us more and more reflective of Him! Just like you can tell who the artist is when you see their art, people will be able to see who God is when they see your life if you let Him take you through the process.

God always sees your potential! God knew the wall around the city could be beautiful again. God knew the wall represented His people who felt torn down by the surrounding nations.

God doesn't leave us broken. God restores the broken! God often uses many people in the restoration. If you want to be restored to wholeness, it'll require you being open to being helped by others.

GOD RESTORES THE BROKEN

In 2015 my wife and I bought a Century home that needed A LOT of renovation! Let's just say it needed more than a little TLC. But I could tell from seeing it that it had so much potential. I wanted to restore it to its former glory. I could see the unique, hand-painted top of the house with all its intricate shapes. The 11 foot ceilings were just one of the many things that was so cool and special about this house. I was part time at church, and to be honest, we didn't even have the money for this project, but we felt like the Lord wanted us to take this risk. We took out a loan and got to work. I was there every evening and throughout the day, 2 or 3 days a week—working on it. A few months later, it was done and it was beautiful! What was at first smelly, worn, and tattered had become beautiful, inviting, and cozy.

That house reminds me of what God does with us. He restores us. He restores His image in us—restoring us to our former glory if you will. God always cares about the problems in your life but also looks past them and sees your potential. He can restore you! Just like the wall around the city of Jerusalem, you may feel burned out, destroyed, useless. But that's not how God sees you! God sees what you CAN be and who you will be in Christ Jesus!

You may say, “I’ve blown it. I’ve made too many mistakes for God to make me a leader. I’ve made too many mistakes for God to use me.” But God says, “I’ve got this! I can restore you! I can set you on a new path. I can give you a new heart! I can do great things with you! YOU are precious and valuable to me!”

Nehemiah got a promise from God. He felt that God was promising him that He would build the wall through the people of Israel. As we read the book of Nehemiah, we easily discover that in Nehemiah’s mind GOD is the one at work. Not only is God the one at work but God is the one who receives the praises for doing the work once the wall was completed. As leaders in ministry or business, it’s not an either–or scenario, but rather, a both–and. God is working in and through us and we are working with God’s help. It’s a partnership. You may have heard it said, “Without God, we cannot. Without man, God will not.” In most cases that’s the truth. God partners with men and women to bring the Kingdom of God to life! He uses us to bring His will and purposes to our reality.

Nehemiah was an Israelite in captivity serving as a cup-bearer to King Artaxerxes, the most powerful man in the world at the time. He heard about the city of Jerusalem and how it lay in ruin. He heard about the problem—that the city walls and gates were destroyed and the people of Israel were discouraged.

PRAYER FOR THE PROMISE

After hearing about the burned walls, he stayed in Jerusalem for three days praying. In his prayer, we find a powerful outline—a pattern I’ve seen many other times in Scripture—in the life of Moses and Jacob. I want to share this pattern to a powerful prayer with you.

Lord, You are powerful and full of love! (Praise)

I confess my sins and the sins of our people that caused this problem. (Repentance)

I remember Your promises toward us, to give us hope and a future. (Recite His Promises)

Remember us Your people, give us success. (Ask for Help!)

Bring Yourself glory through our lives!

The King grants his request! The King not only let him leave the palace but also gave him timber and resources to build the wall! It’s important that you notice Verse 4 of Chapter 1. When the King noticed Nehemiah was sad and not his usual self, he asked “What do you want?”

Prayer must be where you receive your promise. If the goal or vision comes from any other place, it may not be what God wants you to do. If the promise is from God, there will be a sense of passion, of burden, of “I’ve got to do this to obey God and help these people.” If we set out with a purpose and not a promise, then we’re deceived. If our motives sound like “I am going

to do it better than that guy!” or “I am mad at this person so I’m going to....” If your burden doesn’t come from the Lord, it won’t be lite.

AVAIL PULL QUOTE Prayer must be where you receive your promise. If the goal or vision comes from any other place, it may not be what God wants you to do.

If your purpose doesn’t come with a promise received in prayer, it will be full of anxiety, anger, and strife. Your mission, your purpose must come from the Lord! Your purpose must come with a promise from God birthed in prayer! Although you’ll face difficult obstacles and even opposition, there will be a quiet confidence in your step. There will be no need to defend yourself when you’re living in the promises of God. Have you spent that time in prayer?

WHAT DO YOU WANT?

Sadly, many Christian leaders couldn’t answer that question if they were asked. As a leader, whether you lead a church, a nonprofit, a business, you should be able to answer that question without hesitation. *What do you want?* Do you know? Have you been praying and asking God to give you vision - to give you a promise?

The King asked Nehemiah, “What do you want?”

If the wealthiest man the in the United States were to ask you that question today, would you know how to respond? I do. I know exactly what I would do. I know exactly the land and the

buildings I would buy and how they could be used to plant churches. How do I know what I'd say? Because I've spent time with the Lord in prayer and He has given me a promise, and my promise, like yours, requires miracles. When your assignment is God given and Heaven birthed, there will often be miraculous provision. Nehemiah was given bodyguards (2:7) and timber! (2:8) The King even sent an army of officers and cavalry with him to protect him! (2:9)

AVAIL PULL QUOTE As a leader, whether you lead a church, a nonprofit, a business, you should be able to answer that question without hesitation. *What do you want? Do you know? Have you been praying and asking God to give you vision - to give you a promise?*

Don't fear that you won't have enough money to do what God's put in your heart to do. It may be true that you don't have enough money now, but trust me, God isn't short on cash. God has money set aside just for you. God has storehouses ready-made exactly for moments like these! God has money with your promise on it! I used to be self-conscious to talk about money when it comes to the things of God. But over the years, I've just seen God move mountains too many times! I've seen God provide millions of dollars for the Kingdom.

If you feel that the lack of money is your first obstacle, you actually need to back up one more step. It may just be a lack of faith. Jesus pointedly asked His disciples when they were faced with a torrential storm, "Where is your faith?" When these same guys were worried about the large crowd getting hungry, Jesus said, "You feed them." Jesus often tried to teach them that

God has all that's needed, but He simply wants us to ask in faith, and then take the next step in that direction.

If you don't believe God has it covered, then you'll never even begin. So I want to encourage you today.

AVAIL PULL QUOTE **Begin! Believe in the promise God placed within you! Yes, be fully aware of your reality. Yes, take in the facts and do your homework. But at some point, you must begin!** The most important step in any good journey is the first one. Once you begin, you'll often face obstacles, and sometimes those obstacles have faces and social-media accounts.

Let's get back to the story. It didn't take long for opposition to begin for Nehemiah. The minute it was clear that he was leaving the King's Palace to go to Jerusalem to help his people, a man named Sanballat became enraged and fully of jealousy. In his mind he thought, *Why should the resources of the Kingdom be given to this servant to help these inferior Jewish people?*

Opposition from Sanballat and Tobiah increased as Nehemiah made progress. Don't be surprised if you begin to make progress in the work God has given you if suddenly you face opposition. Satan will throw everything but the kitchen sink—scratch that—everything and the kitchen sink at you when you begin to overcome obstacles, stare fear in the face, and move forward in faith, building what God told you to build! Jesus told us that we can tell the mountain to move and it will move! Let's pick up our story. Listen to the ridicule from these two guys!

Neh. 4:1–18: Now when Sanballat heard that we were building the wall, he was angry and greatly enraged, and he jeered at the Jews. ² And he said in the presence of his brothers and of the army of Samaria, “What are these feeble Jews doing? Will they restore it for themselves? Will they sacrifice? Will they finish up in a day? Will they revive the stones out of the heaps of rubbish, and burned ones at that?” ³ Tobiah the Ammonite was beside him, and he said, “Yes, what they are building—if a fox goes up on it he will break down their stone wall!” ⁴ Hear, O our God, for we are despised. Turn back their taunt on their own heads and give them up to be plundered in a land where they are captives. ⁵ Do not cover their guilt, and let not their sin be blotted out from your sight, for they have provoked you to anger in the presence of the builders.

⁶ So we built the wall. And all the wall was joined together to half its height, for the people had a mind to work. ⁷ But when Sanballat and Tobiah and the Arabs and the Ammonites and the Ashdodites heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, they were very angry. ⁸ And they all plotted together to come and fight against Jerusalem and to cause confusion in it. ⁹ And we prayed to our God and set a guard as a protection against them day and night.

¹⁰ In Judah it was said, “The strength of those who bear the burden is failing. There is too much rubble. By ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall.” ¹¹ And our enemies said, “They will not know or see till we come among them and kill them and stop the work.” ¹² At that time the Jews who lived near them came from all directions and said to us ten times, “You must return to us.” ¹³ So in the lowest parts of the space behind the wall, in open places, I stationed the

people by their clans, with their swords, their spears, and their bows. ¹⁴ And I looked and arose and said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, “Do not be afraid of them. Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome, and fight for your brothers, your sons, your daughters, your wives, and your homes.”

¹⁵ When our enemies heard that it was known to us and that God had frustrated their plan, we all returned to the wall, each to his work. ¹⁶ From that day on, half of my servants worked on construction, and half held the spears, shields, bows, and coats of mail. And the leaders stood behind the whole house of Judah, ¹⁷ who were building on the wall. Those who carried burdens were loaded in such a way that each labored on the work with one hand and held his weapon with the other. ¹⁸ And each of the builders had his sword strapped at his side while he built.” Ne 4:1–18

WATCH AND PRAY YOUR WAY OVER THE OBSTACLE

Prayer must be given to our mission. As the leader of a church, nonprofit, or business, we are first called to pray. We have an incredible opportunity to ask God for His blessing and His wisdom regarding all our decisions and the direction we take our people. Many leaders today are distracted by many things including social media. If more Christian leaders would pray as much as they post, we as the Body of Christ globally would be in a much better place. Nehemiah called them to prayer, to trusting God. I’m all for social media and being where people are. But I wonder how many leaders don’t have a passion burning in their gut because they don’t have a promise given to them in prayer. They come to church and get to work. Emails, service planning,

set-up, counseling, reading a book, writing a sermon, checking on a church member, all these things are good and even important but the most important thing you can do every single day is spend dedicated time alone with God, worshiping Him and asking Him “What’s on your heart today, Father? Please give me wisdom. Help me lead these people well. Strengthen me. Empower me. Help me.” These kind of prayers should be followed by silence - a time of simply waiting on the Lord.

I believe that the visual of the sword at their side while they worked on the wall was a foreshadowing of Paul’s words to “pray in the Spirit at all times.” (Eph 6:18) The sword often represents the Holy Spirit in the Bible. He asked many of them to work with a sword in their hand, ready to enter battle at any given moment. He was teaching them to be ready for battle. Today, we battle not against flesh and blood but against principalities in the heavenliness. We battle together through prayer.

Leader, how much are you praying for your people? How often do you take time to shut off all devices and simply pray—asking God for wisdom, strength, and guidance? You should be ready to pray with and for your people at any given moment. You, as the leader, can remind them that God is faithful to complete the work, no matter how big the obstacles are. Php 1:6 “He who began a good work in you will bring it to completion at the day of Christ Jesus.”

CHARACTER TESTS

I want to share with you three ways that Satan will attack the promise:

1. Intimidation

2. Infiltration

3. Isolation

- *Intimidation*—Satan will tell you all the reasons why you are too weak, too poor, too stupid to fulfill the promise on your life and do what God's given you to do. He'll either tell this to you directly, tempting you to think these thoughts about yourself—anything to get you to stop the good work. He'll try his best to get you to live through the lens of shame—that your bad choices prevent you from this promises. Or, he'll use people, even Christians, to attack you, to slander you, to lie to others about your motives and your actions. I know full well. It's happened to me. But you must respond like Nehemiah. "Why should I stop the work God's given me to do? I'm NOT stopping. I'm not giving in to intimidation. I know who I am in Christ. I know what God has called me to do. I know I am weak, but my God is strong and my trust is in HIM. I can do ALL things through Christ who strengthens me...." This must be our declaration! You and I are called to respond to those accusations and ridicule with Scripture. Satan is the Accuser of the Brethren. That's literally his name and his role according to Revelation 12:10. In that same prophecy, he is "thrown down" and defeated! So when he opens his mouth to lie to you, just know that the opposite of what he's saying is true. You can do what God's given you to do! You will see the promise of God in your life!

- *Infiltration*—Nehemiah said “Watch and Pray” sounds a lot like Jesus’ instruction to His disciples, doesn’t it? Watch and pray. Pray and then act. Don’t just pray. Don’t just act. Act in response to prayer. In Chapter 4:15, he stationed every family and every tribe at all the weak places of the wall right before they were going to be attacked. It says, “When our enemies heard that we were aware of their plot and how God had frustrated it, we all returned to the wall, each to our own work.” They were encouraged by their leader to keep up the good work. They were united in their mission. They were unique in their assignment. “Each to their own work,” it says. They didn’t say to one another, “My work is more important than yours.” “My work is more spiritual than yours.” “I’m truly an Israelite because I eat these foods and don’t eat these foods.” “I wear this and you don’t wear this.” They didn’t get divided over unimportant things. They were united in their mission to build the wall—the mission GOD had given to them. Verse ¹⁶ “From that day on, half my men did the work and the other half were equipped with spears, bows and arrows, shells and armor. ¹⁷ Those who carried materials to the wall did so with one hand holding a weapon and the other carrying the material. Each of the builders built with their sword in their sheath at their side, ready to fight.” We see this infiltration play out in Chapter 5 even more. The focus of attack shifts from external opposition to internal strife. Satan had caused them to murmur and complain against Nehemiah. Nehemiah had every legal right to tax them because he was the Governor. Yet, he wanted to show selfless service, so he didn’t eat from the governor’s meal for months. He let the Lord supply, and the Lord supplied him great meals every day! He cared for the poor and ensured the marginalized of society were cared for. He understood that true reverence for God causes us to care for the poor, confront the oppressors, and take care of the orphan and widow.

That's what Nehemiah did. That's what Jesus taught. That's what we are called to do. We must be aware of this infiltration strategy of Satan. He'll tempt you to compete with others on your team or simply others on team Jesus and like the disciples, you might even end up vying for position, arguing over who is more qualified. Infiltration is one of the most deadly attacks of Satan. You must remember that people are not the enemy, they are the mission.

- *Isolation*—This is Satan's most subtle tactic. Let's pick up at verses 18–20. The man who sounded the trumpet was beside me. ¹⁹ And I said to the nobles and to the officials and to the rest of the people, "The work is great and widely spread, and we are separated on the wall, far from one another. ²⁰ In the place where you hear the sound of the trumpet, rally to us there. Our God will fight for us." ²¹ So we labored at the work, and half of them held the spears from the break of dawn until the stars came out. ²² I also said to the people at that time, "Let every man and his servant pass the night within Jerusalem, that they may be a guard for us by night and may labor by day." ²³ So neither I nor my brothers nor my servants nor the men of the guard who followed me, none of us took off our clothes; each kept his weapon at his right hand. Ne 4:18–23 ESV

Picture this in your mind. Everyone is separated from one another. They couldn't see each other because the wall was so long. They're getting tired and discouraged. They're exhausted from not only the long hard days of building this wall but also the fatigue that comes with being stressed in "fight-or-flight" mode. Nehemiah noticed this problem, so he united them

not just in mission but also in heart, in song. Now it was personal. They were too spread out and felt isolated. Of course, they were afraid.

God unites you not only in mission with other believers but also in person with other believers. *Verse 20: Whenever you heard the sound of the trumpet, join us there. Our God will fight for us.* The sound of worship united them like nothing else.

The sound of worship will unite you and your team like nothing else. The unity that follows worship will always bring strength for the mission. How often do you worship together as a team?

Nehemiah said, “Blow the trumpet! Make it known that our God will fight for us!” Nehemiah knew the stories of old! He knew God had parted the Red Sea for his ancestors to walk across on dry land. He knew Gideon had overcome the Midianites with nothing more than the sound of a trumpet and some clay jars. It was time for him to see miracles! Leader, it’s time for you to see miracles! It’s time for you to rise up and believe again!

As I write this, I’m at my annual prayer and writing retreat at a cabin in the woods in Madison, Ohio. I’m reminded of a night in early May of this year when I was at home with Danielle and worship became our warfare. We occasionally sing and play worship music in our home. If Spotify isn’t playing worship music, I’ll sometimes sit at the keyboard and tinker around while the girls dance in the living room. But this time was different.

As we discussed in the chapter on Gideon, my wife Danielle had faced a severe postpartum depression after she gave birth to our fourth child in 2015. We experienced a year and half of ER visits, sorrow, sleepless nights, and questions. Most of the questions aimed at God and even many of our answers just seemed foggy at the time. We had the scriptures and we knew the truth. We'd quote them and often they would bring her out of the pit of sorrow. But sometimes, it simply didn't work. We were in a dark fog we couldn't get out of.

Though doctors and even Wikipedia will tell you about the high chance of this happening after a fourth child and that it's just "the typical combination of hormonal changes and psychological adjustment to motherhood...." We knew it was also a spiritual attack.

By early 2017, she faced every demon and I faced them with her. We combatted every lie with truth from scripture. She overcame. We overcame.

But suddenly in May 2021, she started asking me the same questions she had asked me daily in 2015: "Why is there a hell? Why would God allow hell to exist? Is God truly just?" These questions were suddenly leaving her in the same state of sadness that I saw in 2015. This went on for about a week and one night when I got home, she seemed sad again. I tried my best to skirt around it. She and I both knew that she wasn't doing well.

After dinner, it was maybe 7:30 or 8:00, she began to cry and ask those same questions. I said, "Nope. We're not going down this road again." And out of my mouth came something I'll probably repeat until the day I see the Lord face to face. I told her "Danielle, sometimes you just

gotta worship your way out. Now let's get the kids in the bed. Let's go down to the studio and let's worship. And I don't care if it takes us till 3 in the morning. We are going to worship until your feelings match the truth."

AVAIL PULL QUOTE Sometimes you gotta worship your way out.

I'm happy to tell you it wasn't 3 a.m. when we had our breakthrough. It was roughly an hour or more, and suddenly I saw her sitting on that red couch, tears streaming down her face, her hands lifted to heaven and she was just saying His name "Jesus! Jesus! Jesus, I love you! Jesus, you are so good to me!" Sometimes you gotta worship your way out!

Satan attacked Nehemiah by using a man named Sanballat to ridicule, slander, and accuse him. He made up lies that he was rebelling against the king. Even though the King had not only given Nehemiah permission but also financial aid to do this good work! They attacked his motives, his progress, and his resources just about everything that could be attacked. I find it interesting that Nehemiah never attacked back. He never got revenge. He responded much like Stephen when they stoned him. "Father, forgive them. They don't know what they're doing." I wonder if he heard a rumor from the others that Jesus had said this while hanging on the cross in front of his accusers. When you know you're fighting for God, you know God is fighting for you, and there's no need to defend yourself and fight people. When we are attacked and mocked for saying "Yes" to the promise God has given us, our character will be tested in those moments more than ever before. You'll be tempted to quit, retaliate, or come down to the valley with the

accusers. You must say like Nehemiah. “Oh, No! I’m not leaving this good work to go down to the valley of Ono! The work is too important.”

When you know you’re fighting for God, you know God is fighting for you, and there’s no need to defend yourself and fight people.

Eph 6:10–20 ¹⁰ Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. ¹¹ Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. ¹² 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. ¹³ Therefore take up the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand firm. ¹⁴ Stand therefore, having fastened on the belt of truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, ¹⁵ and, as shoes for your feet, having put on the readiness given by the gospel of peace. ¹⁶ In all circumstances take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming darts of the evil one; ¹⁷ and take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God, ¹⁸ praying at all times in the Spirit, with all prayer and supplication. To that end, keep alert with all perseverance, making supplication for all the saints, ¹⁹ and also for me, that words may be given to me in opening my mouth boldly to proclaim the mystery of the gospel, ²⁰ for which I am an ambassador in chains, that I may declare it boldly, as I ought to speak.” Eph 6:10–20

We have to remember that when we get a promise from God, then say “yes” to begin walking in it, we will fight not against flesh and blood but against “rulers, authorities, powers of

present darkness against spiritual forces of evil.” Don’t fight spiritual battles with earthly weapons. People are not the enemy. They are the mission.

Pray, seek God, bite your tongue, and guard your heart. When people accuse you of things you know are untrue, ask God to cleanse your mind so you don’t play the tape over and over and ask God to forgive them, bless them, and help them come into the light of truth. There’s no need to belittle them publicly or defame them. You may need to separate yourself from them, yes. But there’s no need to fight with the same weapons they’re using. Sometimes it’s evil coming against you to stop the good work.

Our character is tested when we are given the chance to take credit for the victory. When we are making progress, “succeeding” if you will, that’s when we are most vulnerable to sin. Satan has a way of tempting us to take credit for God’s work. But who did Nehemiah credit for the work that was about to take place? God! “The God of heaven will give us success. We, His servants, will start rebuilding.” Nehemiah praised GOD as the one who blesses and commits to build despite their slander.

Nehemiah’s trust was in God. He embraced his weakness. He knew that God was most strong when he was most humble. Humility embraces both weakness and obedience. I’m not fully submitted if I’m not fully obedient. If we are to become the leader God dreams us to be, then we must be willing to die to self and give the praise to God and the credit to others.

AVAIL People are not the enemy. They are the mission.

ENDURANCE

Verse 14 of Chapter 4: Nehemiah urged the people not to be afraid. Even though the armies of opposition Sanballot had brought were growing—the Samaritans, now the Arabs and Ammonites and the people of Ashdod—all threatening to attack them, Nehemiah, God’s man, urged the people, “DO NOT BE AFRAID!”

Sanballat and Tobiah mocked Nehemiah and all the men building out loud, mocking them in front of each other. How does he mock them?

He mocks their lack of strength. Satan always reminds you of your weakness. But embrace it. Say, “YES, I am weak, but Jesus is strong. In my weakness his strength is made perfect”

He mocks their defense

He mocks their motives saying “You are just doing it for yourself.”

He attacks their worship. “Will they offer sacrifices?” The enemy knows that if we only build but don’t worship, then we’ve lost focus. He mocks worship.

He attacks their progress and speed. “Will they build it in a day?”

While we say, “I will do this work God’s given me, one brick at a time,” then we look back and say, “Look, what God did?!” (Walls built in 52 days)

He attacks their resources. “Will they revive the burned stones?” “Even a fox will break their wall!” Satan always tries to intimidate.

Create confusion. Ne 4:8. “Questioning the plan and vision. It says, “They plotted together to come and fight us and stir up trouble”. Verse 9: But WE PRAYED.

I love Nehemiah’s response. He doesn’t stop because of fear. He prays, “God, please take care of these guys!” In other words, He trusts God more than he fears man.

Character tests come in all shapes and sizes. When I share this next idea, keep in mind that I do believe we among all people on the earth are to be blessed. Deuteronomy teaches us that we are to be the head and not the tail. But all too often, leaders separate themselves too far away from those they aim to lead. Nehemiah chose not to take the financial gifts that were culturally normal for him to receive as Governor. Why? He wanted to show that he, too, was willing to not only work but also sacrifice.

Every good leader must lead by example. It’s been said before, “You can’t take others where you’re unwilling to go.” Nehemiah put that leadership principle on full display. Let’s read from Nehemiah 5:14–19 together and notice the sacrifices he was willing to make so as to not elevate himself above those he led.

¹⁴ Moreover, from the time that I was appointed to be their governor in the land of Judah, from the twentieth year to the thirty-second year of Artaxerxes the king, twelve years, neither I nor my brothers ate the food allowance of the governor. ¹⁵ The former governors who were before me laid heavy burdens on the people and took from them for their daily ration forty shekels of silver. Even their servants lorded it over the people. But I did not do so, because of the fear of God. ¹⁶ I also persevered in the work on this wall, and we acquired no land, and all my servants were gathered there for the work. ¹⁷ Moreover, there were at my table 150 men, Jews and officials, besides those who came to us from the nations that were around us. ¹⁸ Now what was prepared at my expense for each day was one ox and six choice sheep and birds, and every ten days all kinds of wine in abundance. Yet for all this I did not demand the food allowance of the governor, because the service was too heavy on this people. ¹⁹ Remember for my good, O my God, all that I have done for this people.” Ne 5:14–19

Nehemiah was right there working alongside them. He wasn't in the shade of a tower being fed the finest food. He could've done that. He could've said, “The King sent me to tell you to...” But he didn't. He worked alongside them. That's what real leaders do. They lead by example.

Jesus did this, didn't He? He didn't merely tell us to serve one another, but He showed it. He didn't merely tell us to be kind and compassionate, he knelt down to wipe the tears of a prostitute. He sat with a woman at the well who was isolated in her shame. The disciples saw this. They showed up just as Jesus was finishing speaking with her. I find it kinda funny that He

sent them on an errand first, probably so they wouldn't mess things up with her. But when they returned from town and saw him talking with her, they marveled at his accessibility and compassion.

Shepherds smell like sheep.

Nehemiah wasn't extraordinary, really. He was an ordinary guy just like you and me. Yet He trusted God and God created in him an extraordinary life. God gave him grace. Every good work in our life is ultimately an act of God's grace. Once we begin that good work see some progress, overcome some obstacles, we can get tired of doing the good work. We can be tempted to quit.

We sometimes forget that the process includes endurance.

Pastor Trinity Jordan was on his way to Colorado, not knowing that his life would be forever changed that day. Just a few years prior that road trip, God had spoken to him and his wife about planting a church. He planted the church south of Salt Lake in Utah and honestly, things were going good, not as good as expected, but good. He didn't have the turnout he had hoped for on weekend services, but he was encouraged to see about one hundred and fifty people attending his new church weekly, and many of them were in small groups. He had begun two new house churches that he envisioned would become their next church plants. In his book, *Jesus Never Said to Plant Churches*, he says he was just getting tired. He was getting worn out from all the conversations, the time it took to build ministry teams, the effort he had to put into

recruiting volunteers for these teams ... he was just getting tired. He was taking an eight hour trip to Colorado to raise funds at a well-established church that was pastored by a friend of his. He, his wife, and their one-year-old were on their way to raise money for their vision of church planting in Utah.

The rain started to come down hard and without much notice, and then it turned to sleet and snow. In an instant, he lost control of his Chevy Blazer, barely missed an oncoming semitruck and went over the ravine, flipping his car between six and ten times! Car chargers became little missiles getting lodged in the shattered glass. He said, "Time stood still, going slower than ever" while he contemplated, "This is how I'm going to die." When the car finally stopped at the bottom of the ravine, he realized everyone was still alive. He managed to get his daughter out of her car seat; his wife crawled out of his driver's side because her door was jammed shut.

They stood there crying and suddenly a Black man in a puffy coat wearing corn rows stepped over the guardrail above and started walking down the hill toward them. He thought, "This Wyoming. I figured I was certainly the only Black man in the entire state." Nonetheless the man approached him and said, "Are you Ok?"

"Yes," he said, "I think so."

The man then looked him straight in the eyes and said, “Satan is trying to shut you up. He wants you to STOP. But you can’t stop, man! You can’t stop! God is going to protect you and guide you!”

Trinity stood there in shock. Tears filled his eyes as the presence of God filled the moment. He said, “Thank you so much” He then turned toward his wife who had an EMT talking to her. He turned back around, and the man was gone. Nothing. Gone. No one.

He says, “There was suddenly just White people. No Black man prophesying to me. He was there. Then gone.” He added, “WOW Lord, my angel is Black and has corn rows in his hair! Cool!”

He went on to share that God had not only spared his life that day and the lives of his family, but confirmed to him that His calling was real, His work was important, and God was asking him to endure! He couldn’t give up on the promise! Not now!

God wants us to be faithful, not successful, and sometimes faithfulness just looks like endurance. Don’t give up! God wants us to simply be faithful, to do the best we can with what we’ve been given wherever we are! He simply wants us to give it all we’ve got and to do it for the glory of God. You can only be faithful with your assignment, not someone else’s. Nehemiah knew his assignment from Heaven. He knew the promise God had given him. Do you know yours?

God wants us to be faithful, not necessarily successful, and sometimes faithfulness just looks like obedience and endurance.

God will empower you with His Holy Spirit to endure and remain faithful despite the temptation to quit! Paul said it like this, “I press onward to take hold of that which Jesus took hold of me!” I push past fear, intimidation, and worry. I admit my weakness before God, then ask Him for strength!

AVAIL PULL QUOTE God wants us to be faithful, not necessarily successful, and sometimes faithfulness just looks like obedience and endurance.

In other words, “If Christ Jesus died and rose again for me to be saved and has a plan for me to be an Apostle then I will do all that I can to be the best Apostle I can be—since Jesus did all He could to complete His work.” Jesus “left it all on the field.” He’s encouraging us to follow His example and leave it all on the field.

Nehemiah was sleepless over the pain of the people. God gave him a burden to see God’s people experience the life that God intended them to have. Let’s go back to when Nehemiah first received a promise from the Lord. This idea of a better future that could come through the building of a wall was worth out of a burden from the Lord. Remember you’re calling is connected to your conflict and your promise is connected to your problem.

Nehemiah said, “I was very angry when I had heard their outcry and these words.”

Nehemiah 5:6: This righteous anger was a result of hearing the people of God suffering.

Nehemiah knew he had to do something. He had to build the wall to fortify their city and rebuild their reputation as God’s people. The conflict in his heart motivated the calling on his life.

There is a promise on your life. There is a group of people that you are destined to serve. It’s a promise from the Lord. Gods promise on your life is not about making you a success story. The promise from the Lord it’s about making you a servant—making you more like Jesus. The question of whether you will succeed as a Christian leader or not has much more to do with your heart and it does your plans or strategy. The question that may determine your success as a leader is simple: Who are you serving and why?

SUCCESS

After a leader gets a Promise from the Lord, faces Reality, overcomes a few Obstacles, Endures some Character Tests and trials, they will likely find Success. People will begin to sing their praises. Has this happened to you? Have you been there were someone is singing your praises and telling you how awesome you are and you’re thinking “Keep going...” I’m obviously making a joke there, but you know there’s some truth in it. We like to be encouraged and given accolades, and truthfully, that’s ok. That’s part of human nature to need an “attaboy” every now and then. But you’re in trouble when you are craving the praises of people.

You're in trouble when Satan has convinced you that you looking successful is what life and leadership is all about. In leadership, there's no greater challenge than success itself. Many don't withstand it.

One of the greatest temptations Satan gives to leaders once they begin to lead is to depend upon their own abilities and talents. Suddenly you're not praying as much. Once he gets you to do that, even for a few months, you'll discover you don't have enough. In that moment, he hits you with a low blow, a temptation to quit. He'll whisper in your ear, "Just give up! Just throw in the towel! You're not good enough to lead!"

When you choose to step out in faith to lead, watch out! Now you've got a target on your back! Satan was totally fine with you becoming saved, as long as you don't influence others! As long as you don't start to make disciples. As long as you don't let God do a good work in you and give you a promise!

AVAIL PULL QUOTE Remember the promise is never for you, it's for others.

Back to our story. The local officials began to tax the Jews more and demand more interest from their lands and income. This was a form of racial discrimination. Nehemiah set up a meeting and urged them to stop, saying, "Don't you fear God? You know this is wrong!" They stopped. Why? I believe they felt the anointing in Nehemiah's voice.

Jesus taught about this same hypocrisy that Nehemiah exposed. In Luke 20:46–47, Jesus points out the religious leaders loved to look smart and religious, and were so pious that they were taxing the widows at a rate they couldn't afford. He warned the disciples not to become like them.

It's important that your mission lines up with God's mission. Serve the poor. Love the broken. Give grace. Worship together. Stand in unity. Preach the Gospel. Does your "good work" line up with God's good heart? If so, awesome! If not, you may be confusing success by man's standards with success by God's standard. God just wants you to be faithful. Period.

AVAIL PULL QUOTE **Faithfulness and obedience is success in God's view.**

So maybe you're reading this and thinking, *I had a good work, but the enemy stopped me. He caused me to be afraid. He isolated me. He infiltrated my mind. Or he infiltrated my team and tried to split it up. Or, He intimidated me, accusing me, questioning my motives so... I second guessed myself.*

What if today, the Holy Spirit is encouraging you to take your eyes off the person beside you and put your focus on the good work in front of you?

That's what Nehemiah did. That's why he was able to build the wall and restore the reputation of their city and their God, Jehovah. Nehemiah asked God, "What is the good work you want ME to do?"

Satan wants you discouraged and living in fear, isolation, and without purpose! God wants to fill your mind and your heart with hope, purpose, and love that removes all fear! God wants to give you a good work to do for HIS glory! We all need to ask God, *What is the good work You want me to do? Do you want me to begin a new work or do you want me to join a good work that you've already begun in someone else?*

Let's be honest. When God begins a good work in us, we will inevitably face a time of discouragement. When that time comes, we must remember that it is GOD who called us for this good work; it was not our idea. In remembering your calling, you're sustained with energy from God to continue the good work God began. Satan will always question the word given to you—the work that's in your heart to do. He'll question your ability and tempt you to quit. Don't have a target on your back until you begin to let God work in you. When you start the good work, Satan will take notice and cause you difficulty, but:

God continues His work amidst the difficulty you face.

Like we learned with Nehemiah, amidst the difficulty, God continued to work as Nehemiah continued to have faith and trust God!

It's so important that you realize that once you begin the good work God put in your heart, you WILL face hardship or difficulty of some sort. That difficulty is NOT a sign from God to quit! That difficulty is sometimes just a sign that Satan wants you to quit the very work GOD

started in you! That difficulty, that obstacle, is also an opportunity for God to do a miracle. God can turn that road block in front of you into a ramp!

I want my friend Laura Bartchak to share her story with you about how she began a rescue ministry for women enslaved in human trafficking.

My personal story is that after I came to know Christ, I started ministering behind the scenes, on prayer teams or children's ministries or as a youth group back-up, but I felt scattered and unfocused most of the time, dipping my toes in areas that in retrospect, were building blocks to my calling. I started asking God for a specific focus, something I could pour my life into for Him, something that He would give me a passion for. I served in the Dominican Republic and in Haiti on several short term missions trips and always felt the Lord's touch, but didn't feel that full-time foreign missions was where I was supposed to be. After one trip, someone challenged me with a question that at first offended me. "I see you're serving God overseas but what are you doing here in the US?"

That question began to stir my spirit and cause me to ask the Lord "What do you want me to do here, in my city?"

I didn't get the big picture all at once. I look back and I see it was a progression of saying "yes" to God over and over. Every yes was a step toward a vision God was forming. People kept prophesying to me and I knew it was connected to that bigger vision. I knew "it" was coming, I just didn't know what "it" was.

In 2011, I went to my first human trafficking awareness event at a local church. There was a terrible snow storm but for some reason I knew I had to go. I was a mess of tears feeling the burden to do something for those trapped in this life, which I didn't realize was happening right here in our own region. I got involved with the organization that put on the event. I joined local coalitions that were trying to address this issue. I hosted jewelry parties and awareness events and got educated to speak on the subject. I went to a church where we did street outreach and encountering prostitutes, and I didn't realize the high percentage (92% according to Ohio studies) who were not there on their own choice, but were actually forced into prostitution (aka trafficking).

For the next few years, God was preparing my heart for this ministry to those who were enslaved in sex trafficking, even though I thought it was only as a speaker or event-organizer! In those few years, I had many family members facing physical illness, which thankfully prevented me from jumping into something in my own strength. From 2011 to 2015, God was teaching me so much. He was teaching me trust and to rely on Him. I even had to pause for a full year in order to learn the love of the Father before I could minister that to others properly.

My friend Misty, who started the ministry with me, was on her own parallel path of serving the Lord, by serving women and inner-city youth. God was laying out her steps as well, to serve in the capacity He was calling her to in the ministry. We went to the same church together, and it was there that our first trafficking victim divulged to Misty that she was being sold into prostitution against her will—by her own family!

Misty and I put our heads together to try to help this girl in the best way we knew how, and couldn't believe how difficult it was to access services that were supposed to be helping. We partnered with local agencies and yet there was still such a gap between what survivors needed and what was being offered. Along the way, people at various organizations would say "I've got a girl that needs help too", so we would try to help the next one and the next one and the next one.

We'd remove these brave young women physically from their situation, sometimes with the help of local law enforcement and other agencies. Once removed from their captor, we would work on their immediate needs such as safe shelter, food, clothes, medical care, etc, while trying to make a long-term restoration plan, focusing on getting them to a program specific for trafficking survivors, where God could work on renewing their minds, where most of their bondage occurs.

Once we rescued our fifth girl, we realized that we were onto something. There was such a gap between bondage and freedom. This is how the Harriet Tubman name came about. We began literally hiding girls and people would say "You're like Harriet Tubman rescuing these girls." After she escaped, Harriet would go back to inform slaves that freedom is available, there's help getting to freedom and that they were worth it! Harriet Tubman guided them and connected enslaved people to those that could offer immediate needs like housing, food, clothing and care; then eventually job skills, education and opportunity. Harriet Tubman was the bridge for the slaves from bondage to freedom. And that is what we were doing.

We brought others onto the team that had a similar passion and various areas of expertise we needed. We created a Board and became a 501c3 to formalize our mission and allow others to financially support the efforts. We hung onto the hem of His garment during the many times we simply didn't know what to do. We were always facing new challenge, as each person who came along was unique, with unique needs and unique stories. We never stopped asking God for help, and He always provided, whether it was wisdom, finances or people with open hearts.

It is hard work and there are many things that look like failure to the world. The needs can be overwhelming, and the discouragement crippling. God continues to remind me "one at a time Laura, one at a time". When I try in my own strength and my own wisdom, He gently reminds me that this is His will and His vision, and I just submit humbly to that and watch Him provide everything. God has been so faithful to us! People who start a ministry and begin to make progress must realize that hardships will come, obstacles will come from the outside and the inside, and you will be tempted to quit more than you will ever admit to anyone. Each time requires a soul-searching, humbling, submitting time where you must ask God "is this still your will? Is this still where you want me?" He is so faithful to answer the hardest of questions, and when you come out of that time of asking, you will be strengthened in your inner man for what He is calling you to.

The Word of God tells us we have ALL been given a ministry, and that is the ministry of reconciliation. We are reconciling God's children back to their Abba Father, through Christ, in

the power of the Holy Spirit. So whether those who need reconciled are prostitutes, drug addicts, co-workers, teen-agers, neighbors, people in another country, foster children or elderly, the ministry we are given is the same. For those of us who were once estranged from our God and Father, to show the way to Him to people who.

God is faithful and able to supply what you need for where you are called. Just keep saying yes! It will be an adventure and you will get to partner with what He is doing! When you're a kid and you get to go to work with your dad, it's a thrill and a joy. He does the work and you're "helping" and we must keep that perspective that we are not in this alone but that God is working through us! He is doing the good work!

God connected the conflict in her heart to the calling He had on her life. God was at work in teaching her about compassion as she said "yes" to the short-term mission trips. God was at work through her friend lovingly challenging her to be a missionary in her own town. God was at work putting a promise in her heart, a vision for her future—to rescue women and see them restored by Father God's love.

The Bible tells us in Ephesians 2:10 that "We are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." In other words, God KNEW before you were born and what you would do for His Kingdom. He designed you, and if He created you for this good work, this promise, then trust me, He will see to it that He completes the work He began. Didn't He already promise you that?

Philippians 1:6: “He who began a good work in you—the day you were born—will bring it to completion on the day of Christ Jesus!”

Leaders who see themselves primarily as a child of God realize their need for their brothers and sisters and value the team God has given them. Sonship is about the collective brothers and sisters, the family of God. A leader who understands sonship is more concerned with God getting all the glory than they are worried about being applauded.

When Nehemiah built the wall, he didn't let the project he spearheaded become a monument to his name. He realized that it was only one step in the process of Israel regaining their identity as God's people. Nehemiah was secure, and that security motivated him to promote Ezra to teach people the Word of God which brought about a great revival. I wonder what would've happened if Nehemiah would've ignored that nudge from the Lord and instead insisted on not only being the builder but also the teacher. When you care more about sonship than success, you are perfectly fine with seeing a brother or a sister succeed in your place, in fact, you celebrate it.

SONSHIP

Before you were born, God called you and I into sonship and to a life that redeems others to also become sons and daughters of God. Before you were born, God knew the good work He had in mind for you! In fact, as He designed you, He had a smile on His face, thinking of all the wonderful things you would do and the wonderful people you'd meet. God had a smile on His

face thinking about the person you'd become. You are NOT a mistake! GOD designed you and He still believes in you. He knows that you can do the good work! If, for some crazy reason, you're not yet a Christian, I want to tell you something. Even if you don't believe in God, God believes in you.

Each one of us has a unique part and a unique role to play in the Kingdom of God. We each have assignments to complete as we contribute to the Body of Christ! The Promise God put in your heart is somehow, in some way, connected to the good work He's doing in other believers around you. You need one another! When they were building that wall, they needed each other. They needed some to carry supplies, some to build the wall and some to stand guard with weapons. We need each other!

One of the traps so many young leaders fall into is becoming "Do It All Don." Maybe you've been that guy before. Mr. Do It All Don believes that he doesn't need anyone else because no one can do it as good as Don can. Leader, just because you can do something, doesn't mean you should. There are talents and gifts in people around you. If you'll only give them a chance to serve using those gifts, you might find they are pretty awesome at what they do. This will not only give you more time and energy to do what only you should be doing but also will be a constant reminder that you need other people. It's also a constant reminder of humility—the most important trait in any Christian leader. I believe there are primarily only three things the senior leader of any organization should be doing. I share those and more insight on the "hows"

of Christian leadership in my next book, *Leverage Leadership*; so you can be on the lookout for that soon.

When you are secure in your sonship and know that you're fully loved by Father God, you don't need to prove yourself by being "Do It All Don." When you are free from the need to prove your value to others, you are more inclined to see the value in others and work with them toward common goals. This is true Christian leadership. Sonship is at the center. If you don't receive this revelation of sonship, you'll act like an orphan, because you'll always behave according to what you believe. If you believe that you are a "valuable leader" or a "good leader" if you meet certain criteria or can operate in x number of gifts, then you're operating with an orphan mindset. An orphan feels the need to prove his value and therefore competes against the others. They see the world through the lens of performance. A loved child already knows that they are loved, so they're free to enjoy the company of other children and even appreciate their unique traits. They're not trying to outperform anyone.

Too many Christian leaders lead with an orphan spirit—a need to compete for approval, social-media likes, a striving for their brand to be known. Some try to wedge their way to victory. A spirit of adoption must enter our hearts in a fresh way so we understand as leaders, we are brothers with other Christian leaders! I hope this challenges you. There's nothing wrong with having a brand or a logo and being passionate about your mission. I love that! I do hope, however, you're more excited about the church of Jesus globally winning the lost. Does your

speech reflect that? Let's grow in unity as we join together, cross denominational lines, pray for one another and learn from one another.

Eph 4:15–16: “We are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ,¹⁶ from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love.”

I have a friend named Dan Barker who is a local pastor in town. He has a gift of prayer. He desires to see revival maybe more than anyone I know. I asked him to share a teaching on prayer and simply impart his heart for prayer and revival to our people at a Prayer and Worship night. His message was beautiful and powerful! It was also so good for our people who are in the Pentecostal and Assemblies of God tribe to see us partner with a Baptist minister. I had a minister from another denomination preach a few years ago and half my reason was simply for our people to get a better world view, a global view of the Family of God. There are millions of brothers and sisters in Christ around the globe in various denominations. As a Christian leaders, I believe part of our job is to communicate that truth and demonstrate unity among the kids, God's kids, God's family and it all comes back to sonship.

When each of us is working properly, doing our part, the whole Body of Christ grows and builds itself up in love. Don't quit! Don't quit the good work God began! When we do our individual good work, we are united in our corporate mission to reach the world! God always blesses a unified body of believers—a unified group on a mission to preach the Gospel! Truly

successful leaders never succeed alone. True leadership arrives at success with a team around them smiling together, because each person's work was valued in the mission.

Just like Nehemiah was able to unite the people of Israel, men, women, and children to each do their part, we are to unite those we lead toward specific common goals. As Christians, in the broader sense, we are to be united in our mission to reach the lost and restore God's praise on the earth. You cannot be united in your mission to reach the lost if you choose to be divided in your opinions.

SAVING MOSES

I want to tell you about Sarah Bowling and the ministry she started called Saving Moses. She goes into areas of prostitution and cares for the children of the prostitutes while they're out. You may not fully understand her calling, but once you hear her share it, you'll be moved to tears and thankful for her compassion, as I was. When you hear about the risks she takes to love on and care for and pray for these children, you can hear the heart of God.

She and her team have seen so many children and mothers come to Christ, it's remarkable! So many children have been prayed for and nourished physically and emotionally through her ministry. She is a modern-day Esther! She doesn't let fear, isolation, infiltration, or intimidation stop her or stop God's love from saving these families! You can look up her story at www.SavingMoses

APPLY IT

Group Discussion Guide | P.R.O.C.E.S.S. | Week 5

1. What were some of the fears Nehemiah likely had to overcome?
2. Is it possible God can use a terrible situation to redeem people? Discuss openly something that was unfair that you experienced and discuss the possibility of God using it for His glory and the redemption of others.
3. What gave Nehemiah the courage to approach the King? Does God give us courage when we approach Him in prayer?
4. How do you think Nehemiah felt when Sanballat and Tobiah were openly accusing him of subverting the King's authority? How do you think he ignored such vivid and public criticism?
5. When as a leader have you faced criticism and what did you do in response?
6. Have you ever experienced a time when you felt isolated or intimidated?
7. Someone read James 4:13–17, then someone else read James 5:7–11.

¹³ Come now, you who say, “Today or tomorrow we will go into such and such a town and spend a year there and trade and make a profit”—¹⁴ yet you do not know what tomorrow will bring. What is your life? For you are a mist that appears for a little time and then vanishes. ¹⁵ Instead you ought to say, “If the Lord wills, we will live and do this or that.” ¹⁶ As it is, you boast in your arrogance. All such boasting is evil. ¹⁷ So whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin.

⁷ Be patient, therefore, brothers, until the coming of the Lord. See how the farmer waits for the precious fruit of the earth, being patient about it, until it receives the early and the late rains. ⁸ You also, be patient. Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand. ⁹ Do not grumble against one another, brothers, so that you may not be judged; behold, the Judge is standing at the door. ¹⁰ As an example of suffering and patience, brothers, take the prophets who spoke in the name of the Lord. ¹¹ Behold, we consider those blessed who remained steadfast. You have heard of the steadfastness of Job, and you have seen the purpose of the Lord, how the Lord is compassionate and merciful.

8. Someone else read Romans 8:12–29.

9. What do these passages tell us about God’s will and God’s goodness?

10. How can we overcome the mental battle that Satan brings to us—the temptations to quit, the beliefs that we aren’t good enough to make it, that we aren’t smart enough or “spiritual enough” to lead...?

How do we overcome these accusations Satan throws at our minds? How does grace play into these lies of shame? How does Jesus' work on the cross break these lies?

CHAPTER 6 | DAN

“I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom, people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel.” Daniel 6:26

When it comes to integrity, no one in the Bible quite stands out to me like Daniel does. King Nebuchadnezzar took the Israelites into captivity when they were exiled and taken into Babylon in 605 BC. The King, like many before him, was fuming with a ruthless greed to conquer all he could for his own fame and fortune. Of all that were taken, Daniel stood apart from the rest because of his wisdom, prophetic gifting, and even good looks. His unique identity gave him a special chance to serve in the palace, the Bible tells us.

While Daniel was true to his Jewish convictions, he served a tyrant! This is the same king who threw Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego into the fiery furnace when they refused to worship him. He was full of pride and arrogance and yet God used Daniel to prophesy truth about a dream the king had. God then fulfilled Daniel's prophecy and brought the king to a place of humility and desperate need for God.

DANIEL'S PROMISE

Daniel remained faithful to God and served God wholeheartedly in a broken kingdom. Daniel held on the promises of God and was faithful to serve Him with his prophetic gifting wherever God had placed him.

Babylon had fallen to the Persians in 539 BC. Daniel 5:31 tells us that “Darius received the kingdom” and many have come to believe that text to imply a great king such as Cyrus may have given it to him, possibly unexpectedly in the wake of Nechuchadnezzar’s death.

Other historical records tell us that Darius separated the region into 120 sections and then placed three administrators over those sections, one of whom was Daniel. This separation is similar to what we have in America with towns and cities, making it easier for the people to be represented by local government and truly governed.

In Daniel, Chapter 5, we learn that Daniel interpreted the dreams of Nebuchadnezzar, Belshazzar’s father. Then Daniel was faithful and was courageous in declaring God’s message to him. He had learned nothing about the demise of his father’s pride. Daniel confronted the king’s sin and pride and that very night the king was killed just as Daniel predicted when prophesying.

Before he was killed, the King had given Daniel a purple, royal robe and a gold chain necklace and placed him as the third in command over the entire land. Remember, Daniel was anointed to serve. Daniel was anointed and appointed by God to serve in this prophetic gifting in that time in history. Daniel was chosen by the king because of his looks and intellect to serve in the King’s palace. But long before the Babylonian King noticed it, Daniel noticed this small

flame within his heart, a gift, a treasure within that seemed to be uniquely his? Do you know what your treasure within is? Do you know what your promise is? Seek God about it! It may not be good looks, but there is something uniquely special about you!

Don't despise your current season, no matter how difficult it is! God knows why He has you where He has you. God has plans and promises for you, people you are to impact, and assignments for you to accomplish.

DANIEL'S REALITY

If we were writing this story, we would've set Daniel free. We're not God and God didn't do that. We see that Daniel doesn't want to be taken captive. Daniel doesn't want to be held captive ... for years. Daniel faced a harsh reality. He was called upon to use his God-given gifts to serve unjust, godless kings. Yet somehow, Daniel's faith remains intact. Sometimes we think a bad situation we're in can't be God's will or that God simply isn't answering our prayers or even hearing us pray. I fear that some Christians are waiting on God to get them *out* of a situation that God has allowed them to be *in*, so they can turn hearts toward Him *in* that situation. More than you ask God to remove you *from* a situation, ask God to help you be faithful in it first.

Daniel, Chapter 6, tells us more of what we need to know about Daniel. In light of the king being murdered, King Darius became the new king. Daniel was 62 years old and was now serving his third king. Many years had gone by. Decades had passed since he was a young man, stolen from his home. Undoubtedly, there were times when his knees would give way or a pain

in his back would cause him to sit and think back fifty plus years ago when he was another person in another place, a Jewish boy, home with his family. Despite knowing who he really was, he didn't become cynical. He remained humble and faithful to God to be used in his gifts. He fulfilled the promise of God on his life.

Daniel was given a prophetic gift. He could interpret the meaning of dreams. This gift led him all the way to the royal palace! At the time of interpreting the King's dreams, his conclusions would've seemed unthinkable! He describes the kingdoms of the present world such as Egypt and Babylon toppling and even being split into four smaller kingdoms. It was ludicrous at the time, because these kingdoms and their military might were vast! Daniel's gift of prophecy allowed him to see these current superpowers in their future, crumbling to pieces.

The picture of the stone is later used by the Apostle Paul to describe Jesus, the Godman who would come and establish an eternal Kingdom, one to far outlast them all. See Ephesians 2:20. He is the "stone the builders rejected," yet He is the cornerstone, the foundation, the rock on which the entire Kingdom of God is eternally built. Jesus was given the throne of David, which started out small, just as described in Daniel's interpretation, yet would last forevermore. Daniel 7 also speaks of this revelation that Jesus, being the Son of Man, would rule and reign forever. Jesus even referenced Himself as the Son of Man when standing in front of Pilot, alluding to Daniel's prophecy saying "... and you will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of Heaven..." He was in no doubt referencing Daniel's vision of the "Son of Man." Revelation

11:15 tells us that “The kingdoms of the world will become the Kingdom of our Lord and of His Messiah and He will reign forever and ever!”

This must be one of the reasons why there’s so much power in the songs we sing about Christ’s eternal reign. On a Christmas album I released, I wrote a song called Glory To God In The Highest and in the bridge we shout, “He’ll reign forever and ever! His love will never end! He’ll reign forever and ever! His power, it knows no end!” Every time we declare that truth with a group of believers, something happens! There’s an eternal truth, a chorus centuries old that our voices join and that unified song of praise electrifies the room! It’s hard to describe, but whether there’s twenty people in the room or two thousand, it seems that when we sing of Jesus’ eternal reign, we are joining all of Heaven! In a way, we are joining all of History, all of creation, all the angels, and even men like Daniel who are standing in the courts of Heaven now declaring this truth of Christ’s eternal reign!

Daniel knew he had a gift. We can imagine that certain political things would take place around him growing up and we can assume that Father God had already revealed those things to young Daniel in the secret place of prayer.

Daniel realized his spiritual gift in the secret place of prayer. It was there that He discovered His unique ability given to Him by God. I would argue that only in the secret place of your prayer life will you discover exactly what God wants you to do with your life—the gifts He’s given you and how they’re to be used. If you don’t appoint time to get alone in prayer, then you could miss your appointed time to be used by God. I wonder how many men and women are

called into full-time ministry and deep down they know it, yet they numb the voice of the Holy Spirit using entertainment or whatever possible. I've met those people while on the road ministering. I've prophesied to them and seen the tears begin to fall from their eyes. I've seen the pain of regret and then the joy of forgiveness as God offers them another chance to go for their promise and enter the full-time ministry. Maybe that's you! Maybe you feel God's Spirit even now speaking to your heart, calling you forward and asking you to trust Him!

I want to clarify something briefly. I say "full-time ministry" and not just "ministry" very intentionally because I believe that we are all called to ministry. We're all called to minister to others—the Bible teaches us that. We are each called to be ambassadors for Jesus Christ—bearing His name and message to those around us. Yet the Bible is also clear that some are called into full-time ministry. If that's you, please don't ignore that calling. Please take some time to pray about it, asking God if the career you're in is really what you're supposed to be doing with your life. It's very possible God would call you into the workplace you're in and it not be a church! That's very possible as many are called to create jobs and culture using their gifts in the marketplace! Yet some are called to either the mission field, to pastoring or traveling as an evangelist or full-time music ministry, yet they ignore the voice of the Spirit calling them to walk on the water in faith.

DANIEL'S OBSTACLES

Dan was a guy with dreams for his future just like you and me. Dan had faults just like you and me. Dan faced a harsh reality though unlike you and I will ever experience. Can you

imagine being abducted, removed from everything you know to be normal? Can you imagine being forced to learn a new language, culture, societal norms, diet and customs?

He was removed from everything and everyone He knew. God allowed this to happen. It breaks my heart when I see a Christian leader face something painful then give up on their faith in God all together. All too often, we see a leader who faces resistance to his leadership, quit. Sometimes that leader needs to know that not everyone on your team will remain with you when God gives you a new vision, a promise for the future of your organization or city. Not everyone will understand that vision or believe in the promise and want to go with you. And that's ok. God will bring you the right people at the right time despite the obstacles you're facing or opposition you're facing.

When painful things happen to us, especially from those within the church, we can be tempted to quit. We think, "Obstacles and opposition should be coming from the world, not other believers! They should know better." The truth is that one of the greatest obstacles you'll face is when someone on your team is either unwilling to do their job, or even worse, becomes someone who is attacking your very character and integrity. There are not many things more painful than that.

A great book I highly recommend for every leader is *Leadership Pain* by Samuel R. Chand. In it, he shares some personal stories and life experiences of others to bring light to the pain we go through as leaders and the lessons learned in them. Obstacles and opposition can be

very painful as a leader, but God will give you the strength to endure it and move forward in the promise He has given you!

PROPER PERSPECTIVE

In the book of Daniel, we see a reoccurring theme of God's sovereignty best summarized in Chapter 2, Verses 20—23.

“Blessed be the name of God forever and ever, to whom belong wisdom and might.

²¹ He changes times and seasons;

he removes kings and sets up kings;

he gives wisdom to the wise

and knowledge to those who have understanding;

²² he reveals deep and hidden things;

he knows what is in the darkness,

and the light dwells with him.

²³ To you, O God of my fathers,

I give thanks and praise,

for you have given me wisdom and might,

and have now made known to me what we asked of you,

for you have made known to us the king's matter.”

Daniel knew that his gift of wisdom and gift of prophecy came from the Lord. Do you know where your abilities come from? Have you forgotten that every ability and talent you have is a gift from God? If so, be reminded today that God “changes times and seasons, removes kings and sets up kings, gives wisdom and knowledge....” Let this truth bring you to a place of humble worship and proper perspective today!

Your talent comes from the Lord, so be thankful for it. Your position of leadership came from the Lord, so be thankful to the Lord for it. Your abilities were given to you by God as gifts meant to empower you to lead well and serve people best. Don't forget these basic elements of leadership. The leader who forgets this will succumb to pride and “pride comes before a fall” as Scripture tells us. If you're not yet in a position of leadership, maybe you're studying and preparing for it, this should encourage you as well. It's not on you to find that ministry position.

God will provide it. Yes, you do your part, but remember, it is God who will place you where He wants you, so don't stress out. Don't worry. Trust Him with your future.

Daniel knew that his abilities came from the Lord. He kept the proper perspective—a humble view of himself and a glorified view of God. This must remain at the core of every Christian leader. When you forget where your talents and opportunities come from, you are closest to failing the next phase in the process of a leader, the character tests.

DAN'S CHARACTER TESTS

Dan's character was tested on more than one occasion and yours will be too. Somehow Dan held on. He didn't give in to what was "culturally relevant" or "cool," nor did he compromise his integrity. When given the chance, he knew what he believed and stood by it. Do you know what you believe and why you believe it?

Dr. Michael Brown often says, "If you don't know what you would die for then you don't know why you're living." Would you risk your life for your confession of knowing Jesus Christ? Many around the world do this every single day. Here in America, our faith is tested but not to the extent that it is in some places of the world where faith in Christ immediately puts you in a hostile environment.

Dan's character was tested when he was asked to give the interpretation for the king's awful dream. Notice in the passage below, he could've said, "I can interpret it for you." He didn't though.

"Are you able to make known to me the dream that I have seen and its interpretation?"
²⁷ Daniel answered the king and said, "No wise men, enchanters, magicians, or astrologers can show to the king the mystery that the king has asked, ²⁸ but there is a God in heaven who reveals mysteries, and he has made known to King Nebuchadnezzar what will be in the latter days. (Da 2:26-28)

Daniel didn't give himself the praise when given the chance. Too many Christian leaders will grandstand and boast of their accomplishments in an effort to impress the others around them.

Why? Why do we see this in modern Christianity? Have we learned nothing from 2,000 years of following Jesus? Have we learned nothing from the disciples vying for position and fame asking who will sit next to Jesus at His right hand? Jesus' reply says it all, "Be thankful you're even gonna make it!"

As a Christian leader, you must not allow sin to rule in your heart and demand your way and your praise. Obedience to God and humility before men is our goal as a Christian leader. If you want to finish the process of a leader, if you want to become who God wants you to become and reach the potential of your promise, then remember this: Your legacy doesn't matter. It's not

about your legacy. It's about God's. Any great Christian leader didn't want to be great. They wanted God to be known as great. Daniel didn't say, "I can." He said, "God can." We see this similar change of tone in the life of Joseph. "I can't, but God can" should become our confession as we go through the process of a leader.

Often your character tests are simple, subtle moments where the Holy Spirit will cause you to say "we" instead of "I." Your character tests are also moments when the Holy Spirit tells you to ask questions, and then be quiet long enough to hear their response. A leader who is allowing the Holy Spirit to build his or her character will begin asking questions like "What is God teaching you lately? He's been teaching me about..." "How can we celebrate _____ who is doing such a good job lately?" "I've never seen it that way before; can you explain more of what you mean?" "What is one of the most memorable times you've had with the Lord and what did He teach you?" "What can I do as your leader to make your job more enjoyable?"

When you begin to ask questions like this, your character is being formed into the image of Jesus and away from the image of you. When your team hears questions like these, they'll know that you're truly there to serve them and not the other way around. Undoubtedly, there will be times when God asks you to keep your head up, because the road is getting long. Next up in the process? Endurance.

DAN'S ENDURANCE

In the process of a leader, we are enduring not just opposition that may come our way with a new vision, we're often enduring the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. He is removing in us the need and desire for accolades. Too many times, we as leaders believe that we need to be given the credit. You may not realize you do this but I wonder how often do you make the conversation about you.

I've had the Holy Spirit convict me of this often. Just because I'm excited about what God is doing in my life, doesn't mean I have to steer a conversation back to what God is doing in my life. I've heard the Holy Spirit tell me, "You don't need to share that" right as I'm about to share it. Why? Because the Holy Spirit will say, "Just celebrate them right now."

In an instant, the Holy Spirit will speak to us and cause us to keep the conversation about GOD and what HE can do and is doing in OTHERS. This simple focus will cause you to last as a leader. Leaders who last are those who deflect praise and truly aim to see others succeed around them. Ironically that is what causes you to succeed as a leader. When you are willing to consistently give the credit to others and value them more than yourself, you'll last in leadership!

Leaders who insist on receiving the credit for being such a great leader, ironically, often lose their leadership, the very thing they prize. They don't endure. Why? People are drawn to humility. People are repelled by pride. In humility, we choose to recognize the abilities and talents of those around us and do all that we can to celebrate them. The building of your character is inevitably connected to your endurance. If your character is low, so is your ability to endure. If your character is high, so is your ability to endure.

THE DEATH OF “I”

I remember a few years ago being a part of an event where there were about five ministers, all scheduled to either share a few songs or preach a sermon. I’ll never forget one pastor I spoke with before the event started. I really enjoyed my conversations with the others, but not this guy. He simply rambled on and on about his accomplishments. I didn’t notice it at first. I thought he was just introducing himself and giving me context. It’s normal to share where you minister. What’s not normal is to tell someone for about 10 minutes everything you’ve ever accomplished and how many people come to hear you. It was astonishing how he simply didn’t have any concern about anyone else in the conversation. At first, I was genuinely interested in getting to know him, but five minutes later, I couldn’t wait to get away from him.

In your time with people, are you asking questions about them, their family, and their work? Are you asking questions like, “So, what’s your story? Where are you from and how did you meet the Lord?” Or is it possible you’re sometimes just giving people a list of your accomplishments? If so, that comes from a place of insecurity, a need for approval. The approval and affirmation you desire can only truly come from Father God. It comes back to sonship doesn’t it?

There must come a death of “I” in your conversations. I’m not saying you can’t celebrate what God is doing in you personally. I’m simply saying we must guard our hearts from pride that disguises itself as “testimony.” Truly Christ-like people will make others feel like the most important person in the room, not themselves. I just sat at a table recently where the minister

who had just preached was sharing with us over lunch what was happening in his ministry. I had asked, so I was eager to hear. What he didn't realize is that he kept cutting off a couple people who would begin to share. He didn't even know how many times he interrupted people to continue speaking about what was happening through his ministry. I honestly believe his heart was in the right place; I know this man. He passionately loves Jesus and wants to see people saved. He also apparently has a bad social habit of interrupting people. Active listening means you are quiet when someone else is speaking. You don't assume you know what the person is about to say. You don't think through your response to what they are saying. You don't interrupt. You listen with the intent to understand. Good listening skills (knowing when to keep your yapper shut) is a sign of a love and love is a sign of a Christ-like leader. But you're "the speaker" you might think. Well, over a meal, you are not the speaker. You are one of many brothers and sisters in Christ, and everyone at the table deserves to be heard and loved.

James 1:26: "If anyone thinks he is religious and does not bridle his tongue, but deceives his heart, this person's religion is worthless."

In the words of John the Baptist, "He must increase and I must decrease." Until this is your belief, you have yet to grasp what Christian Leadership is all about. We are not building our kingdom. We are building His! Building the Kingdom of JESUS and spreading HIS fame is what success in this world looks like.

DAN'S SUCCESS

Isn't it amazing that Daniel was a young man when he was taken into captivity and yet he served three kings who were ruthless and prideful. Daniel's integrity stood in stark contrast to the leaders he served. Despite their religious differences, each king could sense the anointing of God's Spirit upon Daniel. Isn't it amazing that even "the world" could sense "the spirit of wisdom" within him!

In Daniel, Chapters 5 and 6, we learn that King Darius was 62 years old when he was crowned king. In just a few short sentences, we hear about the fall of the Babylonian empire and the start of the Medo-Persian Empire. According to Nabonidus Chronicle, the date was the sixteenth of the month Tishri, which most scholars agree would have been October 12, 539 BC.

We learn from the life and story of Daniel that kings come and go but the Kingdom of God reigns supreme. It's possible that you've become the president or CEO of the company. It's possible you've become the senior pastor. It's possible you're now the mayor, but the truth is that you can be successful in the eyes of people and totally fail in the eyes of God. The questions you really need to ask are:

Is God pleased with my life?

Is God pleased with my leadership?

Am I "hidden in Christ" as Paul says?

Am I dying to self, finding a way to serve others?

Am I letting Jesus live His life through me?

Am I being faithful to do what God is asking me to do with this new role?

Asking these questions will allow sonship to be formed in your heart. I want to encourage you to see the similarities between Jesus and Daniel. Both wanted to simply be obedient to Father God. Their goal was not to be successful. Their goal was to be faithful, to be obedient to their assignments given by Father God. What's your goal?

If your goal is to build your own kingdom and fame, you'll arrive at the mountaintop of your success only to find out that you're alone. You'll live eternity in regret, for God's Kingdom is all that matters, all that lasts, and all worth living for. In the words of Daniel:

⁴⁴ And in the days of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, nor shall the kingdom be left to another people. It shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever, ⁴⁵ just as you saw that a stone was cut from a mountain by no human hand, and that it broke in pieces the iron, the bronze, the clay, the silver, and the gold. A great God has made known to the king what shall be after this. The dream is certain, and it's interpretation sure." (Da 2:44–45)

Jesus said it like this: "Blessed are the meek for they shall inherit the earth." Mt. 5:5

“Seek first the Kingdom of God and His righteousness all these things will be given to you as well.” Mt. 6:33 This proposes we don’t prioritize what we want over what God wants.

One of my favorite chapters in the Bible is Romans 8. There’s so much truth about being in the family of God given in this passage! Here are just a few verses that speak the power of our identity in Christ.

Romans 8:14–17: “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, ‘Abba, Father!’ The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are the children of God and if children, heirs and co-heirs with Christ!”

This identity of being loved by Father God, being adopted into His family, having Jesus as our brother brings us to a place of humble gratitude. That humble gratitude removes any arrogance, boasting, or rude behavior.

I believe God cares so much more about our character than our charisma. Too many leaders are given accolades and praise regarding their gifting or charisma without taking into consideration their character. Character is about being kind, even when you have strong views. Character is about being Christ-like in every situation.

In the podcast I referenced earlier, “The Rise and Fall of Mars Hill,” many sound bites are given from Mark Driscoll that should have rung alarm bells and rung them loud. Keep in

mind that they aren't five-second sound bites where he's taken out of context and misquoted or misaligned in his message. In a sermon to Christian leaders he not only attacks the conference he's speaking at but the very idea of expressing your love to God. He carefully wraps the condescending attacks with million-dollar words like "post-modern" and "neo-liberalism." In doing so, he's hoping that by first impressing his audience, they'll take the beating he's about to give them—after all, that's what abusers do.

He says, in the midst of profanity, "Your problem is that you've got some Will and Grace worship leader singing a bunch of love songs to some sky fairy. I'll be the fly in the ointment this week... and that's fine." In these comments, he's not only mocking worship leaders who love Jesus, he's taking pride in being the "problem" or the "fly in the ointment" at the conference.

He has a disposition of "us verses them" in almost every talk he gives. While there is a place for courage in the pulpit, there's never a place for condescension and a callus heart.

This is the same guy who said often that he read a book a day, 365 days a year. Hardly believable. Laughable really. What would make a man come to that place in his heart? What causes someone to want to impress everyone around him with his intellect, masculinity, or book-reading speed? I'd say it's called sin. Plain and simple. The sin of pride.

Later, he would often say in his sermons "If you're playing guitar at home in your free time you need to grow up and become a man!" His version of masculine Christianity didn't have

any room for the arts. I wonder how he would've viewed David, a musician, warrior-king. I wonder what he'd say about the poet-philosopher turned king of Israel.

Contrast this with Evangelist Steve Hill and it's night and day. I was blessed to be a part of the Brownsville Revival from 2002 to 2005. While it wasn't in the heat of the revival, I did get to hear Pastor Steve Hill preach a few times, and it was truly life-changing. He preached the Gospel with a sincerity of heart, a humility that simply drew you in. After his sermons, you didn't think "He's amazing!" You thought, "Jesus is amazing!"

This book, this chapter, and this theme of humility is not just for the pastor in the pulpit. It's for every Christian leader. Humility must be the trait you aim for above all others.

He's since gone on to be with the Lord and his legacy impacts millions of ministers today! His humility of heart, the tears in his eyes, and the love in his voice will stick with us for generations, inspiring a new breed of Christian leaders who put off arrogance and pick up the cloak of humility Paul talked about. In putting on humility, we not only follow the example of Steve Hill but also follow the example of Jesus.

DANIEL AND JESUS

Daniel, like many of our heroes in this book, points to who Jesus is. Like Daniel, Jesus was unjustly accused and treated like a criminal. Yet He endured the persecution and accusations and even criminal conviction in prison. Like Jesus, Daniel was thrown into prison on false

charges. Like Jesus, Daniel was protected supernaturally. Daniel was thrown into a pit and yet rose in victory. Jesus was put in a tomb, yet He rose to victory being raised to life by the Holy Spirit! When God shut the mouths of the lions, we see that God delivered him from death! God delivered His Son Jesus from the grip of death when on the third day He rose to new life and took on His heavenly body! Through Jesus' death and resurrection, we too have been promised to be delivered from death, and God always makes good on His promises!

Remember, we said in Chapter 1 that in the Kingdom of God, success isn't prominence or the accumulation of wealth or fame. Success in this life is obedience to Father God. As a leader, you need to hear that. It's sacrifice of one's comfort and convenience for the sake of keeping your integrity. It's sacrifice of one's personal agenda so that the glory of God may be revealed, and sometimes that includes persecution and personal pain. Daniel certainly succeeded in passing the character tests by those who sought to destroy his good name. He certainly succeeded when he remained humble yet insistent on not betraying his personal convictions regarding his diet. You and I may not understand why his Jewish diet was so important to him, but it doesn't change the fact that it meant a lot to Daniel and was connected to who he was as a person. He was unwilling to compromise. He succeeded because he was faithful.

In his most memorable act, Daniel succeeded in being faithful when he refused to bow down to worship an idol. He was successful, not in the eyes of man but in the eyes of God. That is an example we can all aim to follow! He was willing to be the leader and others followed.

Ironically, God granted Daniel favor when he chose to endure persecution and peer pressure and the king himself had a change of heart!

Daniel impacted the lives of at least two world leaders, King Nebuchadnezzar and King Darius! King Darius actually decreed that everyone worship the God of Daniel!

Daniel's integrity changed the moral of government. I want to say that again in case you missed it. Daniel's integrity changed the morals of those leading in government! Here's my question: What will your integrity and faithfulness do for your city and your nation? Imagine the impact you can make on your city and your nation when you refuse to bow down to worthless idols, when you refuse to compromise your character in order to be accepted by the crowd, when you commit to serving Jesus with passion and humility. When you take the lead in that, people will follow!

Daniel knew that before he was a prophet, he was a son. Before he was appointed to the third highest position in the land (Daniel 5:29) and before being taken into Babylon, he was a son of Jehovah, a son of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. He knew his Jewish roots. He knew His God personally. He knew who he was apart from fame or failure and apart from popular vote or prison. He knew he was a son of God. He was rooted in sonship. His identity was sonship.

Do your roots go deep? Do you know, deep in your gut, that before you are a leader, you are a son or daughter of God? Are you secure in that? If so, you'll lead well, people will enjoy following you, God will honor your humility and you will endure!

Jesus said something that should make every Christian leader stop and think long and hard about their life and ministry.

²¹ “Not everyone who says to me, “Lord, Lord” will enter the kingdom of heaven, but the one who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. ²² On that day many will say to me, “Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and cast out demons in your name, and do many mighty works in your name?”²³ And then will I declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from me, you workers of lawlessness.”

²⁴ “Everyone then who hears these words of mine and does them will be like a wise man who built his house on the rock. ²⁵ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house, but it did not fall, because it had been founded on the rock. ²⁶ And everyone who hears these words of mine and does not do them will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand. ²⁷ And the rain fell, and the floods came, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell, and great was the fall of it.” Mt 7:21–27

The first goal of your life as a leader is to know God personally. You must aim to know Jesus as your brother and Savior, God as your Father and the Holy Spirit as your Comforter. Leader, it's all together possible for you to lead in your business or church, preach sermons, launch products, build teams that succeed, and never truly know the Lord. Those who don't know the Lord personally are building their house and their life, on the sand of insecurity.

Those who build their life on the foundation of Christ are those who obey the words of Jesus and aim to know Him above all else. This passage can be confusing because we would all argue that “prophesying in His name, casting out demons and doing many mighty works” are the will of God, right? Yes, God’s will is that people oppressed by demons are set free! Of course! Yes, God’s will is that people are encouraged through prophesy. Yes. But God’s first will for your life is that you know Him and love Him. Nothing else. Nothing else can come before that. Even ministry can become your idol if you’re not careful.

Notice Jesus’ warning to us “... and then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you.’” Friend, those are words I never want to hear. Those are words I never want you to hear. I want you to hear “Well done good and faithful servant! You loved me by loving others more than yourself. You found me among the broken and the poor, the sick and marginalized. Well done, good and faithful servant and brother! You’ve carried out our Father’s will to serve people and make Jesus’ known! Enter into Heaven!”

APPLY IT

Group Discussion Guide | P.R.O.C.E.S.S. | Week 6

1. Daniel knew his Jewish roots. He knew God personally, not just culturally. He would worship God on his own apart from any church service. I wonder how many Christian leaders take the time for that sort of personal prayer. Why is it easy to understand God corporately but not know Him personally in today’s culture?

2. He knew who he was apart from fame or failure, apart from popular vote or prison. I'm going to ask that we get real today. I'd like each of you to state your greatest insecurity by stating what you want to be known for—that thing that describes who you assert yourself to be. Then be willing to shed that for the sake of being God's child with or without that position at work or title. It may be powerful for you to each state a new declaration after you've thought about what's inside that tries to define you. For example, it may go something like: *My name is Jordan Biel and before I'm a great pastor or songwriter, I'm a child of God. Whether my music endeavors or pastoral goals fail or succeed, I am known and loved by Father God. I choose to never compromise my Christian beliefs to attain power or position. *Insert your name and your position/roles in the underlined words and make your declaration! My name is _____ and before I'm a _____, I'm a child of God. Whether my endeavors or goals fail or succeed, I am known and loved by Father God. I choose to never compromise my Christian beliefs to attain power or position.*

3. Daniel was unwilling to worship anything but God. Worship is when we put our thoughts and affections, money and time into something. You may not realize you're worshipping something until you assess where you're spending your time, thoughts, money, and passion. If I looked at your checkbook, what would it tell me? That you worshipped? If I could peer into your brain (scary, right?) and I could see the last 1,000 thoughts that crossed your mind, what would the whole of them summarize? Are your thoughts constantly racing over money? Then that very well may be an idol in your life that your heart and mind are

worshipping. Let's ask God to forgive us of that and ask Him to cleanse us of that junk—that need for more money so we *feel* more secure—that need for approval from colleagues so we *feel* more *important*—that need for affirmation so we feel loved. Let's shed all those felt needs and realize that our true identity can only come from sonship—from knowing that we are a child of God and eternally loved by Him!

4. Name a huge goal that you have. Share it with the group! It can be a God-given dream. It could be to run a marathon; it could be anything. Now ask yourself “Would I be content with my relationship with Jesus even if that fails or even if I’m not “as successful” as hoped in that endeavor?” If you can come to that place, then you’re on the right track in the process of becoming a Christian leader who endures! Is God able to make that dream a reality? Of course! And we will believe for that together! But if it doesn’t turn out how we expected, we must understand that doesn’t change God’s goodness.

5. What are you currently trusting God for? What miracle do you need? If you don’t need a miracle, it’s possible you’re not in the secret place of prayer yet daily hearing from the Lord. What I’ve discovered is that the more I get away to talk with the Lord, the more aware I am of the world’s needs around me and what God wants me to do. The more aware I am of that, the more I realize that I CAN NOT DO what He’s asking without a miracle. So again, what is it that God is speaking to you in the quiet place of prayer that may require a miracle in public?

6. Talk in your groups. Is it possible for a miracle to take place in today's society that would so move governmental leaders out of atheism or apathy and into faith in Jesus Christ? What could that look like?

7. Is it possible to Lead in Ministry and not truly know and love Jesus? Why is this possible? How? Have I ever been tempted to believe that my value comes from what I'm accomplished? Have I believed the lie that my value comes from what others think of me? Where does my value truly come from? Why is God the only one legally able to give me identity and value? Only the Maker can give its creation its true identity? And only the one who paid a price can declare its value. God made us, and we are His special treasure. God paid a price for us to be made holy and wholly His, therefore only He can give us our true identity, the one we're all looking for.

8. What are some disciplines we can put in place to be more intentional in show humility? What can we do in our conversations to display love and Jesus-like sonship?

9. Take time as a group to read Mathew Chapters 5 and 6. Split up the passages by going in a circle and as it's read, take notice of how many references there are to God being your Father or the mention of "brothers" or "sisters," then discuss this. *Leader, after it's read and everyone has commented, ask the group ...* How do these commands from Jesus suddenly become much easier when we have the right perspective—the perspective of sonship?

“So you have not received a spirit that makes you fearful slaves. Instead, you have received God’s Spirit when He adopted you as His own children! Now we call Him, ‘Abba, Father.’” Romans 8:15, NLT

The entire book has led up to this moment. The moment we see Jesus, the Son of God for who He is, our brother! He is our best example of what Christian Leadership looks like. He is the one who suffered in our place and enabled us to become His brother and sisters, God’s children. Before Jesus was High Priest, He was the Son of God. Before Jesus was the Savior, He was the Son of God, adored in Heaven. Before Jesus was the miracle-worker on earth, He was the Son of God in heaven. From the place of sonship, Jesus was secure enough in who He was to do what He did and say what He said, even with the body and emotions of a human. His humanity was subject to the Spirit of God within Him. He was our example to follow! WOW! He was fully God and fully man, and His foremost identity was being His Father’s son. You can’t read the Gospels and miss that!

His identity came from Heaven, which is why His courage was so evident on earth. As we said earlier, God the Father was “well pleased” before Jesus ever performed a miracle or preached a sermon. At His water-baptism, from the place of sonship, hearing “*This is my son,*” He went out in courage to fulfill His calling with each new day’s assignments.

We must learn this incredible truth as leaders. Too many leaders today lead from a place of insecurity. We all face it at times. I’ve spoken about it quite a bit in this book. I’ve seen it in my own life. I’ve seen it in the lives of others. Insecurity will sabotage your leadership.

Insecurity leads to poor decisions, poor attitudes, and poor outcomes. Insecurity shifts blame, pushes others down, and avoids responsibility.

Security in who we are as God's beloved children leads to better decisions and better outcomes. It derives from a vibrant personal relationship with Father God. Our sense of value must come *there*—our identity in being God's child. If it doesn't, we try to find our sense of value in our assignments, gifting, or accomplishments. When we know our identity, who we are as God's child, we're not shaken when our assignment or season changes. When we lose a job, the plant closes, when circumstances are outside our control, we don't lose our peace or even our joy. Many people, including leaders, base their sense of value on what they do instead of who they are. That has to change if we want to see more leaders last and finish strong.

Your assignments are like seasons in your life. They will come and go. Your identity as God's child won't. Your role or position in the church or company will likely change. Your identity as God's child won't. Like we said in Chapter 3, when assignments change, identity remains. We must not confuse identity and assignments. God gives us the grace gifts we need to accomplish the things He wants us to accomplish in each new season. So leader, even the gifting you have to do, what you do is a gift from God. You cannot take any credit for it! In the words of the Apostle Paul, let us only boast in the cross of Jesus Christ. Take a look at the graph below and let it be a visual aid to help you see how we as leaders need to start viewing ourselves.

When we know who we are, even if we're placed where we don't want to be, like Daniel, we won't lose our identity, our sense of knowing, our sense of belonging and purpose. Too many

Christian leaders mix these up and feel that their sense of value is in their gifts or even feel the title or position they're given is validation of their value. Jesus determined your value at the cross, and there's nothing you can do to add to it! Leader, I encourage you to realize how loved you are. Be loved. Be found in the joy of being God's child and let your calling (mission) and assignment stem from that identity. The further you move outward from the center of the circle, the more unique and different you are. The closer you get the center, the more you realize how alike you are. My mission and calling to reach lost people and inspire people to love Jesus more is similar to yours, but still it may be a bit different. My current assignment as a Lead Pastor is even more unique than my calling. It's likely different than your assignment. And honestly, the more I move outside this circle, the more defined my unique type of pastoral ministry is. It's as unique as my fingerprint. It's as unique as yours will be even if you're also a lead pastor. What I know is the same is our identity as a child of God. The core, the center of who we both are is family, sons and daughters of the living God! That never changes. Seasons will come and go, assignments will change, but I know who I am. I am a child of God. That is my identity. That is my joy. That drives everything I do.

JESUS, THE ANSWER (NOT ME)

Now that I've got my identity down and my source of joy, my mission becomes more clear. It's not to make more people like me; it's to make more people like Jesus. My mission, if I'm a Pastor, isn't to have more people in *my* church, it's to have more brothers and sisters in *His* church. If I'm a Christian businessman, I am now overjoyed at another Christian businessman

having success. He is no longer a competition, he is family. His success is my success, because it's *our* success ... as brothers and sisters in Christ!

Jesus is the answer, not me. "I am the way, the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me." John 14:6

Our ultimate example of a leader who through this process was Jesus Christ. If you're reading this book, I'm assuming you're a Christian leader or training to be. Please don't skip this chapter thinking "Yeah, yeah ... I know the story of Jesus. Don't do that. Let the Holy Spirit uncover some things in Scripture that maybe you haven't seen yet. The Holy Spirit illuminates the word of God, and in His wisdom, He will illuminate exactly what you need to face your next leadership challenges. Jesus is your brother! He's right there with you—even now as you're reading this. Picture Him, sitting beside you, smiling, encouraging you to keep going, keep leading, and keep serving!

JESUS' PROMISE

Jesus was given a promise from Father God. The Father promised Him that not only would He be able to endure the cross but He would also raise Him from the dead. Jesus saw Abraham offer his son Isaac after a three-day journey. Jesus watched from Heaven with his father as this prophetic picture unfolded. He knew that although He would suffer horribly, that Father God would deliver Him from death. Jesus was given a promise. This promise included being given His rightful place, back at the right hand of the Father.

John 1 describes Him as being the life and the light of all mankind. He was before all things and in Him all things were created!

Colossians 1:15 describes Him as *the visible image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all Creation*. He's the firstborn of all creation, because He's bringing more children into God's family!

Hebrews 1:3–4 describes Jesus as the Heir of all things, Creator of all things, and radiance of God's glory! He was given a promise that He would purify people and then be given back His throne. "After making purification for sins, He sat down at the right hand of the Majesty on high, having become as much superior to angels as the name He has inherited is more excellent than theirs."

Jesus agreed to come, knowing that He would suffer in *our* place and take *our* blame. Jesus was promised by the Father to be given many brothers and sisters. We see that in John 17 very clearly. When you walk in the mindset of fear like Romans 8 speaks about, you're not living in the truth of what Jesus won. Jesus came and died on that cross and rose from that grave so that you no longer live as fearful slaves but as children of God, Jesus' brothers and sisters! This was the promise given to Him by the Father. God made good on that promise! That revelation of our identity should give us the courage to face anything

JESUS FACED REALITY

When the problems and heartaches of God's people were in the face of Jesus, He didn't hide. He didn't shrink back. You may say, "Well, He was Jesus, the Son of God." Yes, but He was also fully man. While this is hard for us to understand, the Bible states it as truth—that Jesus was fully man and fully God, therefore He was "tempted in every way like we are tempted," and that includes being tempted to not live up to that calling on His life. We know He was tempted in the Garden to give up. We know He was tempted in the desert to give in. We can also infer He may have even been tempted to never begin. Think about it. When we saw John the Baptist, what were His thoughts in that moment?

"Here we go!"

"This is it!"

"It's getting real now!"

"Everything is about to change if I state who I am. I'll go from carpenter to target really fast. I know the Pharisees will hate me. I'm sure God's people may not even accept me. If I allow Him to baptize me, it will begin. This is the turning point. This is it!" Sometimes we forget the humanity Jesus walked in. He was teaching us in every moment. If He can do it, we can look to Him and we can do it, too! If He can suppress the physical hunger to fast, we can do it, too. If He can ignore the criticism of the mob and stay on mission then we can, too!

Jesus faced the real problems of his day. He didn't cower from the religious leaders and their manipulation or intimidation. He didn't cave to politics or peer pressure. He didn't stop preaching when they told Him to. He confronted the sins He saw in front of His very own eyes. Jesus faced reality.

When Jesus stood in Heaven and was asked by the Father to go to earth to save us, we can only imagine that moment. We can only imagine Jesus agreeing to that journey, that process, that pain.

When Jesus faced Pharisees who were just plain ugly on the inside, He confronted their arrogance and told them, "You are whitewashed tombs, clean on the outside and yet full of only death on the inside."

When Jesus faced doubt, He encouraged them, yet addressed and acknowledged it. He knew what any leader knows. You can't fix a problem until you identify and acknowledge the problem. When Jesus saw people stealing in the Temple courts, He knocked over their tables and made it clear that the Temple was to be a place of worship and prayer.

The key to facing your "Reality" is to be observant and honest. If you avoid the problems in front of you and you are the leader, your potential impact stops dead right there. Your leadership stops in its tracks. Your team looks to you to address the issue, not ignore it.

When Jesus faced obstacles like the religious leaders who set out to trap Him in His own words and even kill Him, Jesus would remain unwavering in His mission. When you make a decision for your team, it's possible that some won't agree. They'll have a decision to make. After you hear them out and discuss their ideas or concerns, they'll still need to come into alignment with your decision, so the team can move forward in unity. If they don't understand, do your best to help them understand your motives and the full scope of the decision. If they still refuse to align, you have a new reality to face. Don't ignore it. Bring gentle, but firm correction and give an opportunity to move forward together. If you ignore it, division will begin, and that person will cause mistrust and misalignment.

Jesus didn't perceive these obstacles from the Pharisees or even occasional backlash from his own disciples as barriers that would stop Him from going to the cross or healing the sick and preaching the truth. He was faithful to continue, all the way to the cross.

Jesus endured to the end. Hebrews tells us that Jesus is the firstborn of many and that He is our example of what it means to lay down our lives and pick up our cross, knowing that God will bring resurrection. Jesus had endurance! He faced the painful reality that the disciples whom He'd befriended and mentored will betray Him. He didn't live in denial, and He certainly didn't write them off. He endured in His mission.

When Peter denied even knowing Jesus, He was so loving and forgiving that He came and met Peter on the lakeside and made Him breakfast! Jesus essentially said, "We're still friends." And then to top it off, Jesus said to Peter, "Feed my sheep" as if to say "I still want you

in the ministry although you blew it. Look, I know what you did, but I'm not here to talk about that. I'm here to ask you this one simple question, "Do you love Me? If so, then feed my sheep." Jesus was saying to Peter, "Give everyone who is searching for truth, the truth. Give them the Bread of Life. Give them the hope they need. Give them JESUS! Don't give up on the mission. You're still in this! You're still on my team!"

Peter was inevitably shocked that Jesus would still include him in the inner circle. He must've assumed that he had blown it completely. He must've assumed that Jesus no longer had need of him. Maybe this is why he was alone. We can't know that for sure. But what we can know for sure is that Jesus gave Peter another chance. Why? He loved Peter. He loved the people who needed to hear from Peter. The mission was too big to allow unforgiveness to hinder progress.

I found a helpful article written by Steve Tillis on the leader's need to forgive and move forward on ChurchLeaders.com; I think it'll help you as much as it helped me.

1. Forgiveness requires so much energy that you can help yourself by having a soft heart and thick skin. If you constantly take everything personally you won't have any energy left to forgive in the situations that really hurt. Learn to let some stuff roll off your back. Focus on the people and issues that really need forgiveness.

2. Forgiveness is easier when you don't define the person by what they have done to you. The person that is hurting you is most likely a decent Christian who is caught up in the middle of a

volatile situation. Don't judge their whole life on what they are doing now to you. Take the kind of perspective on their life that you would want them to take on yours.

3. Forgiveness is a standard by which you can measure your Christian spiritual growth. How often do you say "I'm sorry?" It shows humility toward God and love for others when we are quick to apologize. When we wait to say "I'm sorry" or we don't grant forgiveness quickly, we are living from a source of pride.

4. Forgiveness has a powerful way of taking the steam out of an argument. How many conflicts become inflated because people won't apologize? I've found that those people who are coming to the office for a big battle are disarmed by a prompt and sincere apology.

5. Forgiveness very rarely needs to be accompanied with an unsolicited explanation. This is tough because we always want to make an excuse or give a rationale for our behavior. Just practice the discipline of asking for forgiveness and stopping. To be sure, sometimes the explanation is required but most often it's not. Practicing this will help you even when you are the one who has been hurt. Because in ministry sometimes you can't give the other party all the information you know.

6. Forgiveness is the natural overflow of a life saturated in the gospel. This is more than a catchy statement, it's true. Walk your thoughts through the components of the gospel concerning the situation. Remember that God's original intention was for us to live in constant dependence on him. Remember that the problem you are having could be birthed in a lie someone believed.

Remember that Christ came to redeem the worst of us. Remember that we can be restored. We see in the Garden that we were made for fellowship.

7. Forgiveness does not mean forgetting, it means releasing. It's not profitable to try and force yourself to not remember being hurt. What you can do is choose not to hold the offense against the person. This is not easy, but it is the most Christ-like thing you can do in life and ministry. The Holy Spirit does have the power to help you supernaturally forget the offense. But don't think that just because you remember that you haven't forgiven. If you can truly desire that your offender is blessed by the Lord, then you're walking in the freedom of forgiveness.

SONSHIP

Jesus has grown up knowing the promise within Him, the destiny He has in revealing the Father to all mankind, but He's held it in all these years! Let's read how He began His ministry.

Luke 3:21–22: “Now when all the people were baptized, and when Jesus also had been baptized and was praying, the heavens were opened, ²² and the Holy Spirit descended on him in bodily form, like a dove; and a voice came from heaven, “You are my beloved Son; with you I am well pleased.”

Before Jesus enters ministry, He humbles Himself and is baptized by His cousin, John. In that moment, God speaks to Jesus in an audible voice! He says, “You are my beloved Son. With you I am well pleased.”

God the Father was well pleased with Jesus before He ever performed any miracles or preached any sermons. The same is true of you. Because of what Jesus has done in making you His brother or sister and allowing His nature to be seen in you, you, too, are loved and you, too, give God pleasure *before* you perform. Before you preach a great sermon, perform perfectly as a CEO or COO or executive pastor, before you do anything *for* God, God already looks upon you with incredible love. He's proud of you, because when He sees you, He sees Jesus!

Do you realize the power of this statement toward Jesus? God the Father showed His approval and pleasure before Jesus did anything "ministering" or miracles or leading. What does this tell you? Jesus could operate without any insecurity in His ministry because before He was a minister, He was a son, a *beloved* son!

HOW ABOUT YOU?

What can you learn from Jesus about His willingness to forgive His team and still partner with them in the work the Father had given Him? What do you think about Jesus' tenacious endurance? How did endurance play a role in the life of Jesus as a leader? How are these two concepts connected: endurance and forgiveness? Stop and think about it. If you're going through this book in a team, spark up a short conversation asking one another. "If Jesus forgave His own teammates in order to accomplish the mission and endure, what does that mean for us as colleagues when we have conflict?"

We said in Chapter 1 that “Success is personal obedience to God’s directives.” It’s obedience to God’s voice. Success isn’t about being seen as important. Success isn’t about being the smartest person in the room; it’s about being faithful to your assignments to fulfill your promise from the Father.

No matter how it plays out. No matter who agrees or disagrees. No matter if everyone responds to our plea to action or if only 10 percent respond. Success is obedience. Jesus was successful because He was obedient to His Father’s request to leave Heaven, be born a human, endure rejection, teach about God’s love and ultimately give His life on a cross. The Father asked Him. Jesus obeyed. Jesus succeeded as a son.

Leader, it’s possible that you need to reframe your life’s goal. Is it to be a successful leader? Is it to be known around the world? Is it to be known among your peers? Is it a growth simply for the sake of growth? Or is your goal to make the Father revealed? Is it to make Jesus known? Those who come into that revelation find the greatest joy for they find what life is all about. Those leaders find that Jesus is their brother and their ultimate goal in life is to make the Father known. They discover the best way to do that is to follow Jesus’ example in serving others and in being in right relationship to the Father.

Leaders in the Kingdom of God know that their first priority is to be a brother of Jesus, a child of God. When the leader remembers this, he or she remains humble and eager to learn. Leaders, who are humble and eager to learn are actually more readily followed.

Dr. Townsend of the Leadership Institute did a national poll of employees and team members. They found that the majority of people said, “They would rather follow a leader who admits their mistakes and shows their eagerness to improve over a leader who is never vulnerable.”

Jesus allowed His disciples to see that He was weak in the garden. Why would He do that? Think about it. As leaders, we often put our “best foot forward” or at the very least attempt to hide our errors or shortcomings. What if we flipped the script? What if we followed the example of Jesus, our brother, and let them see when we are weak and in need of the Father’s help?

I’m not suggesting we display every insecure thought or missed task to our employees or team. Some discretion is advised. But I am suggesting an appropriate level of honesty and vulnerability. If you miss the quarterly goal that you set, own it. Real leaders take responsibility; they don’t constantly blame others. If you were assigned four things in the meeting and you only completed three, be willing to say, “Guys, I’m sorry, I only got three of the four things assigned to me done. Please forgive me. I’ll do my best to get better at managing my daily tasks.”

That humility will go a long way in showing your team that “Yes, their leader is also human. Show them that you’re eager to improve and willing to grow. That humility is contagious and will spark a desire in everyone to also be willing to be honest and dependent upon the Father for strength.

Paul said, “In my weakness, His strength is made perfect.” When he said that, do you think the apostles and spiritual sons like Timothy or Barnabas thought to themselves, *Well, I’m not following Paul anymore! Clearly, he’s a weakling!* No. Instead, they likely thought, *Wow! It’s so refreshing to follow someone who knows they’re not perfect; someone who knows that only Christ is perfect; someone who needs God’s strength for today, just like me.*

If anything, your humility in moments of failure or weakness, draws your team closer to you and emboldens their desire to serve alongside you. After all, now they’re alongside you and not so much behind you.

There are many reasons why I’ve admired Abraham Lincoln. He simply stands out to me as the greatest president our nation ever had. Maybe it’s because he helped abolish slavery. Maybe it’s because he tried his hand at entrepreneurship and had the courage to try just about anything. Maybe it’s because of his faith in the Lord. Do you know where the nickname “Honest Abe” came from? It was the slogan used to mark his 1860 political campaign, but it was derived from his reputation as a small-town businessman. You see, he started a General Store with a friend and that friend became a drunkard, forfeiting all his responsibilities to Abe. Abe lost the store and yet paid back every penny of the debt incurred, a total of \$1,100. Keep in mind, this is 1860 so that’s a huge chunk of change! Two of my favorite quotes regarding honesty in light of leadership are:

“Without doubt, honesty has always been the best policy.” Tom Peters

“Managers do things right. Leaders do the right thing.” Bennis and Nanus

Jesus exemplified integrity and character at all times. It was His authenticity and integrity that inspired those fishermen, tax collectors, and doctors to keep following Him. I’m sure the miracles may have hooked them (pun intended), but it was Jesus’ authentic character that kept them. In the same way, you can impress people for a while with your gifts or abilities, but it’s your character and trustworthiness that will cause them to stay for the long run.

I heard about a church recently where the staff was somewhat of a revolving door. That can be expected at McDonalds or Subway. But Pastor, Christian Leader, that shouldn’t be expected where you lead. If they can’t trust you, they won’t follow you for long. If they don’t feel you genuinely care about their well-being, their future, and their desires, then they won’t follow you for long. We’ve all heard it said, “It’s lonely at the top.” That may be true for most leaders, but that does not have to be true for you. I know it’s not true for me. I bring people to the top with me, thanking them all the way!

Keep in mind also that there are two things that have no bearing on your leadership qualities, yet will cause some of your team to leave: new leadership and new vision.

It’s proven that with new leadership, whether it’s in a church or a company, not everyone will stay. Some may give it a go for a few years but not be able to connect with the new pastor or senior leader the way they did with the previous one. And that’s ok. The second reason some people may leave your team is when a new vision is given. When a new vision is laid out, it’s

possible some team members can't see themselves in that preferred picture of the future. And that's ok. It doesn't make them bad people and it doesn't make you a bad leader. Not everyone will make the whole journey with you. That's just a reality of life. We all have different seasons and assignments as we mentioned earlier and some people on your team may be prompted by the Lord to enter a new season, and that's ok, because as we established earlier, God's family is BIG! When they tell you, don't try to control them or convince them to stay. Simply bless them and encourage them and let them know how thankful you are that they were with you for that season.

SONS EMPOWER OTHER SONS & BECOME FATHERS

In city after city, you'll find Pastors who are truly doing an amazing job at pastoring. There is no doubt that their sermons cause people to put their faith in Jesus. No doubt, when they speak with someone in their office, that person knows they are loved and cared for. However, if that pastor suddenly develops cancer, there's often a sense of "Who can step in to lead us if we lose our pastor?" With no one in sight, the church feels incredibly lost, just like the people of Israel when Gideon died. The church may struggle for months searching for people to fill the pulpit and lead the teams, but slowly the church dies as members give up. Sadly, this is the story of thousands of churches each and every year. Why? The leader was nearsighted and didn't raise up spiritual sons and daughters, someone who could take the leadership at some point in the future.

My parents, Mark and Pam, pastored Rock of Grace for twenty-six years, leading hundreds of people to Jesus. He had asked me over the last five years of his time as the senior

pastor if I was interested in the role and I'd always respond with this: "I am so satisfied in my season of life right now that I'd really have to hear the Lord speak to me if He wants me to become the Pastor. I know He'll speak to me about it if He wants that to happen." That was my response from 2010 until early 2015. Suddenly God's Spirit kept prompting me to think about becoming the pastor. I'd pray about it and, although I had so many doubts about my ability to do it, I knew God was asking me to just say "yes." When I told my parents, they were ecstatic. I mean, why wouldn't they be, right? Just kidding. Humility is my greatest quality.

We put into place a two-year plan of transition and God was in it all the way. God had spoken to my dad about this before He spoke to me about it. That makes sense because he was the leader in the position, but it's important for you to recognize his wisdom in being farsighted. He gave me opportunities to preach, to pray and minister, and He always encouraged me. True fathers are so excited about their sons doing more, excelling, growing, and becoming all that God intends them to become. We need more of those leaders in our churches—leaders who are humble enough to recognize the season change God is bringing about and the wisdom to look ahead and raise sons and daughters to take the lead.

The crises we mentioned before of the dying church happens far too often. If we are raising spiritual sons and daughters, when sickness or tragedy occur, we should have at least two, if not four or five people, who are being mentored by the pastor, praying with the pastor, meeting with him or her regularly, being mentored to become a minister.

If you're a Christian CEO, ask God to help you think differently. You don't just have employees or staff. You have spiritual sons and daughters. If you're a pastor, ask God to help you think differently. You don't just have congregants and a leadership team or board. You have sons and daughters! You have a team of people you can affirm, guide, and provide opportunities for!

When you see them this way, you'll treat them this way. You'll have more empathy when they're going through something difficult. Empathy and encouragement are at the core of our job as Leaders. Instead of bossing people around, lead people forward. You lead people forward by sometimes slowing down to lean in and listen.

Why don't we see more leaders concerned with raising up leaders beneath them? Why do we have so many leaders yet so few fathers? The question is an important one. Yes, it can be hard to let go of what you've built. I'd like to give you a nugget of wisdom from Pastor Craig Grochell: "The more you want to grow, the more you have to let go."

Pastor, if you were to be in a car accident tomorrow, is there anyone who comes to your mind who could take the church for you? If not, start praying about who you could meet with weekly or even monthly to mentor. Maybe they could be your Joshua, your Timothy. Start praying about who and what kind of person you want on staff who has the potential to pastor the church. Jesus often would take Peter, James, and John with Him into prayer and into circumstances the other disciples didn't enter. Who is your inner circle of three? Paul had Timothy. Moses had Joshua. Who do you have? Who has potential around you? Who has that spark in their eye—that desire to do something for God?

Raising up other leaders is one of the most fulfilling and impacting things you can do as a Christian leader. When you do this, you move from addition to multiplication. Yes, it's hard, but it's worth it! This multiplication mindset comes from a leader who values sonship over success. After all, you want as many as possible to enter God's family!

AVAIL PULL QUOTE: Raising up other leaders is one of the most fulfilling and impacting things you can do as a Christian leader. When you do this, you move from addition to multiplication.

I want to make this concept of sonship a bit more tangible. Here are eleven signs of sonship. There will likely be one or two that bring a loving conviction to your heart. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you in this area and commit to change.

ELEVEN SIGNS OF SONSHIP

1. A PRAYER LIFE

A Christian leader who grasps sonship, has a strong prayer life; they have dedicated time with their faith regularly. For Jesus, it was His alone time in the mornings with the Father. He often would find a quiet place to pray. The Father would give Him energy and encouragement. The Spirit would give Him strength to face the week ahead.

For Jesus, He had disciples whom He viewed as teammates. “I no longer call you servants but friends...,” He said to them. When teaching them to pray, He said, “Our Father...” He truly viewed Himself as their brother. WOW!

For Jesus, He certainly had “takers,” people who would only show up hoping for another free meal. He had people who were truly in need of forgiveness too—people truly wanting to repent and accept the Kingdom of God. That was His mission and that had to be beautiful to see! But even Jesus didn’t spend His time only with those who would simply take from Him or drain Him. He valued His friendships with Peter, James, John, and the crew. He valued His time alone with the Father. You and I would be wise to follow suit.

2. COURAGE TO LEAD

The courage to lead comes from knowing that you are called by God and that this whole thing wasn’t your idea in the first place!

1 Co 1:26–31: “For consider your calling, brothers: not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth. ²⁷ But God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise; God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong; ²⁸ God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, ²⁹ so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. ³⁰ And because of him you are in Christ Jesus, who became to us wisdom from God, righteousness and

sanctification and redemption, ³¹ so that, as it is written, “Let the one who boasts, boast in the Lord.”

1 Co 2:1–5: “And I, when I came to you, brothers, did not come proclaiming to you the testimony of God with lofty speech or wisdom. ² For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified. ³ And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling, ⁴ and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, ⁵ so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.”

God chose you and me *despite* our problems, failures, fears and inadequacies! In our weakness, His strength is made perfect! Don’t think for a minute that you chose the wrong thing in choosing Christian leadership for you didn’t choose it but God chose you! Scripture is clear that it is God who put leaders in positions of leadership.

Daniel 2:21: “God changes times and seasons. He removes kings and sets up kings.”

Romans 13:1: “There is no authority except from God and those that exist have been instituted by God.”

Leader, it’s likely you’ve already started. If you haven’t, I’m asking you to be brave enough to start. Say “yes!” to the call of God on your life. That calling will never leave your

heart no matter how hard you try to run from it. It will always be there until you respond and say “yes!” to it. The calling is “without repentance” scripture says.

Once you start Christian leadership, I’m asking you to keep your eyes on Jesus, the Author and Finisher of your faith. He is the One who called you into this thing! He is faithful to complete the work He started in you! He promised it in His Word! Leader, keep your head up. You can and you will finish strong! Remember that you are a CHILD OF GOD! I’m not asking you to lead in your own strength but in the strength and power of Jesus Christ! Paul says that this power works within you to complete the mission in front of you!

Jesus said, “All authority I give you to!” Too many leaders don’t realize that they’ve been given “all authority” to make disciples and change their cities for Jesus! They stay in their comfort zone. They don’t pray for the sick to be healed. They don’t expect the sick to be healed because they don’t truly believe Jesus rose from the dead. If they did, they would know that Jesus has all power to heal. Maybe you do believe Jesus is who He says He is, but you need to be reminded today! Jesus has given you all authority to love everyone who crosses your path. Jesus has given you all authority to display His kindness to a hurting world, caring for orphaned children, widows, and the poor. Jesus has given you all authority to stand by your convictions that derive from the Word of God. Be bold. Be brave.

3. COURAGE TO CONFRONT

Leaders who are first a child of God, have the courage to confront.

Leaders who are more concerned with success than sonship will shy away from any sort of conflict that needs resolved. True leaders, leaders in God's Kingdom, will know that they are first and foremost a son/daughter of God, and in that security, they will be able to make the tough calls that need to be made. From a place of security, we make our toughest decisions. From a place of knowing that we are loved by Father God, we can confront people and make needed changes. From a place of knowing that we are loved by Father God, we can avoid the fear of man that paralyzes us.

One of the lines my mentor in Bible College, Richard Crisco, shared often was "Leaders care enough to confront." Leaders who follow Jesus' example will have the courage to give the truth in love. This means that sometimes after giving that truth, people will leave. That's ok. Of course, we don't want them to leave. We never want our followers or leadership team members to leave. But when confronted with the truth of God's Word, people are given a chance to surrender to it or demand their own way. You can't control how they respond, but you can control your response, your heart, and your actions as the leader. You can hold a high bar of integrity and yet open arms of forgiveness like Jesus did. What you can't afford to do, however, is ignore when someone is blatantly sinning. In that moment, it is your job to privately speak to them, give them the truth in love, and give them a chance to explain and repent and hopefully be restored if they're repentant.

*You can download a free eBook called *Truth & Love in Confrontation* from my website www.JordanBiel.com. It's an excerpt from my first book, *Truth & Love*.

4. HUMILITY

Leaders, you must know that you can't lead others if you can't lead yourself. The first person you lead is the one in the mirror. Let the Holy Spirit do His work of sanctification, bringing you to place where you think, act, and lead more like Jesus, like a humble servant. Sonship is what it's all about! Remember what Scripture says about humility. Romans 12:10–16

¹⁰ Love one another with brotherly affection. Outdo one another in showing honor. ¹¹ Do not be slothful in zeal, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord. ¹² Rejoice in hope, be patient in tribulation, be constant in prayer. ¹³ Contribute to the needs of the saints and seek to show hospitality. ¹⁴ Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse them. ¹⁵ Rejoice with those who rejoice, weep with those who weep. ¹⁶ Live in harmony with one another. Do not be haughty, but associate with the lowly. Never be wise in your own sight.

There is nothing more repelling than pride. There are various forms of pride. Spiritual pride. Intellectual pride. Pride says, "I'm smarter, more spiritual, better ... than you." Pride reveals itself in rolling eyes, smirks, and dishonoring comments about other team members or the leader. God is pretty clear how He feels about pride.

Pr 16:5–6: "Everyone who is arrogant in heart is an abomination to the Lord; be assured, he will not go unpunished. ⁶ By steadfast love and faithfulness iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the Lord one turns away from evil."

Pr 16:18: "Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before a fall."

Pr 6:16–19: “There are six things that the Lord hates, seven that are an abomination to him: ¹⁷ haughty eyes, a lying tongue, and hands that shed innocent blood, ¹⁸ a heart that devises wicked plans, feet that make haste to run to evil, ¹⁹ a false witness who breathes out lies, and one who sows discord among brothers.”

It’s interesting to me that when the Lord lists the things He hates, He doesn’t include rape or theft. Of course, those are terrible things and I’m in no way belittling them. I’m just making the point. What does the Lord list for His hate list? Haughty eyes, lying, murder, a malicious heart, sin, lying (again), and one who causes division among brothers. God is quite clear that He disdains pride that causes wickedness, division, rolling eyes, and haughty looks. These should never be characteristics of Christian leaders. We should walk with a sense of humility that truly sees others as more valuable than ourselves. This leads me to the next sign of sonship.

5. GRACIOUS

Leaders who have the Spirit of Jesus in them are filled with grace; they’re willing to forgive and give grace and honor to the leaders who serve beneath them on their team. We all will have moments where one of our staff drops the ball. A true leader never embarrasses anyone by correcting them in public, especially a teammate or another leader. Anyone who does that is struggling with some insecurity and feels the need to appear powerful. The exception, of course, is when the leader needs to hold someone on the team accountable in a team/staff meeting where adjustments simply need to be made on minor tasks. Course correction in a safe environment on

a team is one thing. Embarrassing someone in front of a group of people is another, and it's totally uncalled for.

I've been in the room when someone feels the need to embarrass another team member and that doesn't come from the Holy Spirit's leading. Also, I'm a part of two groups on Facebook where thousands of Christian leaders are learning from one another, networking ideas, and so forth. All too often, I've seen a post where a pastor or worship leader throws a teammate under the bus. This is simply not how Jesus would want you and me to lead. If we're upset with someone on our team, we're given clear instructions in Mathew 5 and 18, like we talked about earlier on how and when to confront someone we have an issue with. In front of a group of people is never the appropriate environment.

What would cause a leader to lack grace and lash out at people from the stage? The *lack* of sonship. You see if I as the leader value sonship over success, if I know that I am fully loved as a child of Father God, and that nothing could take away the love of God that is in Christ Jesus, then I don't feel the need to appear "right," "powerful," or "smarter" in front of a crowd. I don't feel the need to belittle someone else to make myself look more spiritual. Those immature thought patters have a way of simply leaving our mind as we are transformed by the love of Christ, our *brother and Lord*. When the Spirit of God bears witness with our spirit that we are adopted and have become children of God, heirs of the Kingdom, we are so filled with joy that we no longer need affirmation from "the crowd." This leads me to our next sign of sonship.

6. SECURITY

We've talked about this often in this book. As King David once said, "The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want...." If you *want* recognition to the point of needing it to feel important or loved, then you need a deeper revelation of sonship—a deeper revelation of what Father God has done for you in calling you His child!

We all want recognition to a degree, especially creative, and most leaders are somewhat the creative type. We get a sense of identity by what we create. And that's, I think, in some ways normal. We find joy in the making, in the work. I think because God is creative, we are to be creative. Because God found joy in creating, we find joy in creating. Because God found joy in looking at what He made and saying, "It is good" I think we can find joy in looking at the team, product, or service we offer and say, "It is good." But the problem lies in the *needing* of that affirmation from others. You must let God, your Father be the sole source of affirmation, the most important source of information on who you are. If you know whose you are, you'll know who you are. And if you know who you are, you don't need others to tell you who you are. You won't need affirmation from people to be happy.

All of us can usually spot an insecure leader when we see one. They fish for compliments. They namedrop as much as possible. They accuse others and blame any problem on anyone other than themselves. They never take responsibility.

Be secure, not in *your* achievements, but in Christ's. Because Jesus became poor, you can become rich toward God. Because Jesus was rejected, you can be accepted. Because Jesus was filled with sorrow and betrayed by those closest to Him, you can be filled with joy and even

given friends so great that only God Himself could provide. Because Jesus went to the cross and rose to new life, you can be given new life! Celebrate and live in the joy of what He has already done! Don't strive to find joy in only what you will do. Don't be the older brother. Be gracious knowing that you too have been given grace.

7. GRATEFUL

We should be the most grateful people, for God has adopted us into His family! God has taken a risk on us, empowered us, and anointed us to serve alongside Him to bring people into their destiny. Yes, it's ok to find joy in reaching your goals and creating something truly special. That creative spirit and that drive to lead is put there by God. *But don't let your ambition cloud your adoption. Before you're a leader, you're a son.* And not just any son, but a son of the Most High God! WOW! What a joy and what a privilege!

If you'll let this truth settle in deep within you, everything will change. You'll live a happier life, because now your joy isn't contingent upon others actions, but it is found within. If you'll grasp this sonship thing, you'll be inspiring people to join your cause and share your idea without you even knowing it. You'll be drawing people toward your vision instead of begging. A man or woman who understands adoption to God and then finds a unique vision from their Father God will have no shortage of followers. A man or a woman who wants to lead but has yet to find joy in being a child of God will only lead for a while then the passion will fade when the numbers are low, when the reports are in, and it doesn't look good. That's when many leaders quit. That's when many leaders don't endure.

A leader who is first a son or daughter of God can endure accusations and sleep well at night. A leader who is first a son or daughter of God can face obstacles and keep their head up. A leader who understands sonship can face the reality of their company or their church, admit the problems that need addressed, and begin to tackle them one by one with or without 100 percent approval of everyone around them. Why? They know they're 100 percent approved by God.

Your calling to ministry from your Father will sustain you through every trial and obstacle. Knowing you're first a child of God will keep you grounded when you're praised and encouraged when you're blamed.

You must know that above all else and before all else, you are loved by Father God. Whether you "fail" or "succeed" in your eyes or the eyes of others, you are loved by your Heavenly Father, and nothing you can ever do will change that! So why not go for it! Why not take that big risk you're thinking about! I know there's something burning in your soul to accomplish! I know there's a passion to reach a destiny within you! I know it! Otherwise you wouldn't be reading this book! You have a destiny to reach, a Promised Land to take possession of, a place God has already said, "I have given you" and now you must simply believe it! After all, if you're loved as a child of God and this thing you try to lead doesn't work out, it's OK! It's not the end of the world. Why? You're a son! A daughter. A child of the Most High God! That, my friend, is something to smile about!

While the men and women we read about in Scripture inspire us, we shouldn't aim to simply be like them. We shouldn't think, "If I could just be as courageous as David..." or "If I

could just be as determined as Nehemiah...” We must remember that all of these leaders served as a type of Christ—a foreshadowing of the majesty of Jesus. Jesus, who came as the suffering servant to save us and be the real hero.

I love what Edmund Clowney wrote in his book *Preaching Christ in All of Scripture*.

I first believe in the one to whom David points, I'll never become like David at all. It is not the stories of individuals who point us to Christ. The redemptive purpose of God is to redeem a people and renew a creation. There, all the major events in the history of the formation of the people of God also point us to Christ.

Jesus is the one through whom all people are created (John 1). Thus the creation story itself points forward to the new creation in Christ. Jesus is the one who went through temptation and probation in the wilderness. Thus the story of the fall points forward to the successful probation and active obedience of Christ. The exodus story points forward to the true exodus Jesus led for His people through his death (Luke 9:31). He led them not just out of economic and political bondage but out of bondage to sin and death itself through His death and resurrection! The wandering in the wilderness and the exile to Babylon points forward to Jesus' "homelessness" and the wandering and wilderness temptation, culmination in the his suffering as the scapegoat outside the gate. He underwent the ultimate exile that fulfilled the righteousness of God fully.

Jesus is very literally the true Israel, the seed (Galations 3:16–17). He is the only one who is faithful to the covenant. He is the remnant of one. He fulfills all the obligations of the covenant for all who believe. When Hosea talks about the exodus of Israel from Egypt, he says “Out of Egypt, I called my son” (Hosea 11:1). Hosea calls all of Israel ‘my son.’”

Why? Jesus is the SON who makes YOU a son or a daughter of God! Jesus is the new human who set all things right! Jesus taught us what it means to be obedient to the Father and fully submissive to His will. Jesus is the culmination of all things beautiful! Jesus is the Rose of Sharon, the Bright Morning Star, the one who captures the heart of His beloved (Song of Solomon). Jesus did what you and I cannot do to earn what you and I can never earn. Jesus won for us freedom from the bondage of sin and right-standing with Abba, Father. Now our hearts rightfully cry out to God “Abba, Father.”

Sonship is what life is all about. Sonship must become more important to you than success. Sonship is the most incredible revelation any human can experience. We don't know who we really are—yes, even we, “strong” leaders, don't know who we really are until we receive the Father's loving smile. The smile that says, “You're my child and I love you no matter what!”

Swiss theologian Hans Urs von Balthasar captures this in an image that is supernatural yet also natural. He says, “After a mother has smiled at her child for many days and weeks, she finally receives her child's smile in response. She has awakened love in the heart of her child and

as the child awakens to love, it also awakens to knowledge. Knowledge comes into play because the play of love had already begun beforehand, initiated by the mother, the transcendent.”

While this is a natural picture—something we see all the time around us when a mom births her child, it’s a supernatural picture of God’s love that awakens us—that’s what Hans is arguing here. He continues...

“God interprets Himself to man as love in the same way: He radiates love, which kindles the light of love in the heart of man, and it’s precisely this light that allows man to perceive this—the absolute LOVE. ‘For it is the God who said ‘Let light shine out of the darkness’ who has shone in our heart to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ.” (2 Cor. 4:6) In this face (the face of Jesus) the primal foundation of being smiles at us as a mother and as a father. Insofar as we are His creatures, the seed of love lies dormant within us as the image of God. Just as no child can be awakened to love without being loved, so too no human heart can come to an understanding of God without the free gift of His grace—in the image of His Son.”

WOW! The bright, beautiful smile of an overjoyed mother evokes the love to be awakened in the heart of the child. This picture, this metaphor that Hans gives us in how we relate to God is so powerful because it’s so tangible. All of us have seen it. Especially in the world of social media, we find more and more parents posting pictures of that first moment when mom holds her newborn baby. There’s nothing like it! That face, that emotion—that’s captured is beyond words. It’s beyond anything an artist could ever create.

Hans was right. We only are awakened to life and love when we look into the face of God, our Creator, more specifically, into the face of Jesus. For Jesus is the perfect image of the invisible God!

Leader, you may be tempted to believe that you will one day be happy when you achieve “success” in your leadership. When your company is “big” When your church reaches ____ number of people. Then, *then*, you will be filled with joy. No my friend.

We come to life, and our hearts are awakened by love when we behold the face of Jesus, the Son of God. That’s true of those you lead and that’s true for you and me. The Son of God came to make more sons and daughters—to awaken the children of God to the love of their Father. This is the most beautiful, stunning, life-changing revelation in my opinion.

8. CHRIST-CENTERED SPEECH

Jesus and His work must be at the center of every Christian leader’s messaging. Jesus came to restore hope, give life, redeem His creation, and buy back the sons of man! He came to set wrong right, to forgive each of us, every one of us of every sin—every single sin that separated us from our Holy God. He taught us to forgive one another and extend his government, His law of love to everyone around us. For us as leaders, that means even those who criticize our leadership or mock our decisions. Love will find a way to honor even your critics. Love is at the core of sonship.

Before you are an amazing leader, before you bring salvation to others, before you bring them aid, rescue, wisdom or help of any sort, you realize that you find 100 percent of your identity in being a son or daughter of God. When we look at the Bible, cover to cover, we find that sonship is the goal.

Does God want to partner with you to rescue people? Yes! Does God want to use you and work through you as if you were a conduit of his power? Yes! Does God even see you as an ambassador, a royal deliverer of the King's message? Yes! But more importantly than all of that is that you find your true identity as being a child of God, a son of our Heavenly Father! More importantly than you becoming an amazing leader is that you find joy in being a child of God. When the applause goes silent, when the ratings or views are low, when criticism is coming your way, your identity will not be shaken and your joy will not be missing if you'll come to understand this truth. Your greatest joy is found in your true identity: a child of a loving father. You are fully known and fully loved. You are a brother or a sister of Jesus himself, the firstborn among many!

What we find in all of these heroes, be them prophet, priest or king, is a foreshadowing of Jesus, the son of God. Jesus is the hero of every story. Jesus, the son of God, is the main character in the story. Jesus landed the lead role and you and I are the supporting cast. If you fail to understand this and you're inwardly striving to be the center of attention, you will live your life in constant frustration, unable to pinpoint why you can't find joy. You'll wonder why, at the

center of your being, why you can't find peace when you lay your head down at night—even if you accomplish great things for God.

This is a subtle thing, but it's about an underlying message that does come through to those you lead. Not everyone will pick up on it, but the discerning will. If you're a minister, you are communicating many things when you preach. These things are said overtly and many of them subconsciously. You're communicating one of the following:

Our church is amazing!

My sermon is amazing!

I am amazing!

OR

Jesus is amazing!

Your message comes through in your tone, demeanor, and what you literally say. If your heart is sincere and you're truly so grateful that Jesus saved you from your sin, then your humility and passion will come through. They'll feel what they felt with John the Baptist. He was certain who he was and who he wasn't. His message was clear: *Repent and be saved! Jesus is the Savior, not me.*

Why is it that some Christian leaders and ministers lose their joy? They've begun to value success over sonship.

One thing can give you peace at night and joy in your soul, whether you're leading 10,000 or 10. That is knowing God is your Father and Jesus is your brother! John Calvin, like all theologians, including you and me, didn't get it all right, but he certainly did when he said this:

Christ is Isaac, the beloved son of the father who was offered as a sacrifice but nevertheless did not succumb to the power of death. He is Jacob, the watchful shepherd who has such great care for the sheep which He guards. He is the good and compassionate brother Joseph who in his glory was not ashamed to acknowledge his brothers however lowly and abject their condition. He is the great sacrifice for us! He is the King and Priest Melchizedek who has offered an eternal sacrifice once for all. He is the sovereign lawgiver Moses writing His law on the tablets of our hearts by His Spirit. He is the faithful captain and guide Joshua to lead us to the Promised Land. He is the victorious and noble king David bringing all rebellious power to subjection. He is the King who brings us into peace. He is the Prince of Peace! He is the magnificent and triumphant king Solomon governing his kingdom with peace and prosperity. He is the strong and powerful Samson who, by his death, has overwhelmed all enemies.

1 Corinthians 15 tells us that Jesus is the true and better Adam who passed the test in the garden and gives us the reward of His obedience. It's as if *we* become obedient although our obedience is frail and imperfect, Jesus imputes to us His perfect obedience. Jesus is the true and

better Abraham who stepped out in faith to create a new people for God and you and me are included in that family!

Please hear me, leaders! Whether you are 17 years old and recently called into full-time ministry or whether you have been in ministry for decades, the goal of your life and leadership is not that people would esteem you, but that they would esteem Christ. The goal is not that they would celebrate you, but that they would celebrate Christ. The goal is not that they would think you are amazing, but that they would discover that Jesus is amazing. When you minister and when you lead, the goal is not that they would like you, but that they would love Him! This brings me to the ninth sign of sonship. A Christian leader who's going through the process of a leader, enjoys empowering others for the glory of Jesus.

9. EMPOWERMENT—SONS EMPOWER OTHER SONS

One of the best ways you can communicate this to the church or business you lead is to surround yourself with leaders who are more talented than you. Ask yourself: Are you, without hesitation, willing to give talented leaders more authority? If not, why? Is there any sort of fear in your heart that they will be liked more than you? If so, rid yourself of that insecurity—today! Repent of it. Remember that Jesus is the hero of your church or organization, not you.

I remember being about six months into being a senior pastor; it was 2018. I went to a little diner in Cortland after church with a couple that visited that day. The woman kind of chuckled saying that she didn't know who the pastor was for the first 45 minutes of the service.

She said someone opened the service with a welcome and she thought he was the pastor. Then someone else lead worship and she started to wonder if he was the pastor. Then a young man closed the time of worship with a passionate plea, almost a mini devotional. She assumed he must be the pastor. Then a woman gave some announcements and she said, “I wondered if *she* was actually in the pastor!” She continued telling me, “It wasn’t until you were about 10 minutes into your sermon that I realized you must be the pastor!” I jokingly replied ... “My goal is that everyone would find Jesus to be the center of our service. I feel one of the ways I do that is to include a team of leaders around me—people who discover their leadership potential. My goal is that Jesus would be so celebrated that I could be forgotten.”

Pastors, my question for you is this, If you were to be in a tragic car accident today, could your church still function? If not, then too much is centered around you and your abilities. You must start to find a team of can-be-leaders that you can equip to do the work of the ministry. You can also start to staff people around you who are more talented, more anointed, and more able to preach Christ. In doing so, you will accomplish what John the Baptist had in mind when he said, “I must decrease and He must increase.”

And if you were thinking *I do not have the budget to bring on a staff*, then you are sorely mistaken. Vision requires no money. You can get alone with God and get vision with no money in the bank at all. All it takes to begin is desire. You can ask God in prayer “Who has leadership potential? Who can I invest some time with and develop?”

Ask the Father for the eyes to see them, likely sitting in the pews in front of you every single Sunday. There are men and women with massive leadership potential—some of them with an anointing to lead and even preach. All it takes is that you ask the Spirit to open your eyes to see them. Once you begin to meet with them regularly to teach them what it means to follow Christ and lead others, you will begin to make a greater impact for the Kingdom. Not everyone belongs in your inner circle. Pray and choose wisely.

THREE, TWELVE, AND THE CROWD

Jesus had three closest to Him; three in an inner circle: Peter, James, and John. Jesus had twelve disciples who went almost everywhere with Him. They felt like Spiritual sons to Jesus. Jesus also has crowds occasionally. I'm afraid that today, too many Christian leaders have crowds and no sons.

Love empowers. Love gives the mic away. Love is generous with authority and blessing. Love doesn't hold on too tightly. Love doesn't manipulate or control. Love gives encouragement and empowerment. Love gives opportunity and second chances. Love dies to self and puts others ahead of themselves.

You can love those you lead by giving them authority and blessing to reveal Christ to the nations! Jesus is the hero. Not me. Not you. Right now, this may seem like the Holy Spirit is bringing a loving discipline but Scripture says, "That's a good sign! It's a sign of sonship!"

Hebrews 12:3–11 (ESV): Consider Him who endured from sinners such hostility against Himself, so that you may not grow weary or fainthearted. 4 In your struggle against sin you have not yet resisted to the point of shedding your blood. 5 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. 6 For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.”

7 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? 8 If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. 9 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? 10 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. 11 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.

That passage reiterates this principle of sonship over and over, reminding us that even when we are pruned, it is a sign of the Father’s love for us.

Throughout Scripture, God reveals Himself as Father calling His people “My Children.” You only need to read a few chapters into the story of Exodus to hear God speak to them as a loving Father.

This is how you must begin to see God. Before you lead people, you must allow God to lead you. You must allow His love to permeate your very skin and bones. You must understand who you are in light of who He is. He is ABBA, FATHER. He is compassionate toward you and loves you unconditionally and unequivocally. He feels the same way about you as He does the prostitute who's selling her body this evening. He feels the same way about you as He does the drug lord who's been deceived into a world of crime. He loves them as much as He loves you. His love for man has nothing to do with man's performance. Before you can lead them, you should love them. Leading without loving will turn you into a tyrant. Leading while loving will reveal you as a servant.

10. COMPASSION

As the leaders of the church, we must realize that every person who walks into our building is either a *found* son or daughter of Father God or a lost child of God. He wants you to see every person for who they are! They are a potential child of God!

SONS SEE PEOPLE MORE THAN NUMBERS

This concept is also true if you're a leader in the marketplace. A CEO recently told me about how his real estate company provides finances for mission trips. He has funded eight trips so far and has a passion to do more! God keeps blessing his business and he simply keeps giving his profits away! This is a leader who understands sonship. This is a leader who has embraced the purposes of God.

Remember why Jesus came to us? It's been said, "The Son of God came as the son of man to make the sons of men, sons of God." Jesus makes you and I His brothers and sisters and we must be reminded of that as Christian leaders. This mission drives out all insecurity and reminds us of why we're doing what we're doing.

WHAT CHILDREN DO

I've got four girls and they are the joy of my life. Selah is my oldest and my scrappy, athletic Sporty Spice as we like to call her. Elli, our second, is our Princess Elli. Eva is just a "handful" as they say when people are trying to be polite. She's goofy and tons of fun. Eden at only three is just so sweet. They are all so different, and yet I love them all equally. God feels the same way about you and me and even that neighbor of yours who drives you crazy. Even the coworker who is always late to deliver, yup, them too. God loves every single human equally and that love simply won't change. He's Father.

I'm no parenting expert but ... wait a minute, I hear you're deemed expert when you've worked in a field for 10,000 hours. That means I AM an expert. Shoot, I'm a genius by that standard! Actually if I'm honest, I'm like every parent out there—doing my best and hoping I'm not screwing things up. I have noticed some beautiful things in being a dad—some things I'm hoping can become takeaways for our understanding of how we can and should relate to our Father God.

CHILDREN KNOW THEY NEED HELP

Kids know they need help. Well, sometimes. If you're like me and parenting four girls, you know that they can change their mind in .0000002 seconds. One minute I hear a panicked screech, "Dad! I can't get this shoe on! Why won't you help me!?" I bend down to help and hear: "Leave me alone! I can do myself! Let me do it!"

Ugghhhhhh. Confused. Again. This. Is. My. Whole. Life.

No but really, there are plenty of times when my girls simply know they need help. Whether it's reaching something since I'm so tall or tying their shoes or homework. Children know they need help and when they know they're loved, they know they can ask Dad for help.

Do you know you're loved? Do you know that you have a Father God in Heaven who cares for you more than you could ever understand? Do you know that He is not only able to help you but also willing and desiring to help you if you would only ask? I want to say this again: God reveals Himself in many ways in His Word, none more prevalent than that of being our loving Father.

Simon Sinek, best-selling author and speaker, says "Too many leaders worry about being in charge and forget their real job—that leadership is really about taking care of those in your charge. Leaders need empathy and perspective." (Simon Sinek, Live2Lead, 2016)

You will have more empathy when you realize that your team members are humans just like you. They have fears, dreams, hopes, insecurities, prayer requests.... Your first job isn't to

lead them over the hill; it's to care for them and ensure they know how loved they are by Father God.

11. CURIOSITY

Children are naturally filled with curiosity and wonder. My kids, especially at that toddler age, would often ask “What is that? Why are you doing that? Where are we going? What will happen if I eat this?”

One of the greatest attributes of a leader is curiosity. I know, you may not have expected that word, but the more you look into the leaders who've shaped our world and even our faith, they all were curious, curious as a three-year-old exploring their world, learning, seeing, touching, eating, and feeling something new every day. The greatest CEOs are curious about how the market will respond to a new product. They're curious about how their service or product could be better. They ask the right questions. They want to know why something works or doesn't work. They are curious about how to be better leaders and more inventive.

The greatest engineers and scientists are curious. Every inventor who ever walked the earth invented out of a seed of curiosity. Are you curious? Or, are you stuck? You can't be both. If you're curious and if you love to learn, you and your organization won't be stuck for long. You'll be trying new things and honing in on what works and before you know it, you'll be more effective than ever. Curiosity is the first step toward greater productivity, team unity, and successful leadership. If you feel the answer is “no” to that question, then I have to ask you to

check for pride. Because humility leads to curiosity that leads to innovation and leadership. Pride leads to stagnation that leads to failed leadership and a team who knows it isn't valued and products or services that aren't wanted.

THE FATHER'S WORLD

When I take my kids to the sledding hill in our town, I give them all sorts of rules and instructions. "Put on your hats. Put on your snow pants, then your gloves, then your coat. The coat will help hold your gloves in place. Stop taking your sisters gloves!" The instructions continue. There are benefits that come with following the rules. For example, "You cannot get in the car until you have all your snow stuff ready. You don't have to walk there if you'll pay attention. You will not go sledding if you don't put that coat on. You will get hot chocolate if you guys stop arguing." Hey, no shame; bribes work, people.

I'd like to think that Father God goes on the adventure with us. When we are curious and set out in faith on a new adventure, God is with us all the way. I love going sledding down the hill with my girls, especially when it's a bit icy and we hit Mach 4. They take turns sitting on my lap, and we zoom down the hill screaming. I'll never forget a hill I took them to near Stony Glenn campground. We go there as a family for a getaway each winter, and while we were sledding down the huge hill nearby, a dad and I struck up a conversation. He said, "Did you take them to the big hill, yet?" I was like, "The big hill? There's a bigger hill than this?" He told me where to go and off we went.

Let's just say it wasn't the smartest dad move. It was twice as long and much steeper. They were a bit reluctant to go down, but I convinced them. Selah, my oldest, is adventurous and athletic so she just went for it. She hit a sweet ramp about two-thirds down the hill and got some sweet air. Eden was four at the time and I told her I'd hold on and she'd "be fine." She climbed on and I aimed a little left of that ramp that Selah hit. Let's just say ... there was another ramp. We were flying! About half way down this thing, I saw the ramp and couldn't adjust course. Everything went into slow-mo. I said, "Oh..." and up she went. I made good on my promise and grabbed her mid-air but she came crashing down on me and we took a good tumble. There were some tears, but we made a memory! What's my point? I went with her! God, your Father, is with you in this thing!

Children learn that they live in their father's world—that someone else is in charge and setting the rules. They learn quickly that to disobey leads to punishment or at the least course correction. They learn that they are not the center of the universe. This lesson takes time, at least in the Biel household. They learn correct perspective. I'm afraid there are far too many Christian leaders in churches and companies who are hesitant to obey Father God's words. They are content to simply do what's "normal," because they're afraid of failure, afraid of man's opinions, or worse, afraid of change. But often God's instructions to us require change.

Children even hold parents to their word and are ready to hold them accountable to even the principles they've established in the home. Children trust their father to hold true ... well, most the time. One principle I've repeated in our home is sharing—the importance of being

generous and giving away what is yours for others to enjoy. My toddler Eden held me to this standard a few months ago when I pulled through a drive through to get a coffee. Before I continue, you should know that my wife, being a nurse, calls any candy or treats “sugar.” “No sugar before bed....” “No sugar right now.... You have to eat dinner first....” You get the idea. So I paid for my coffee. I went to the next window and got it. Eden said, “What is that?” I said, “Coffee.” She said “What’s in it?” I said, “Coffee.”

It was early. I wasn’t ready for a lengthy conversation, but she persisted. “What’s in it?” I said, “Hazelnut, cream, and sugar.” I happened to look in the rear-view mirror to catch her face when she replied with her eyebrows raised and a condescending tone ... “You share your sugar!” I almost spit my coffee out everywhere. For the next ten minutes, I tried my best to communicate to her that I was unable to extract the sugar from the drink and share it with her. She was not cool with that and broke down in tears insisting, “Shawa youwa shugaaa!” Another dad-fail for the books.

My kids inevitably trust me. When they feel in danger, they run to me. When they feel hungry, they come to me. They know I’ll feed them (in due time). When they are hurt, they come to me for solace. They trust me. They really do. Why? It’s simple. I’m their dad. Do you see God that way? If not, I encourage you to try to. Ask God, the Father, to reveal Himself to you in this way. Let God reveal Himself to you the way He did to Jesus “This is my Son in whom I am well pleased.” Let God reveal Himself to you the way He did to John, who repeatedly addresses God as a “Father” to be loved, trusted, and obeyed.

SONSHIP IS A PARADIGM

Leadership in the kingdom of God is about knowing that every person you lead is a child of God, whether they are living in Father's home or whether they are far from home and need to come home and be forgiven. You must care for them like the Father cares for them. Ask God to give you His heart for them.

What leadership is all about is caring for the people that God's entrusted you with. It's not about having the highest position. It's about having compassion on those you lead. It's not about having power. It's about empowering those you lead. It's not about being the smartest person in the room. It's about asking the right questions to evoke the best advice from the smartest people in the room—those you've put in the room because you know they're smart. A real leader doesn't take credit, they take responsibility.

God the Father, Holy Spirit, and Son are all three working in unity to create sons and daughters! He chose you to be a part of that! He knows what He's doing. He chose you and me to partner with Him! Remarkable! Because of this, we should be prayerful, courageous, humble, gracious, secure, grateful, focused on Jesus, empowering, compassionate, curious risk-takers!

APPLY IT

I'd like you to take a few minutes and circle the attributes you feel the Holy Spirit is speaking to your heart about in the list below. After you've circled at least three, I'd like you to take a few minutes to pray, ask the Holy Spirit to help you in these areas and then write down what you'll commit to doing to grow in that area. Make the commitment a commitment to God—a prayer. I want to even encourage you to share this commitment with a friend or your spouse. It makes the commitment more meaningful and more likely to be enacted, because you're inviting them to hold you accountable to it.

SIGNS OF SONSHIP

Circle at least three you need to grow in.

Prayer life

Courage to lead change

Courage to confront

Humility

Gracious

Security (as opposed to insecurity—the need to prove your value)

Grateful

Christ-centered speech (as opposed to “I” centered speech)

Empowerment of others

Compassion

Curious

Risk-taker

Celebration of other leaders/pastors (seeing them as brothers and sisters)

Empathy

Good listening

Belief in Father’s provision (Kids don’t wonder if Dad has the money. They know he does.)

My Commitment To Grow in Sonship

Lord, I commit to grow in sonship. Help me to see myself as a child of Yours *before* I am a _____ (your role at work). Remind me that like Jesus, you have found pleasure *in me* before I ever perform anything *for* You. Remind me, Father, that when You see me, You see Jesus! In that, You are well pleased. Help me to be a good steward of the assignments You've given me in the season You've placed me in.

Lord, I commit to grow in these areas by taking intentional time to do the following:

- Celebrate the work of _____, a colleague of mine
- Ask my team good questions about their family life. I will take time every _____ to ask _____ questions such as “How is your walk with God going personally?” “What are some victories and answered prayers in your life right now?” “What are some points of frustration or pain?” “How can I pray with you about those things?” “How can I support you in that? Is there anything I can do to help?”
- Commit to my staff/team ... I am here for you whatever you need. Truly, if you need to just talk, I'm here. If you need a day off to take your spouse out for your anniversary, take it! I want the best for you more than I want the best for this organization. I'm committed to your success!”

- Taking time every single morning at _____ I am to pray and read Your Word and invite Your Spirit to speak to my heart, challenge me to change anything in my life that needs to change to make me more like Your Son, Jesus.
- Setting aside time with a mentor and spiritual parent such as _____ at least once a month to come under their spiritual covering and receive wisdom. I commit to contact them today to start this relationship.

FINAL THOUGHTS

I hope you enjoyed this book and it has encouraged you to press on to see the promise God's put in your heart come to life! While this book was written for those in Christian leadership and ministry in their discovery of *why*, my next book, *Leverage Leadership*, is written with the aim of answering the question of *how*? In it, I take you through the four essentials of every successful team. There are four things that every winning team has. Do you have them? While this book deals with the heart, the next book will deal with more of the pragmatics of leadership and how to get from A to B.

You can subscribe to my email newsletter in the footer of JordanBiel.com to ensure you're informed when that book is released. You can also click "Follow" on Amazon, and they will notify you any time I am releasing a new book. My prayer is that you'll love Jesus even more and be equipped to do the good work He's placed within your heart.

LETSLEADTHIS

LETSLEADTHIS is a network of Christian entrepreneurs and leaders who gather every fall to grow together, network, and build friendships. We have a Facebook page where you can get weekly motivation and advice on Biblical leadership. We invite you to join us! If this book has impacted you and helped you as a leader, then know that it's just the tip of the iceberg of what you can learn from being a part of the LetsLeadThis network. Dr. Sam Chand, President Emeritus of Beulah Heights University, says in his master class "Many leaders know where they want to go, but haven't packed their bags yet. They have a vision for where they want to go but haven't packed their bags with preparation for the journey." LetsLeadThis is part of packing your bags and getting prepared for the journey ahead. Learn from leaders and entrepreneurs who've gone before you so you can go further and stay healthy in your journey. Learn more at www.LetsLeadThis.com

To get consistent motivation, practical leadership advice, and Biblical inspiration on leadership, follow our page on Facebook @LetsLeadThis or tune into our podcast LetsLeadThis on Apple Podcasts or Spotify.

All Scripture references are used from The Holy Bible: English Standard Version (2016) Wheaton, IL: Crossway Bibles.