
Cultivating the Heart of the Leader

Introduction

Change must always begin in the life of the person you greet each day in the mirror. Before we can facilitate authentic life change in others (our team, lost friends, new disciples, an emerging community, a city, etc.), we must allow God to do his work in us personally. The choice to do “organic church planting” is a choice to be a certain kind of person. That person must be filled with the Spirit, have an authentic walk with Christ, maintain a commitment to growth, and lead others in an empowering way. This session unpacks a model for being a leader in “organic churching” and will challenge you to look closely and deeply at your own life.

Overview

1. Getting Focused
2. Stepping into a Spirit Empowered Ministry
3. The Leader that Lasts!
4. Starting Well to Finish Well
5. The Leader’s Spiritual Practices
6. Character Formation: The Processes God Uses
8. Understanding Biblical Authority
9. Reflecting and Responding
10. Assignments and Recommended Resources

Learning Activities

1. Write a letter to God, unbearing your heart to him with your desire for a heart cultivated with grace and truth.
2. Think about a person in your life in whom the Holy Spirit is in control. Learn from the example of that person’s life.
3. Share with others where you experiencing God’s grace as you grow in Christ.
4. Reflect on your own devotional life and spiritual formation.
5. Consider the “process items” God has used to shape your character.
6. Discuss the concept of “Biblical Authority”.

Materials Needed

1. Notes for everyone
2. Pens, pencils



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Gathering Notes

**Getting
Focused**

Look at the personal evaluation questions below. Pick one and reflect on your life this last week. As you embark on (or continue in) a front-line church planting ministry, write a letter to God reflecting your desire for him to cultivate your own heart.

- How am I able to tell that the soil of my heart is soft and receptive to the truths of God?
- What sin or encumbrance is hindering growth in my life?
- Do I make it a practice to listen and reflect on what my spouse, children, leaders, mentors and/or other teachers has to say as they sow spiritual wisdom and insight into my life?
- What is God teaching me as I daily allow Him to water his word into my mind and heart?
- What evidences indicate that I am eager to grow and mature -- seeking time, people and resources to fertilize my hungry heart?

Dear Father...

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Stepping into a Spirit- Empowered Ministry

Successful Ministry in the 1st Century...was Spirit-Empowered Ministry

1. In the 1st Century, believers had a New Set of Values – their minds were enlightened by the Holy Spirit (1 Thessalonians 1:4-6).

Will you welcome the Truths of the Spirit, anticipating fresh insights for life & ministry?

HOW?

- By regularly taking in the Word of God.
- By having regular time with God in Solitude, Silence, and Prayer.

2. In the 1st Century, believers had Transformed Lives – their behavior and attitudes were developed to maturity by the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16-6:2).

Will you live by the Leading of the Spirit, anticipating that God will guide you and change you?

HOW?

- By cooperating with the Spirit of Jesus as you seek to obey him by faith.
- By staying accountable to other believers who are following Jesus with you.

3. In the 1st Century, believers were Bold in their Witness – their verbal testimony was inflamed by the mission of the Holy Spirit (Acts 4:23-31, esp.29 & 31).

Will you pray for the Empowerment of the Spirit, anticipating opportunities to be a witness?

HOW?

- By looking upon the harvest and asking God to break your heart over the lostness of people.
- By praying for the Holy Spirit to open doors for the gospel...and for a mouth to speak God's good news.

4. In the 1st Century, believers experienced God's Miraculous Power – their extraordinary prayers were marvelously answered by the Holy Spirit (Mark 6:7,12,13; Acts 3)

Will you Minister by the Authority of the Spirit, anticipating the miraculous?

HOW?

- By identifying needs in people and in culture that only God can meet.
- By asking God to meet those needs by his mighty power...anticipating his response.

- *Pair up with someone else and share with each other about someone you know whom you have seen embody at least one characteristic of a Spirit-empowered leader. (If you can't think of anyone, discuss the implications of not having seen Spirit-empowered ministry lived before you.)*
- *What can you apply personally having listened to each other share these brief biographies?*



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Leaders that Last!

“Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever”
1 John 2:15-17.

A Focused Life

What derails a leader? What keeps a leader from finishing well?

(See the list “10 Characteristics of a Spiritual Plateau” at the end of these notes for more specific characteristics of a leader that is spiritually plateaued.)

Read the Scriptures in the margin to the left.

1. The Pursuit of Pleasure = the lust of the flesh
2. The Pursuit of Possessions = the lust of the eyes
3. The Pursuit of Power = the boastful pride of life

What marks a successful leader?

1. He or she is Faithful (Mathew 25:21)
2. He or she is Fruitful (John 15:8)
3. He or she is Followworthy (Hebrews 13:7)
4. He or she Finishes Well (2 Timothy 4:7)

➔ *We are never done depending on God for escape from sin and temptation and for the grace to experience authentic success. But growth and victory do come. Share with another person where you are seeing God’s grace in light of the above areas of danger and success.*

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Starting Well to Finish Well

Consider the following five characteristics of growing leaders. These qualities mark the life and ministry of those who have grown old in the Lord and can now look back on their ministry with the assurance that they “finished well”.

The leader who finishes well...

Adapted from *The Making of a Leader* and *Starting Well*, listed on page 11.

1. *starts* now with a perspective that puts the focus of his or her energy on ministry strengths.
2. *starts* now to maintain a learning posture throughout all of life.
3. *starts* now to enjoy repeated times of personal/spiritual renewal.
4. *starts* now to mentor others while continuing to be mentored.
5. *starts* now to discipline her or his own spiritual formation.

The Leader’s Spiritual Practices

As a large group, read the following Scriptures and quotations (1-5) out loud. When you are finished, work on the Personal Reflection individually:

1. Read the example of Jesus in Mark 1:35-39
2. Read the words of David in Psalm 131
3. Read the quotes below from Henri Nouwen’s book: [The Way of the Heart: Desert Spirituality and Contemporary Ministry](#).

“Solitude is the furnace of transformation.” (p.25)

“The very first thing we need to do is set apart a time and a place to be with God and him alone. The concrete shape of this discipline of solitude will be different for each person...but a real discipline never remains vague or general. It is as concrete and specific as daily life itself. When I visited Mother Teresa of Calcutta a few years ago and asked her how to live out my vocation as a priest, she simply said, “Spend one hour a day in adoration of your Lord and never do anything you know is wrong, and you will be all right...” (p.31).

...Like all great disciples of Jesus, Mother Teresa affirmed again the truth that ministry can be fruitful only if it grows out of a direct and intimate encounter with our Lord (p.31).

“Here we reach the point where ministry and spirituality touch each other. It is compassion. Compassion is the fruit of solitude and the basis of all ministry. The purification and transformation that takes place in solitude manifest themselves in compassion” (p.33, 34).



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4. Consider other ways that Jesus' practice of abiding with the Father impacted his ministry:
 - He illustrates that moving successfully through temptation by trusting in the truths of God results in a powerful ministry (Matthew 4 and onward).
 - As one who was intimate with God, he displayed a kind of authority that even the unconverted recognized as "different" from the learned religious leaders (Matthew 7:28,29)
 - He shows that a heart knit to the Father results in compassion for the lost (Matthew 14:13,14).
 - Rest and reflection were built in to his cycle of ministry (Mark 6:30-32).
 - He invited those he mentored to share profound spiritual experiences with him (Luke 10:17-24).
 - His ministry was empowered by the Spirit of God resting upon him (Luke 4:14-19).

5. Consider one *sample* pattern of devotion for spiritual leaders:
 - Moment by moment conversations with God, i.e. "pray without ceasing"
 - A brief, daily time to "touch-base" with God devotionally.
 - A monthly, extended time with God (approx.3-6 hours).
 - Quarterly all day away with God (8-12 hours)
 - Annual overnight or weekend retreat.

Personal Reflection

In light of the preceding readings, what is the Father saying to you about your own spiritual practices? (For example, what changes do you need to make? What should you continue to do that you are already doing?)

Cultivating the Heart of the Leader**Character Formation: The Processes God Uses**

Much of this section is gleaned from the insights of Dr. J. Robert Clinton, who has studied the lives of over 1,000 Christian leaders from the past and the present. Some insights also are from Terry Walling.

All leaders can point to critical incidents and people in their lives where God taught them important life-changing lessons. “Process items” are those events, people, assignments, and circumstances that God uses to mold and shape a leader for his or her calling. God uses them to indicate leadership capacity, confirm a unique calling and to direct the leader to God’s appointed ministry.

➤ *In groups of three, identify and briefly discuss one or two of the most significant process items listed below which God has used to shape your own character.*

➤ *What process items have you struggled in? (Share with each other, as you feel comfortable doing so.)*

Process Item:	Definition:	Examples:
Integrity Check	A test God uses to evaluate the heart and consistence of inner convictions with outward actions.	Paul received a warning on his way to Jerusalem (Acts 21).
Word Check	Tests a leader’s capacity to hear from God and apply revelation to life and ministry.	Paul was directed to Macedonia on his 2nd journey (Acts 16).
Divine Contact	The emergence of a key contact person at the crucial moment to help ensure future life development.	This is what Barnabas was for Paul (Acts 9:27; 11:25-26).
Faith Challenge	This item tests a leader’s willingness to take steps of faith and grow in his/her capacity to trust God.	Paul’s beating and imprisonment in Philippi was a faith challenge (Acts 16).
Destiny Revelation	Test of a leader’s capacity to hear from God concerning future direction and ultimate destiny.	As when God spoke to Paul on the road to Damascus (Acts 9).
Negative Preparation	Special experiences or conflicts that focus and free up a leader for the next stage of development.	Paul’s imprisonment prepared Paul for what would come next (Acts 26-28; Phil 1:12).
Life Crisis	Unique and intense human experiences that provide a situation of pressure used to test and teach dependence.	There was a point when Paul feared death from his ministry struggles (2 Cor. 1).
Ministry Conflict	Ministry conflicts are used to help shape ministry philosophy and values when they are challenged in some form.	Paul and Barnabas’ conflict over circumcision and the law is one example (Acts 15).
Leadership Backlash	This item occurs with the ramifications that emerge because of a decision made by a leader.	Paul and Barnabas’ split over John Mark served to strengthen them both (Acts 15).
Isolation	The setting aside of a leader from normal ministry involvement to hear from God in a deeper way.	Paul was not in “active ministry” for 3 years while he was in Damascus (Acts 9:30-11:25; Gal. 1:17).



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Understanding Biblical Authority

After Jesus had finished these words, the multitudes were amazed at His teaching; for He was teaching them as one having authority, and not as their scribes.
Matthew 7:28,29

In an organic approach to church multiplication, nothing (humanly speaking) is more critical to release the power of spontaneous reproduction than the control (or lack thereof) of the leader. A leader who holds tight to control will not see spontaneous multiplication of any sort. Multigenerational multiplication requires that the leader not be necessary for life, growth and reproduction. Authority *is* found in a multiplication movement but it is not a top-down, hierarchical, positional leadership. Rather, it is a servant leadership that comes along side to serve with, not over others.

Four Types of Authority...

Read the following definitions as a group.

1. *Positional Authority* is found in the title and position one is given by an organizational hierarchy. This authority may exist and be enforced regardless of the character or quality of the leader filling the position. In the world, much of life moves under this form of authority. This is the weakest form of authority. The church must be aware of its trappings.
2. *Expert Authority* is given to a person or group because they have proven capable or knowledgeable in a particular area. The authority given in this case is usually limited to the area of expertise. This authority is stronger than positional but still very limited and often narrow in its insight.
3. *Relational Authority* is based on a relationship shared by followers and leaders. It is extended because those who follow value the leader – knowing first-hand his/her commitment, as well as the leader's personality, knowledge, character or skill. This authority is much stronger than the previous two but may incorporate the others in appropriate ways.
4. *Spiritual Authority* is a special authority that comes with a deep and growing relationship with Jesus. It is an authority that is bestowed on the leader by God himself. People recognize this authority for what it truly is, whether they submit to it or not. Spiritual authority is realized when the presence of Christ is so strong in a person that the followers recognize that their submission is in fact to Christ's leadership through the human leader. This is the purist, rarest and strongest of authorities.

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Before you can know what authority is, you must first learn what submission is.
J. Robert Clinton

The more I considered Christianity, the more I have found that while it had established a rule and order, the chief aim of that order was to give room for good things to run wild.
G.K. Chesterton

Large Group Discussion

- *Discuss what you know Jesus to have modeled and said about authority and leadership. (For example, see Matthew 7:28,29; 20:24-28; 21:23; 23:8-12).*
- *What are the benefits and risks of holding out for true authority – authority that is granted by those who choose to follow vs. authority that is compulsory?*
- *In the realm where God is King, he is the only “lord” or “leader”. The rest of us are just his servants – serving one another and forbidden from “lording it over” others. What happens to leaders when they try and maintain control? What happens to those who “follow”? What kinds of things happen if all parties give over control to God the King?*
- *The choice to release control is a matter of trust in God. What will that choice mean for the faith of those who give up control and the faith of those who are empowered?*
- *Look at Paul’s attempt at following a “plan” in Acts 16:6-10. Unlike Paul, we often “stick with” our original agenda. What are the ministry implications when we are unwilling to submit to the “agenda shifting” that the Holy Spirit so often provides?*

People tend to abuse authority and derail the empowerment of God’s people for the following reasons:

1. Insecurity. “Do these people really respect me. They should! I’m their leader!”
 2. Pride: “I want to be important and admired.”
 3. Lack of Trust: “I’m not sure God knows what he’s doing here...and besides, other people can’t hear from him like I can anyway!”
 4. Shortsightedness: “I need to hold the reins. If others get involved, things might get out of hand!”
 5. Over-responsible: “Our resources are limited, so it’s my job to keep all the ducks in a row!”
 6. Lack of Love: “These people need to shape up and get with the program! They joined up to serve the dreams and visions God gave me!”
 7. Legalistic Orientation: “If people don’t work for it, they won’t value it. God wants them to do more and do better!”
- *Where do you think you struggle in releasing control to God through empowering and serving others?*



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Reflecting and Responding

Write out a few thoughts about one or more of these areas before leaving this session of the Greenhouse

Head: An idea or concept that you will continue to think about as a result of this session.

Heart: A feeling, emotion or reaction that emerged from the issues within this session.

Hands: A real world response or an act of obedience that was stimulated by this session.

➡ *How can you pray for a fellow Greenhouse participant this month?*

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Assignments

Major Assignment Recommendation

Take a half a day alone with the Lord to ask him to further instruct and guide you as you prepare to lead others. Take these Greenhouse notes, or, perhaps one of the books listed below, and be intentional at looking more closely at your own life. While we are never “fully ready” to lead, it is important to look deeply from time to time for both blind spots and areas where God’s grace and goodness has shown itself. Make a short list of areas you desire support from others and in which you know you need accountability. Consider the kinds of reading and learning you want to do in areas you are asking God to work with you on. Develop a short plan that can be evaluate and adjusted on a monthly basis.

Minor Assignment Suggestions

1. No matter what you believe or were taught about the Holy Spirit, your learning certainly isn’t over. Develop an academic and experiential plan to take some next steps in learning about how the Holy Spirit wants to work in your life and ministry (p.3).
2. Pick 1-3 spiritual disciplines to experiment with over the next month. Perhaps R. Foster’s book, Celebration of the Disciplines, or another book like it, can assist in your experiment (pp.4-6).
3. Each day, for 10 days, think about each of the 10 “Process Items”. Make a list of the ways God has used each one in your life (p.7).
4. Do a deeper study of authority in the New Testament. There is much more there! Use your study to develop your convictions, right now, as to how you will function as a “leader”. (pp.8,9)

Recommended Resources

1. *The Making of a Leader: Recognizing the Lessons and Stages of Leadership Development* by J. Robert Clinton.
2. *Starting Well: Building a Strong Foundation for a Lifetime of Ministry* by Richard Clinton. (A more accessible rendition of the important, but more technical book listed above.)
3. *Practicing the Presence of Jesus* by Brother Lawrence.
4. *In the Name of Jesus: Reflections on Christian Leadership* by Henri Nouwen.
5. *The Ascent of a Leader: How Ordinary Relationships Develop Extraordinary Character and Influence* by Bill Thrall, et. al.



