

Spiritual Leadership

(Blackaby)

Study Guide

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Spiritual Leadership

Henry & Richard Blackaby

Spiritual leadership is not an occupation, it is a calling.

1-The Leader's Challenge

Technology

- Today's leaders must be comfortable with change and technology.
- Though devices are there to make work less burdensome, they can be invasive to a leader's quiet time. All leaders need time to reflect deeply on matters.

Overall Lack of Effective Leadership

- "Will it work?" is a good question. "Does it line up with God's Word?" is a better question.
- In any context, organizations rarely rise above their leader.

Ambition

If your purpose is to invest your life to advance God's purposes on earth, then ambition is a good and useful force in your life.

Discussion

- How are you using technology to your advantage? How are you keeping it from becoming your master?
- When you learn of a "new" secular leadership principle, how do you determine its value?
- List the top five areas in which you are driven to succeed.

2-The Leader's Role

Definition

There are hundreds of definitions of leadership. For this book, the authors use:

spiritual leadership = moving people on to God's agenda

Task	Influence people to pursue God's purposes.
Method	Pray; follow God's leading.
Accountability	Take responsibility. Answer to God.
Focus	Grow people.
Agenda	Seek God's agenda.
Key	Cultivate your relationship with God.

Jesus as the Model

- Jesus' **task** was to bring His disciples face-to-face with the Father ([John 14:8-11](#)).
- Jesus' **method** was to regularly spend time alone with His Father ([Mat 26:36](#)).
- Jesus was **accountable** to His Father ([John 5:30](#) and [Mat 26:39](#)).
- Jesus' **focus** was to grow His disciples ([John 14:10](#)). also John 15:15, John 17:6-8
- The **agenda** was the Father's ([John 3:16](#) and [Mat 24:36](#)).
- The **key** to Jesus was His relationship with His Father ([Luke 2:49-52](#)).

Discussion

- What evidence do you have that you are moving people to where God wants them to be?
- Do you give an account to God of your leadership behaviors?
- Make a list of people that you are affecting spiritually.
- What actions do you take to ensure that your agenda is God's agenda?
- What actions do you take to cultivate your relationship with God?

3-The Leader's Preparation

God's Work

God Gives His Holy Spirit

Leadership is something the Holy Spirit enables a person to do (**Rom 12:8**).

God Develops Required Skills

The key is not the leader's skill. The key is surrender to God (**Deu 34:10**).

God Gives the Assignment

- God determines each person's assignment.
- The key is to seek God with all your heart.

God Requires, God Provides

God requires faith, obedience, and love for Him. The bigger the assignment, the closer a leader must be to God (**Mat 25:23**).

Learn from Failures

Abraham took Lot with him even though God said to leave his family behind. Abraham learned that modifying God's will even a little bit is dangerous (**Gen 36-38**).

Build Spiritual Landmarks

When Abraham learned something new about God, he built an altar (**Gen 12:7-8**). As leaders, we can keep a journal or other memento to remind us of what God has done in our lives so far.

Learn to Wait on God and Obey Him

Abraham made a major mistake of taking shortcuts to get an heir rather than trusting and waiting on God. It is not easy to wait, but making us wait is a method God uses to develop us. God tested Abraham to see if he had learned the lessons. Abraham's decision to obey became a blessing to all of us today (**Gen 22:16-18**).

Be God's Friend

Abraham is the only person in the Old Testament that God calls His friend (**Isa 41:8** and **Jas 2:23**). God did not choose Abraham for his leadership abilities. He chose him for his heart.

Discussion

- Make a two column list. In one column, list the abilities God has given you that enhance your ability to lead. In the other, list your qualities that work against your ability to lead. Consider having someone who has observed you in a leadership role also make the two column list for how they view you as a leader. Pray over the lists. Ask God where He wants to focus your leadership development.
- In what areas are you most trusting God right now?

4-The Leader's Vision

Where Leaders Obtain Vision

From a purely human perspective there are seven typical sources of vision. They all have their appeal, but none work from God's perspective.

1. See an opportunity. Just because you see an opportunity doesn't mean that is the direction God desires for you or your organization.
2. Duplicate success. Just because something works for someone else or has worked for you in the past doesn't mean that is what God has planned now.
3. Appeal to Vanity. Beware of casting an audacious vision that appeals to your ego. Your personal agenda is unlikely to be God's agenda.
4. Meet a Need. When basing a vision on needs, a congregation will tend to focus on symptoms rather than causes. A relationship with Jesus is a higher priority than meeting people's temporal needs ([John 12:5-8](#)).
5. Have available resources. The vision should come before the resources. Planning based only on current resources closes the door for divine assignments and heavenly provision.
6. Leader driven. A leader's best thinking will not build the kingdom of God. People do not naturally think the way God does ([1Cor 1:20](#) and [John 15:5](#)).
7. Purpose driven. Values and purposes are not a good substitute for God.

Seek your vision directly from God.

How Vision Inspires People

Leaders can help people see the meaning and significance of what they do. When this happens, people move from compliance to commitment.

Grow Rather Than Sell

When a spiritual leader brings followers into a face-to-face encounter with God, there will be no stopping them from participating. Focus on encouraging followers to grow in their relationship with the Lord. The dream of an ambitious leader can't compare to the promise of God.

How Leaders Communicate Vision

Communicate with Symbols

Many people are visual thinkers. Symbols help them grasp and remember the vision God has for their organization.

Communicate with Stories

A relevant, true story engages people's hearts and enlists their commitment. Leaders should regularly tell three kinds of stories.

1. Stories from the past. Tell specific stories of what God has done for the church and individual members. Focus on pivotal moments in your church's history.
2. Stories from the present. Tell stories of what God is doing right now.
3. Stories pointing to the future. Paint pictures of what God will do in the future.

Vision + Accountability

People watch how leaders behave. The spiritual leader is accountable to God for personal discipline and commitment that is visible to others.

Discussion

- Write out a God story that **reminds** you and others of a pivotal moment in your church or ministry. Practice telling the story.
- Write out a God story that communicates what God is doing right **now** in your church or ministry. Practice telling the story.
- Review the sources of vision in this chapter. Which have you been using to develop your vision? What improvements will you make to your vision casting?

5-The Leader's Goal

Unworthy Goals

- **Achieving Results at All Costs:** The leader should be focusing on achieving God's Will rather than a personal set of goals. In God's eyes, how you do something is just as important as what you do.
- **Perfectionism:** Churches who concentrate on culling the best talent rather than on developing people overlook what God considers most important.
- **Size:** While an increase in attendance can be an indicator of God's blessing, it is no guarantee. There is a significant difference between drawing a crowd and building a church.

Worthy Goals

- **Developing People:** God's agenda is His people. He kept them in the wilderness 40 years to grow their faith. A spiritual leader's key responsibility is to take people into a relationship with Christ. Each believer needs to learn to recognize God's voice for himself. To help others grow to that point, the leader must be continually growing himself.
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- **Equipping Others to Lead:** A common mistake of leaders is to make themselves indispensable. To avoid this, leaders must develop four habits.
 1. Delegate
 2. Minimize meddling
 3. Give credit
 4. Encourage and support
- **Glorifying God:** God seeks to glorify Himself by working through people and organizations that believe and obey Him. Glorifying God should be your driving force. By accurately reflecting God's nature to others, you bring Him glory. When you forgive others, they learn that God forgives. When you are patient with others, they learn that God is long-suffering. When you live with integrity, others get a glimpse of God's holiness.

Discussion

- What percentage of your time do you spend in:
 - ▶ Developing leaders?
 - ▶ Developing yourself?
- What advantages would someone experience by having you as his/her leader?
- How does the way you lead and treat people bring glory to God?

6-The Leader's Character

Illegitimate Sources of Influence

- **Position:** Obtaining a position of power for yourself does not mean you have the corresponding character necessary to influence others. As a spiritual leader, focus on your character and submission to the Holy Spirit.
- **Power:** Leaders invite rebellion when they use force to achieve their goals. Each person must give account to Christ for everything he does [2Cor 5:10].
- **Personality:** Being a charming, charismatic person doesn't make you a leader. Personality without purpose and charm without competence are recipes for disaster.

Legitimate Sources of Influence

- **God's Hand:** People are looking for spiritual leaders who clearly demonstrate God's presence in their lives.
- **Leading Through Surrender:** Spiritual leadership is not a choice a person makes, rather it comes from a profound relationship with God.
- **Integrity:** Integrity = a state in which a person's actions accurately mirror his beliefs and values. Followers feel secure around leaders who do what they say [Pro 2:7 and Psa 26:1-2].
- **Successful Track Record:** New leaders should resist undertaking large projects. It is better to prove yourself on smaller tasks first.
- **Preparation:** Key = learn how to think. Those who cut their preparation short indicate a lack of commitment to finishing and a lack of a teachable spirit.

- **Humility:** Few things are as powerful as leaders who view themselves with an accurate and humble perspective.
- **Courage:** Courage is not an absence of fear. Courage is being afraid and yet doing the right thing anyway.

Discussion

- What character qualities do you have that attract people to follow you? What character qualities do you have that hinder your leadership?
- Do you continue to prepare yourself for your leadership role? What methods do you use to continue your education?

7-The Leader's Influence

Tools of Spiritual Influence

Pray

- Nothing of eternal significance happens apart from God (**John 15:5**).
- To be a spiritual leader, you must allow God to fill you with the Holy Spirit (**Eph 5:18**). All Christians have the Holy Spirit, but quench His power. You must seek Him fervently (**Jer 29:13**).
- Dedicated prayer initiates communication with God and access to His wisdom (**Rom 8:26-27**). To have this available and choose not to communicate is gross dereliction of duty (**Luke 18:1-8**).
- God is all powerful. Keep asking (**Mat 7:7**). Your most powerful position is on your knees.
- Prayer is the best remedy for stress. Cast your cares on Him (**1Pet 5:7**).

Work Hard

True leadership comes through personal sacrifice. Jesus ministered to the crowds until He was so exhausted even a raging storm did not awaken Him (**Luke 8:22-24**).

Communicate Effectively

The key is clarity and relevance rather than eloquence and wordiness. To avoid falling into verbal ruts, read Scripture, literature, history, and the writings of great thinkers.

Tailor your words to relate to your audience. Tell stories, especially those that:

- Give meaning to people's involvement
- Explain the reason for a group's existence
- Describe the vision
- Chronicle the hardships and successes
- Describe the way the organization is currently making a positive difference
- Highlight what is valuable and noteworthy

- Show God at work in our midst

Serve

The classic story of servant leadership is Jesus washing the disciples' feet (**John 13:1-17**). It illustrates important principles of being a servant leader.

Your acts should flow from love	John 13:1
You should be secure in your identity	John 13:3
Know you are God's servant and take orders from Him	John 13:8
Be motivated by the Holy Spirit	John 13:15

Maintain Positive Attitudes

A pessimistic leader is a contradiction. You can have a person in command who is pessimistic, but that person is not really a leader. True leaders understand that no matter how difficult the challenge before them, a person led by the Holy Spirit can accomplish anything God asks of him.

Romans 8:31 What shall we then say to these things? If God be for us, who can be against us?

Good morale is intrinsically linked with a healthy sense of humor. Joy was an inherent part of Jesus' ministry.

John 15:11 These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full.

Encourage Others

Leaders do not become great by personally accomplishing impressive results, but by motivating others to achieve notable victories.

Three Ways to Encourage Followers

1. **Leader's Presence:** MBWA, Let followers observe you where they work.
2. **Leader's Words:** Recognize people as individuals. Praise their contributions.
3. **Leader's Personal Concern:** Procure the best supplies for your followers. Look after their well-being.

Focus

Focus on the critical issues until you understand them fully and have a solution.

Stewardship of Influence

God holds leaders accountable for their influence ([2Cor 5:10](#) and [Jas 3:1](#)).

Discussion

- If your prayer life was the only means of getting God's blessing on your leadership, what level of success would you anticipate?
- How pleased would you be if everyone in your organization had the same work ethic as you do?
- How could you improve your communication skills?
- When people meet with you, do they leave encouraged, discouraged, or apathetic? How do you know? What changes will you make?
- What are some practical ways you can encourage those under your care?
- Are you focused on the critical things or bogged down with issues that someone else could address?

8-The Leader's Decision Making

Guidelines for Decision Making

Seek the Holy Spirit's Guidance

- Spend time every day in heartfelt prayer ([Jer 33:3](#)).
- When you immerse yourself in Scripture, you begin to think according to Biblical principles. Then when a difficult situation arises, the Holy Spirit will bring the relevant verses to mind ([John 14:26](#)).
- Recruit godly counselors ([Pro 11:14](#)). Select them carefully. Give them freedom to speak candidly. Pay attention to what appear to be coincidences. They may be answers to prayers.

Be Teachable

- Work to keep a teachable spirit.
- Be careful how you ask questions.
 - ▶ Bad: "No one has a problem with this, do they?"
 - ▶ Good: "What are the advantages and disadvantages of this approach? What are some other ways we could handle this?"
- Watch your body language. If you scowl and cross your arms, that suggests comments are unwelcome.
- Listen ([Jas 1:19](#)). While you should avoid promoting arguing or complaining amongst your followers, keep the door open for valid feedback.

Master Your History

When you are new to an organization, resist the urge to immediately change everything. When you begin to put changes in place, do your best to leverage from past successes.

Plan

God only obligates Himself to bless, sustain, and bring to completion that which He initiates ([Isa 46:9-11](#)). Work diligently to stay aligned with God's plans. Your quiet time with God is critical.

Give an Account to God

Lead with integrity because you know God is watching and assessing your actions ([2Cor 5:9-10](#)).

After You Make a Decision

- Accept the consequences.
- Admit your mistakes and learn from them.
- Stand by your decision, avoid vacillating. When you know what God wants, you will not be tempted to waffle.

Ways to Improve Decision Making

- **Evaluate Your Decisions:** Every decision has consequences. Make it a practice to evaluate the results of your decisions.

- **Walk Closely with God:** When you struggle to make a decision, consider that an indicator that you need some quiet time with God. Seeking the mind of God at the front end of a decision can save you years of painful regret later.
- **Seek God's Vision:** There is no value in making progress in the wrong direction. Always seek God's direction.
- **Seek God's Wisdom:** The book of Proverbs is packed with God's wisdom. If you aren't getting clear direction from where you are in your daily reading, spend some time in Proverbs.

Discussion

- What can you do to improve your decision making?
- Evaluate the caliber of your counselors. What changes do you need to make?

9-The Leader's Schedule

Take Control of Your Time

- **Subjugate:** When you don't know God's will, your schedule careens out of control. Be clear on God's priorities for you.
- **Eliminate:** Audit your commitments. Determine when God wants you to move away from some activities.
- **Cultivate:** Establish routines that accommodate time alone with God, your health needs, and the priorities God has given you.
- **Delegate:** Just because you can do something doesn't mean it is what God wants you to do. Look at responsibilities to see if God has someone else in mind for some of them.
- **Concentrate:** Focus on the priorities God has given you. Block out time for them.

Make Time for What is Important

- **Schedule Unhurried Time with God:** God does not reveal His truth on people's terms. Give God as much time as He needs to talk to you ([Isa 64:4](#)).
- **Schedule Quality Time with Family:** Your family is more important than your job.
- **Schedule Time for Your Health:** You need rest.
- **Schedule Time for People:** Invest in those who work hard and are teachable. Avoid letting chronically needy, unteachable people consume your time.

Avoid Time-wasters

- **Technology:** Use technology without letting it consume too much of your time.
- **Lack of Personnel:** Staff adequately so you don't need to do tasks that should not be on your schedule.
- **Idle Conversation:** Avoid lengthy frivolous conversations.
- **Excessive Hobbies:** Take care to keep hobbies from detracting from priorities.
- **Disorganization:** Get organized so you don't waste your time and the time of others. Ex. Send out meeting agendas well before a meeting.

Invest Your Time Wisely

Have reading material or work files accessible so you can make good use of unexpected free moments.

Discussion

- What are God's priorities for you?
- What are you currently doing that is not God's priority for you?
- How much time do you spend alone with God?
- How much time are you spending with your family?
- Which people are you investing in regularly? Are these the ones God wants you to develop?
- What are the biggest time wasters in your typical day? What can you do to minimize them?

10-Leadership and Change

- There is always a cost for change; therefore, be sure the change is one that God wants ([Luke 12:28-32](#)).
- To institute change, you'll need to alter people's thinking. You must understand the organizational culture.
- You must provide a compelling reason for change, a clear picture of the desired destination.
- Give leaders a clear sense of the importance of immediate action.
- Gain the support of key influencers who can help you move the organization forward.
- Give ongoing encouragement, provide resources, challenge naysayers, and reward those who produce changes.

- Follow through to ensure the change is fully implemented.

Discussion

- What is the greatest challenge you face in leading people to change?
- What do you do to encourage people during a change process?
- Think of a change you have experienced at Grace Church. What did leaders do well in instituting the change? Where did the organization struggle with the change?

11-Building Effective Teams

- Choose team members carefully ([Luke 6:12](#) and [John 17:6](#)).
- Assemble teams with a diversity of personalities, perspectives, skills, and knowledge.
- Create an environment of trust and caring.
- Keep the team centered on its mission.
- Foster healthy communications.
- Assign challenging tasks and help members mature through their mistakes.

Discussion

- What benefits are there for serving on your team?
- What are you doing to help your people grow?
- Describe the diversity of personalities, perspectives, skills, and knowledge of people on your team.
- What do you do to keep your team focused on its mission?

12-The Leader's Pitfalls

Pride

- Blinds you to reality ([Pro 27:2](#))
- Makes you unteachable
- Makes you vulnerable ([Luke 18:14](#))

Sexual Sin

Safeguards:

1. Make yourself accountable to a few trusted friends.
2. Heed your own counsel.

3. Consider the consequences to your relationship with God, your family, and your church ([Pro 7:24-27](#)).
4. Develop boundaries that prevent you from being in tempting situations.
5. Maintain a healthy walk with God and ask Him to watch your every step ([Pro 14:15](#)).

Cynicism

Focus on things that give hope rather than dwelling on the negative. Remember who you serve.

Greed

Be careful to not let monetary rewards be your focus. A hunger for riches can destroy spiritual leaders.

Mental Laziness

Good leaders never stop learning. We need both experience and disciplined reflection on our experiences. Our minds needs regular renewal ([Rom 12:2](#)).

Oversensitivity

People who cannot handle criticism need not apply for leadership positions. Spiritual leaders do what is right and trust God to vindicate them. Don't let the negativity of a few detractors derail you. Take the seed of truth in the criticism and use it to better yourself. Seek God's approval above all else.

Spiritual Lethargy

Be careful to set aside substantial time to listen to God. Vary your study methods and places to keep things fresh. What you do "for" the church can never replace your personal relationship with God.

Domestic Neglect

Most leaders love their families; however, many fail to give their families the priority attention they deserve ([Deu 6:4-9](#)). Block out your calendar for key family commitments.

Administrative Carelessness

Be careful of four areas of administration:

1. Execution: Make sure you get things done. Be determined ([Luke 9:51](#)).
2. Conflict resolution: Be alert to conflict and work toward resolution.

3. Communication: Keep people informed. Answer critical questions promptly.
4. Culture: Pay attention to what behaviors you reward. Hire staff with attitudes that match the culture you desire. Consider modifying workplace layout and organizational structure to better support the culture you want to build.

Prolonged Position Holding

It becomes a problem when leaders see their identity as their positions. Spiritual leaders must yield their positions as God directs.

Discussion

Who are your accountability partners (trusted friends who challenge your behavior)?

Self Assessment

Rank order the Leader's Pitfalls according to which is most likely to cause problems for you (1=most likely, 10 = least likely).

	Pride
	Sexual Sin
	Cynicism
	Greed
	Mental Laziness
	Oversensitivity
	Spiritual Lethargy
	Domestic Neglect
	Administrative Carelessness
	Prolonged Position Holding

13-The Leader's Rewards

Heaven's Rewards

- God's Affirmation ([Luke 18:28-30](#))
- Fulfilling Your Divine Calling ([John 17:4](#) and [Acts 20:24](#))

Relationships

- Family ([Deu 6:4-9](#) and [Eph 5:22-6:4](#))
- Colleagues ([1Chr 11:10-47](#))
- Friends

Legacy

- Family
- Life Work
- Contributions to a Successor ([2Kgs 2:9-10](#))
- Kingdom of God ([Mat 6:33](#))

Discussion

- For you, what are the most rewarding aspects of serving as a leader?
- Which relationships have blessed your life as a leader?
- List some things your leadership has accomplished that may outlast your life.

14-The Final Challenge

What is the next step God wants you to take as a leader?

My Action Plan

Learning opportunities I need for this step: <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Books to read● Classes to take● On the job learning	
Coach or mentor I need for this step:	
Strengths I will bring to this step:	
What I need to learn or overcome during this step:	