

**"A Work of Heart"**  
**Reggie Mcneal**  
**Notes by Dave Kraft**

FOLLOWING ARE WORD FOR WORD QUOTES FROM THE BOOK THAT SEEMED WORTHWHILE TO ME

Only God knows how many would-be leaders turn away from the burning bush. They have "shrinkwrapped" God down to the size of their personal frailties and limitations. Without exception, all great spiritual leaders throughout history have found themselves in circumstances in which their leadership is both challenged and imperiled. Some leaders bring on persistent conflict through their own unresolved issues with authority or lack of people skills. The experience of the anointing is truly humbling to the leader, who knows that unless God shows up, the crowd goes away hungry. Many spiritual leaders do not lead from courage. They lead from fear. Fear drives many ministries. Fear of being disliked, of losing income, of failure, of conflict.

The drive to minister has to be fueled by the call and not dependent ultimately on the opinion of others, even significant others. Abrasive leaders who bully, cajole, intimidate, and manipulate have missed the basic competencies that qualify them for effective spiritual leadership. The leader cannot advance to the next level without passing the entrance exam—the call clarification. The lack of focus eventually bankrupts early dreams. This tension between human need and divine assignment constitutes a major heart-shaping dynamic. Jesus knew that crowd approval constituted a false measurement of His effectiveness. The great temptation and debilitator for many Christian leaders is not moral failure but compass failure. Sin is the failure to surrender life, moment by moment, to the rule of God. We sin when we place ourselves in charge of our lives.

Reggie talks about major subplots that God develops throughout the leader's life that significantly shape the leader. Here are five of them:

## # 1-CULTURE

We need leaders who view cultural connectivity as an essential aspect of fulfilling the Great Commission. They hold cultural relevance as a core value. Only when something goes on in church that can be explained as a God-thing will a spiritually fascinated culture pause to take notice. People want to see spiritual power demonstrated by transformed lives expressed in community.

Questions to consider:

- ◆ What forces, positive and negative, have contributed the most to your world-view?
- ◆ How do you see your leadership role vis-à-vis culture?
- ◆ How have you been uniquely prepared for your ministry role through cultural forces beginning with your family of origin?
- ◆ How have you transcended and impacted your culture?

## #2-CALL

A leader with a clear sense of call represents a formidable force. The sense of destiny emboldens, energizes and empowers the leader and the followers. Life options and job opportunities are always evaluated and determined against the "plumbline" of the call. Some leaders need to retool to stay relevant. Their ministry experience seems ill suited to take them to the future. The trip they prepared for has been canceled. We can call these new leaders "Apostolic Leaders", or leadership for a new apostolic era. These new leaders tend to be more collegial than competitive, more community focused than merely focused on church culture agenda. Leaders for a new apostolic era desire and are comfortable with leadership plurality.

Call is essential. Not coming to a clear understanding of what you have been called to do leaves you vulnerable to competing agendas and imposing personalities in your ministry world.

Called people should examine what they bring to the table. Do the gifts, abilities, and passions you have match what you are trying to do?

One leader ordered his life around the primary passion that God has affirmed in him. Construct your life so that you are doing more of what God is anointing in your life. What theological themes seem most operative or most often expressed in your ministry?-Grace, Hope, Holiness, Evangelism, Universal Priesthood, etc. Your life message reflects some significant truths about God.

Questions to Consider:

- ◆ What did you answer the call to do?
- ◆ Have you seen the attendant gift, talents, and passion come along?
- ◆ What has God anointed? When do you feel most alive in ministry?
- ◆ How has your understanding of your call changed over time?
- ◆ How is the call being expressed in what you are doing right now?
- ◆ How would you describe your life mission?
- ◆ What vision do you have for the current and the next chapter of your life's ministry?
- ◆ What strengths do you have to build on? How are you using them right now?
- ◆ What weaknesses must you manage in order to be more effective? What is your plan?
- ◆ What have you learned and what are you learning about the effectiveness of your leadership?

### #3-COMMUNITY

Leaders are not shaped in isolation. Leaders are shaped in community. And they are shaped by community. Work had been his drug of choice. Sex, food, money, power, pornography, work, adrenaline, and the need for approval join drugs and alcohol on the list of substance or process addictions. The ministry can become the mistress. He became the "Teflon" pastor when it came to relationships. No one stuck to him; eventually no one stuck with him.

Spiritual leaders who quit loving, quit leading. Unrealistic expectations and a critical spirit often go hand in hand. The Reformation will be completed when the clergy-laity distinction (in terms of ministry empowerment) finally yields to the biblical doctrine of the universal priesthood of all believers.

The work of God will finally return to the whole people of God. Whenever control types gain places of spiritual leadership, a negative energy begins to thwart creativity and synergy. Power must be given away in order to foster team and community that develops as a result. Coaching abilities differ from performing abilities. Most church leaders have been taught to perform. Few leaders have had training in coaching. Leaders who create teams figure out how to empower others, literally giving power away.

Questions to consider:

- ◆ What family of origin issues contributes positively and negatively to your leadership?
- ◆ How have ministry communities contributed to your heart development?
- ◆ How are you practicing community in your own life? In your family?
- ◆ What kind of community are you developing in your ministry assignment?
- ◆ What obstacles to developing community in your own life must be addressed?
- ◆ What challenges to community threaten your ministry community, and what are you doing about it?

#### #4-COMMUNION

Leaders often neglect communion more than any other heart-shaping arena. When communion with the Savior is missing, genuine missional enthusiasm and purpose give way to maintenance and routine, with an accompanying loss of joy. With false leadership, it is all about the leader, not those served. People are not served, they are used. A spiritual leader practicing communion leads from a solid, integrative sense of purpose. This vision for the future grows out of time spent with the one who has already been there. Communion is about relationship, not about fulfilling obligations. God's Sabbath, then, did not mean a cessation of activity, but a different activity.

The return on investment is much higher when leaders, like athletes, spend their energies on what they do well. Prayer must be dialogical if it is to change people and move heaven and earth. The practice of Sabbath requires a proactive determination on the part of the leader.

Great spiritual leaders are great because they enjoy exceptional communion with God. The failure to establish intimacy with the Almighty imposes a limit on genuine spiritual leadership. Well-communed leaders maintain a spiritual dynamic that allows followers to participate in the fresh movements of God in the world.

Questions to consider:

- ◆ Do you spend consistent time with God?
- ◆ What kind of time do you spend with God?
- ◆ What do you and God do?
- ◆ What are you learning about God because of your own time with Him?
- ◆ How do you encourage others in their own communion with God?

#### #5-CONFLICT

Challenges go with the territory of leadership. Die to expectations that everyone will love you. Die to getting a pass on being mistreated and persecuted. Count on being frequently challenged and sometime resisted. This perspective will set you free from having to lead from popularity or approval ratings. Trying to please everyone was not working. It never does. I told one leader to choose his pain. Leaders must have some internal vision and value grid for decision making that governs responses to conflict. A conviction secure in the heart as to why the leader is on the planet will not be overturned easily by travails.

Some leaders, not knowing exactly what their objective is, choose to go to the mat over every issue. The leader who cannot take a stand when the issue is the mission will fail to serve as a champion for those who believe in the mission. Leaders who establish compliance from followers as a litmus test for remaining in favor disqualify themselves as spiritual leaders. Leaders who do not exercise discipline over themselves, asking themselves the tough questions don't finish well. Some have great difficulty handling situations in which people get upset with them. Internally they place their self-worth on the block. The truth is, some criticism has no merit. Furthermore, some critics are jerks, pure and simple. The capacity to learn from experience is a hallmark of good leadership. The leader does not need to equate being kind to enemies with being untruthful or adopting a doormat position.

Questions to consider:

- ◆ Are you conflict-allergic, or do you love a good fight, or is the truth about you somewhere in between?
- ◆ What has shaped your view of conflict?
- ◆ How do you respond to those who challenge your leadership?
- ◆ What have you learned about yourself through conflict?
- ◆ In what ways might you be contributing to the amount or nature of the conflict you experience?
- ◆ What have you learned about God in times when your leadership has been threatened?
- ◆ How have you taught those in your ministry to deal with conflict?