

“The Spiritual Formation of Leaders”
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Kindle Notes by Dave Kraft

I am convinced a key to effective leadership is our personal, intimate, ongoing, and ever deepening relationship with God. As God-followers, we must discover and live within the biblical process rather than being borne along by the current “this-is-what-works” model. I believe we leaders need to live according to a biblical process, not according to a ministry model.

Observation #1 A model presents a product. Biblical process presents a path. A model became a blueprint rather than a resource to be drawn upon as needed.

Observation #2 A model arises from a situation and provides a sense of closure. Biblical process recognizes that God is continually at work in a situation. A model shares a product rather than a process.

Observation #3 A model draws attention to itself saying, “Look at it.” Biblical process draws attention to God and says, “Look to Him.” Asking the God question protects us from focusing on—and being enslaved to—a model. Biblical process relies on the leader’s growing relationship with Christ from whom comes focus, ministry ideas, and Spirit-led flexibility.

Observation #4 Models run their course. Biblical process is ongoing. Models have their season, but biblical process—and the nurture and power it offers leaders—will never be out of season.

Observation #5 Models say, “Follow it.” In the biblical process, Jesus says, “Come, follow Me.” Beware lest the it of a model diverts you from the Who of the biblical process.

Observation #6 Models tend to focus on management. Biblical process acknowledges mystery.

What happens in the Soul Room spills into the Leadership Room. What happens in the Leadership Room is brought into the Soul Room. This biblical leadership process is a two-room process.

Our work in the Leadership Room becomes more and more an expression of the work He is doing in us when we meet with Him in the Soul Room.

In summary, Jesus’ classroom for leadership development is one of relationship with Him and transformation by His power and His presence in our life through the Holy Spirit.

And I am convinced that when we regard Scripture as the authority for just the message but not also as the authority for the way we live out that message, we limit what God intends Scripture to be for us.

Allow the Bible to be the authority not only for what you believe but also for how you live, how you lead, and how you train leaders.

The Bible is a book of grace about pardon and process, not about perfection and performance.

Now, goals in and of themselves aren’t bad, but a problem arises when professional Christians establish clear, realistic goals with only passing reference to God or even independently from Him.

We don’t like living with the tension of mystery; we prefer the specifics of management.

Too often the Bible is the authority over the message these leaders believe, but it is not also the authority for the process by which they live and lead.

The dominant question in our growth as leaders must therefore be; what is happening on a daily and continuing basis between the Father and me...the Son and me...and the Holy Spirit and me? Such a perspective makes our leadership an ever-enriching and ever-expanding story.

As Eugene Peterson says, “The Jesus way and the Jesus truth must be congruent. Only when the Jesus way is organically joined with the Jesus truth do we get the Jesus life.”

Simply put, then, godly leadership is an extension of the leader’s relationship with God.

Our motivation to serve God must be rooted in our relationship with Jesus, in the Who rather than in any what.

In presentations at seminars and conferences as well as in conversations with fellow believers, I often hear more about outcomes than about following; more about programs than about Jesus; and more about gifted leaders than about committed followers of Christ.

Jesus wants His followers to know that the Christian life is not merely information to believe, but a Person to trust in and live with every moment of every day.

The effectiveness of our leadership hinges on the degree to which we are abiding in Christ.

We are so busy doing things for Him that we don’t often take time to be alone with Him.

I believe that this careless neglect of soul nourishment is a major weakness of the American church. More often than not we are ministry-driven rather than Spirit-led.

Do God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit know you as an occasional visitor to the Soul Room or as an abiding friend?

As Christian thinker Dallas Willard warns, unless we identify with these biblical folk, “we will not genuinely be able to believe the Bible or find its content to be real, because it will have no experiential substance to us.... [The Bible] becomes simply a book of doctrine, of abstract truth about God, which one can search endlessly without encountering God himself or hearing his voice.”

“I am learning to turn to the Bible as my first response rather than my last resort.”

Read what Henri Nouwen learned: Over the years, I have come to realize that the greatest trap in our life is not success, popularity, or power, but self-rejection.... Self-rejection is the greatest enemy of the spiritual life because it contradicts the sacred voice that calls us the “Beloved.” Being the Beloved constitutes the core truth of our existence.”

I find that many people desire the comfort and release of the Soul Room, but they continue to hold the reins of control in the Leadership Room. Have you found this true in your life?

It’s so easy for our self-image to be wrapped up in the accomplishments of our lives rather than in the presence of God within us, isn’t it? That’s another reason to regularly spend time in the Soul Room.

Mission—and this is a key point—is where I express my identity rather than establish it.

That’s why seminary **professor Howard Hendricks** challenges college graduates with these stirring words: My greatest fear for you, graduates, is not that you will fail. My greatest fear for you is my greatest fear for myself—and that is that you will succeed... in doing the wrong things—with the wrong means. You see, I spend a lot of time with people just like you. And what has disturbed me over the years is to find students from schools like this and my own who go out and depend on their giftedness, on their personality, on their education and training, on their experience. In fact, on EVERYTHING except God. To be sure, God will use your training; you’ve never had one that’s better.

God will use your giftedness; some of you are gifted beyond description. God will use your experience...because He's the one who gave it to you. He will use your personality...to reach people whom the rest of us could not reach with a twenty-foot pole. But for God's sake, don't depend on it. USE it, but come with that humility that recognizes in every scene and circumstance of your life, "Lord, without You, I can do nothing."

Temperament, leadership skills, giftedness, resume, and passions are of value, but they remain of secondary value in the formation and impact of my life as a leader.

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I wonder if the Soul Room is too often regarded as an optional rest stop on our quest for efficiency.

Does your busyness in the Leadership Room keep you from entering the Soul Room?

Let what God is saying touch your feelings as well as your thoughts. Read with a heart that asks, "God, what is on Your mind for me?" This is reading in the formative sense.

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God's Spirit leads me from Soul Room formation into Leadership Room influence. The lifestyle of healthy leaders is seamless: Soul Room and Leadership Room merge together.

The Soul Room is the control room for my soul, for my life—but it can be so hard to go there, can't it? Let's talk about five obstacles to spending time alone with God—and how to overcome them.

Altar-Building Challenge #1: "I've Tried Building Altars and I Failed."

Altar-Building Challenge #2: "My Life Is Full of Distractions."

Altar-Building Challenge #3: "I Don't Have Time."

Altar-Building Challenge #4: "I Cannot Add One More Thing to My 'To Do' List."

Prayer is not something I do, but Someone I am with.

Altar-Building Challenge #5: "The Bible Is Difficult for Me to Understand. I Don't Know What to Read or Even Where to Sit When I Read."

Unlike ordinary reading, spiritual reading is done to affect the heart, not to gain information."

Prayer doesn't prepare me for the battle. Prayer is the battle.

We goal-oriented folks too often rush to evaluation, and, driven by the let's-improve-the-event dynamic, we miss the joy of seeing God touch lives and transform people.

When we share the gospel in an attempt to reconcile people to God and make disciples, we must clarify that God's salvation involves a cross and a community.

The church as organization gives us a measurable bottom line, yet the tension between organism and organization is very real and continual.

We must focus on being the people of God before we do the work of God.

So what about leadership today? Do we lead by serving? Or have we allowed our job title, our training, our passion, or our resume to distract us from waiting tables?

The church today is too often quick to recruit Positional Leadership and too slow to develop Lifestyle Leadership.

Overflow from Lifestyle Leadership should be the primary reason for asking someone into Positional Leadership.

Again, I can't emphasize enough that both Positional Leadership and Lifestyle Leadership are essential. It is not either/or, but both/and. Yet the organism (Lifestyle Leadership) must be foundational and seen as primary in the development of the church body and its programs and ministries.

Lifestyle leadership is the soil out of which positional leadership grows and bears fruit.

Leadership Intentional #1: Abiding for Myself (Soul Room)

Leadership Intentional #2: Abiding for Others (Soul Room)

Leadership Intentional #3: Developing a Structure for Lifestyle (Leadership Room)

Leadership Intentional #4: Asking Meaningful Questions (Leadership Room)

Leadership Intentional #5: Creating Space for "Holy Hanging Around" (Leadership Room)

Leadership Intentional #6: Modeling the Process (Soul Room & Leadership Room)

Students are looking for models more than they are looking for information:

"It can't happen through you until it is happening in you."

Leadership Intentional #7: Remembering—Always—That the Ministry Is God's, Not Mine

At our church, we want members to be the people of God before they do the work of God."

"You are a people who stand in front of the mirror and let it define you. I want you to discover the excitement of standing in front of God and letting Him define you."

For too long we in the church have developed programs that tap into people's interests and skills, but we have not developed an accountability structure that nurtures their soul, heals their woundedness, or helps them develop a godly lifestyle characterized by abiding in Christ.

Health and lasting fruit come only from organism. So people who had grown in Lifestyle Leadership soil were soon invited into Positional Leadership. As the Lifestyle Leadership soil became richer,

The God-process moves us from communion with The Three to community among God's people.

I believe much of the tension in our society exists because of conflicting micronarratives and the loss of the metanarrative. And Jimmy Long concurs: "Lacking a common thread to hold us together, we grope around in the dark."

Sensitive leaders have a growing level of awareness that influences the ways they touch people, speak to people, and connect with people. Sensitive leaders maintain a posture that notices what others may miss.

For too long, the modern church has been living more as a gathering of people committed to events rather than as a family of people committed to one another yet sent on a mission into the world.

“Christians are to be good news before they share the good news. The words of the gospel are to be incarnated before they are verbalized.”

#1 Are your Christian life and your leadership style defined by a ministry model or by what I call a God-process of building leaders and ministries?

#2 The God-process of spiritual formation involves two rooms. Which room do you frequent most often? Why? Are the two rooms each essential? Explain.

#3 In a world flooded with information, where do you find wisdom? The Bible is to be the Christian’s guidebook, the primary source for developing healthy leaders who are being transformed by God and leading His people as a result of His work in their lives.

#4 God is a God of grace. In His love and grace, He continually extends two invitations to you. Have you accepted these invitations?

#5 So many voices! So many distractions! What really matters? You love Jesus’ invitations to you, but how will they fit into the schedule and flow of your life?

#6 The story of God’s pardon of our sins brings relief, cleansing, and freedom. But what else does the God process involve? What does He want to do in your life, for the rest of your days, so that you will continue growing in Him?

#7 Who is in the Soul Room? Is it a safe place to go?

#8 How does the Soul Room become a special place for personal growth as well as leadership?

#9 The church—populated as it is by sinners and existing counter-culturally as it does—gets good press and bad in this fallen world. What exactly is the church? And how is it to function effectively?

#10 The church has so many opportunities to be salt and light, a source of love and hope and healing, in this dark and hurting world. How do we know what really matters, how do godly leaders grow a healthy church, and how do we develop leaders who are continuing to grow spiritually?

The first soil is Lifestyle Leadership soil, the soil of invitation (“Come unto Me” and “Come, follow Me”); the soil of the Upper Room (abiding, loving one another, and bearing witness).

#11 What can you do to better understand—and, for the Lord’s sake, engage more fully with—our rapidly changing world?

#12 Christ’s people are so different from our culture’s postmodern people. Can God really impact the world through people like you—and if so, how?