

Small Group Leader Equip Night – Oct. 15, 2019 “Life Balance as a Leader”

What is your sign that your life is out of balance?

As leaders, each one of us has a heightened responsibility: Not just in what we do, and not just in how we do it, but in how to do all of it. And there are consequences for getting things out of balance.

That’s why we’re going to talk about “Life Balance as a Leader” tonight.

And we’re going to explore 3 REALMS where we can establish balance that will help us be healthy and effective.

- SPHERES
- RHYTHMS
- POSTURES as leaders

And we’re going to finish the night with answering the important question: “WHAT DO I DO WHEN I FAIL?”

SPHERES

Jesus established the best sequence for spiritual work.

There is an article that [Henri Nouwen wrote for Leadership Journal in 1995](#) that has changed the way I see the sequence of my life. In it, he takes one overlooked passage in Luke and builds a powerful vision for how we can shape our lives like Jesus’.

These three spheres are:

1. Solitude
2. Community
3. Ministry

Let’s see if we can see these 3 spheres in the passage:

Luke 6:12-19—¹²In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God. ¹³And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: ¹⁴Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, ¹⁵and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, ¹⁶and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

¹⁷And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon, ¹⁸who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were

troubled with unclean spirits were cured. ¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

First in Jesus' life and leadership was the sphere of...

1. Solitude

Verse 12—*all night he continued in prayer to God.*

“Why is it so important that you are with God and God alone on the mountain top? It's important because it's the place in which you can listen to the voice of the One who calls you the beloved. To pray is to listen to the One who calls you 'my beloved daughter,' 'my beloved son,' 'my beloved child.' To pray is to let that voice speak to the center of your being, to your guts, and let that voice resound in your whole being.” – Henri Nouwen

Each of us in here can tell of how God's voice has changed us and our leadership. How are you doing at solitude: Not advice, Not reading an instructive book, but Solitude? That alone will cause your cup to overflow into the next 2 spheres.

The second sphere in Jesus' life was...

2. Community

“...community is not loneliness grabbing onto loneliness: 'I'm so lonely, and you're so lonely.' It's solitude grabbing onto solitude: 'I am the beloved; you are the beloved; together we can build a home.'” – Henri Nouwen

How sweet it is when two or more people are so secure in their identity in Christ that they *can* let others in! For most of us, our Small Group is one branch of our close-knit community, along with our family and friends.

But Jesus' doesn't stop after he names his apostles.

The third sphere of Jesus' life was...

3. Ministry

“Ministry means to help people become grateful for life even with pain. That gratitude can send you into the world precisely to the places where people are in pain. The minister, the disciple of Jesus, goes where there is pain not because he is a masochist or she is a sadist, but because God is hidden in the pain.” – Henri Nouwen

We are called to ministry.

I have seen over the years that if something feels “off” in my life—if I'm in some sort of “funk” or “stagnant” feeling—it is typically attributable to the loss of one of these areas! Then it's up to me to re-embrace this area and give it back to God: whether my solitude, my community relating, or in ministry to others.

DISCUSSION QUESTION 1: Which sphere feels the most out of whack right now for you (solitude, community, ministry)? Why? How would you like to participate in God changing this this month?

RHYTHMS

Whether or not you are a super committed calendar-writer-downer like I am, or your calendar is in your head. And whether or not you think it's forgivable to be on your phone in the middle of a Small Group discussion:

I think we can ask 3 questions in regard to our rhythms that to relate to our calendar:

1. What rhythms do we need to integrate into our calendar?
2. What rhythms do we need to pull off our calendar?
3. What priorities do we want our calendar to reflect?

1. What rhythms do we need to integrate into our calendar?

I like this idea: "Don't add, integrate."

- For instance, if I know a night that will be open, I know who my top people are that I want to prioritize spending time with.
- Or a lot of you use where you sit on Sunday worship to *also* build into the people who sit nearby. (Which may be fellow Small Group members!)

Obviously, we often have to purely "add" new things to our calendar; but I think first asking what we can "integrate" helps us tie together our priorities without always overloading ourselves.

2. What rhythms do we need to "pull off" our calendar?

I like the words "pull off": Because, like a sticker, there might be things we can't pull off entirely from our calendar; but we can at least pull off part of it. (Like having the kids pick one sport instead of two. Or having permission to work late 1 night a week instead of 3-4.)

3. What priorities do we want our calendar to reflect?

- Did you know that our calendars reflect our priorities?
- I wonder what priorities your calendar is speaking about you. And if that's what you want it to say.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- 1: Let me ask: What is 1 thing you're considering "integrating" (or "adding") to your calendar right now that you think is in line with God's priorities for you?
- 2: What is 1 thing you're considering "pulling off" of your calendar right now?
- 3: What is a priority that you want your calendar to reflect that it isn't right now?

POSTURES

When I was in seminary, I had one favorite class. It was a 1-week intensive with Crawford Loritts. For those of you who don't know Crawford Loritts—he has pastored in the Atlanta, Georgia area for decades, written a number of books, been on Moody Radio, and he's the father of Brian Loritts, our recent THINK speaker.

His class was called “Biblical Leadership” (based on his book [“Leadership as an Identity”](#)), and he opened the class by saying this:

“Your assignment from God is impossible to fulfill, because it is spiritual in nature. That means you need the Holy Spirit.”

Friends—Let's not miss this. Yes, life balance is good. Yes, leadership is a great gift that the Lord has chosen to bless us with. But lest we think that we can do this with the “strength of our own arm,”—this work is impossible! Unless we have the Holy Spirit accomplishing this work of leadership through us!

Now it didn't end here. He said,

“I have spent years reading books on leadership. There are so many books on leadership. And eventually I came to the point when I just wanted to know what the Bible says about leadership. So I sat down and I looked through my Bible cover-to-cover and pulled out observations from every time I saw leadership in the Bible—every time God chose and used a leader. And I saw 4 things that God uses when he chooses a leader.”

Now I was getting excited! I was thinking these characteristics were gonna be “Nobility!” “Courage!” “Excellence!”—Like that. You know what they were? They were these:

1. **Brokenness**
2. **Uncommon Communion**
3. **Servanthood as an Identity, not as a Strategy**
4. **Radical, Immediate Obedience**

Whew! These are the postures of a Biblical Leader. Pretty upending, aren't they. Yet these are the exact characteristics God uses in his leaders: think of them: Moses, Joseph, Daniel, Jeremiah, Peter, Paul, John! They all have these 4 postures. And we desperately need them too.

1. **Brokenness**

Brokenness is a conscious, core awareness that you need God in all things.

Now brokenness doesn't need to wait for a crisis circumstance. Broken leaders aren't necessarily those who are constantly going through trial. (They can be.) But they are those who know that they are in constant deep desperation for God.

Like Jesus says:

John 15:5—*...for apart from me you can do nothing.*

Isaiah 57:15—*For thus says the One who is high and lifted up,
who inhabits eternity, whose name is Holy:*

*“I dwell in the high and holy place,
and also [ironically] with him who is of a contrite and lowly spirit,
to revive the spirit of the lowly,
and to revive the heart of the contrite.*

1 Peter 5:6—*Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of God so that at the proper time
he may exalt you,*

Dr. Loritts continues:

“I believe God uses brokenness as a tool to prepare you for the assignments He has for you. Brokenness is God’s way of adding weight, supernatural substance to your life and the assignments He gives to you. If you don’t have this sense of your inadequacy and His all-sufficiency, you will lead with your own resources and abilities. You will lose the awareness of your need.” - Crawford Loritts, *Leadership as an Identity*, 81

This room contains many stories of brokenness. Brokenness that God’s used to bring you here and use you in the ways he’s using you.

2. Uncommon Communion

As Dr. Loritts says:

“What we value the most will be the foundation upon which we build our leadership.” - Crawford Loritts, 88

And so:

“Because your assignments are beyond your ability, and because you need to depend on God for guidance, wisdom, and power, everything you do as a distinctively Christian leader should emanate from your walk with God.” - Crawford Loritts, 89

Just as we saw earlier that Jesus’ community and ministry emanated out from his solitude with the Father, we too need to go up early onto the mountain to pray.

First, because He is worthy. But also because no wisdom and no power for building anything in leadership comes without God’s giving it.

James 1:5—*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, and it will be given him.*

Psalms 127:1—*Unless the LORD builds the house,
those who build it labor in vain.*

*Unless the LORD watches over the city,
the watchman stays awake in vain.*

Whose strength are you tapping into to accomplish what God's calling you to do? How do you really operate? Is there prayer in your leadership? How do you surrender each step of leadership to the Lord?

God is forming you *in* your leadership:

“God is using what He has given you to do to not only accomplish His assignments but to make you what He wants you to become.” – Crawford Loritts, 93

D.L. Moody may have said it best:

“Why do so many workers break down? Not from overwork, but because there has been friction of the machinery; there hasn't been enough oil of the Spirit.” – D.L. Moody

3. Servanthood as an Identity, not as a Strategy

Unfortunately, even “serving” people can be a strategy to get people do what you want!

But we must do this from the heart of our identity:

Philippians 2:3--*Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves.*

Dr. Loritts frames it like this:

“The authority to lead is developed and cultivated not through prominence and power but rather through acts of service from a sincere humble heart. In this sense, others give us the ‘permission’ to lead because they have experienced the authenticity of our acts of love and service on their behalf. This profound humility is God's way of [us] leading His people.” – Crawford Loritts, 138

And lest we think that humility keeps us from really stepping up when stepping up is needed. Dr. Loritts also adds:

“It is not humility to refuse the do the difficult but right thing.” – Crawford Loritts, 132

Maybe a few metaphors can help us check in on where we land in Servanthood:

Is your leadership:

- A classroom—where you're teachable or always the teacher?
- A catwalk—where you have to be seen and get the recognition?
- A sports field—where you are comparing and competing with others?

Jesus sets our picture of leadership:

Matthew 20:25-28— ... “You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ²⁶It shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ²⁷and whoever would be first among you must be your slave, ²⁸even as the Son of Man came u, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

As Dr. Loritts says:

“This is what Jesus defined as greatness. You must be a servant. You don’t just act like a servant; you must become one. You are only ready to lead when you stop trying to prove your worth and value based upon your position and power.” – Crawford Loritts, 150

Wow! Are we ready for this: Stopping the need to prove our worth based on our position or our power? But “being” a servant?

How do I rate my leadership then, if not based on my power?

“The question every leader needs to ask is, ‘What am I willing to do so that the people I lead know that I love and care for them’? The answer is *sacrifice*.” – Crawford Loritts, 158

4. Radical, Immediate Obedience

This may be the most convicting posture to me. Maybe you feel a little stagnant spiritually right now; a little stalled in your leadership. Here’s what Dr. Loritts has to share with us:

“It is one thing to be content; it’s quite another to be complacent. It becomes easy to ignore the promptings of the Spirit of God to embrace God’s next assignment. We rationalize and settle into a comfortable disobedience. Gradually our fruit diminishes, our impact wanes, and we are left wondering, ‘What happened...What’s missing?’” – Crawford Loritts 174

And this:

“When God speaks, obedience is not something to be negotiated. There’s no such thing as partial obedience. We either completely do what God says or we disobey Him. God is to be taken seriously.” – Crawford Loritts, 171

I can’t help think of Moses here: “No Moses, don’t strike the rock, speak to it.” There was no partial obedience. God uses leaders who obey radically and obey immediately.

This takes courage. And courage can be simply defined as:

Courage: complete obedience in the face of opposition” – Crawford Loritts, 186

What is God calling you into right now? Are you listening?

And when you fail (as we will): Do you have a sensitive spirit that is willing to confess and return to listen to the Lord’s voice?

DISCUSSION QUESTION 3: Which posture is most difficult for you? Why? How would you like to take a step to change this?

WHAT DO I DO WHEN I FAIL?

Let me finish tonight with answering a final question: “What do I do when I fail?”

Many of us look at the previous realms and we are motivated: “Wow, this is really clear. This will help me make adjustments to my life balance as a leader.” But some of us look at these realms and feel bummed out. You might have walked in here thinking, “I’m failing as a leader. I’m failing as a mom. I’m failing as a spouse.”

How do we find peace as a leader, especially when we fail?
This is where one phrase sticks out to me, and it’s this:

“Gospel is better than perfect.”

You and I are going to fail in our leadership: of ourselves, our families, our Small Groups. And our response in that moment is the true test of our life balance. Has my entire leadership been resting on myself this whole time? Or has it been resting on Jesus?

It’s accurate to call “Repentance” a “turn.” But tonight, let’s realize what it really is: a “return.” Let me share 4 ways you can return to Jesus when you fail as a leader:

1. When you fail your SPHERES, return to the One Who Fills & Sends You.

Jesus: Jesus is the only person that ever modeled perfect solitude with God and community with others and ministry to the world. He was perfectly obedient; the perfectly balanced life. We will never ever match Jesus. And he died to take on our neglect: whether that’s short-changing God, being hands-off in community, or avoiding the ministry call.

You: After He forgives us, God fills us with his Spirit and sends us back into His presence, into his people, and into the world on mission.

2. When you fail your RHYTHMS, return to the One Who Reorders You.

Jesus: Jesus is the only one who lived every day and month for God’s glory. He ran the race first and he got the world record time! That’s what Hebrews 12(:1-2) says. (we run with our eyes fixed on the “Author and Perfecter of our faith.”)

You: And Jesus lets us look at him as Champion and that gives us the motivation to tear off the sins and entanglements keeping us from running this month well. God takes our burdens that are slowing us, because he cares for us (1 Peter 5:7). And he sets us free to run.

3. When you fail your POSTURES, return to the One Who Lifts Your Head.

Jesus: “As we read, “The Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.” Jesus came to serve you. He has served you.

You: So now when you fail in your leadership, return to him with thanks: that his leadership is what God counts. And he will pick you up and serve you more as you serve others.

Psalm 3:2-3—*many are saying of my soul,
“There is no salvation for him in God.”
But you, O LORD, are a shield about me,
my glory, and the lifter of my head.*