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SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

A Quick Focus

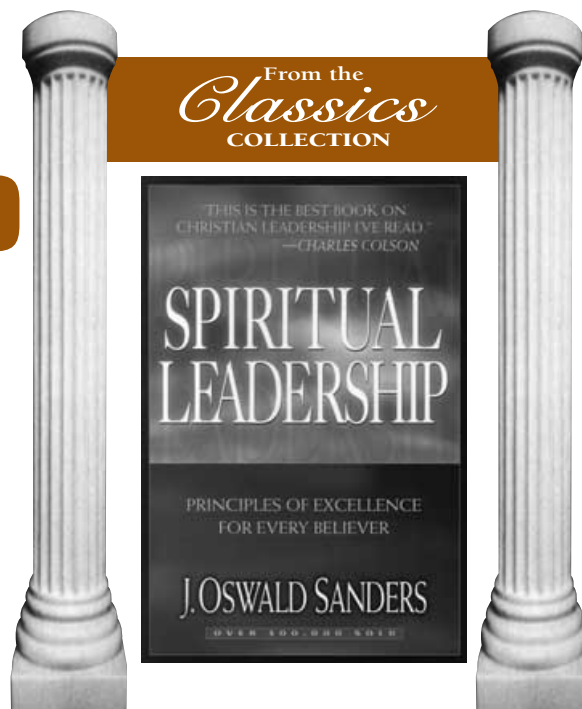
The Book's Purpose

- Derive practical and inspired principles of leadership directly from Scripture.
- Illustrate leadership principles through Scripture and the biographies of eminent men and women of God.
- Create a holy ambition in younger Christians to unreservedly dedicate themselves to the Lord's service.
- "[Re]kindle aspiration and crystallize a fresh purpose in the hearts of those further along the road of leadership."

The Book's Message

Christianity needs a powerful voice in today's world. Such a voice can only come from strong leaders guided by God and devoted to Christ.

Character, passion, and godliness are the marks of leaders God can mold and use in His service. We can learn about them by studying the accounts of eminent men of God-like Moses, Nehemiah, and Paul-as well as David Livingstone and Charles Spurgeon.



by J. Oswald Sanders
 Moody Press

The Church today needs strong leaders. Real leaders~the kind God describes in Scripture~are in short supply. God is seeking leaders who will place their talents and powers at His disposal so they can become leaders used for His glory.



Eight Main Points

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An Honorable Ambition

Should a person aspire to leadership? Desiring to be humble in the sight of God, many Christians are reluctant to say yes. After all, they say, isn't it better to be selected for leadership than to strive after it? In Jeremiah 45:5, the Lord says, "Should you then seek great things for yourself?" If a person is motivated by a self-centered desire to expand his sphere of influence, clearly he does not belong in a leadership position.

But Scriptures also tell us "to aspire to leadership is an honorable ambition" (1 Timothy 3:1). Here the Apostle Paul isn't referring to a posi-

tion of authority; he is talking about setting our sights on a life of service that characterizes a godly leader. Jesus Himself taught, "whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant" (Mark 10:43 NIV).

Ambition to be great, if focused on God's glory, is praiseworthy. Desiring to be greatest, however, is always wrong. We see this in Jesus Christ's rebuke of James and John, who both wanted the highest places of honor in Christ's kingdom. In His kingdom, true greatness isn't achieved by how many you govern, but how fully you give yourself to the Lord and serve others.



Who Can Be A Leader?

Businesses and ministries constantly search for strong leaders~and God searches for them, too.

- "The Lord has sought out a man after his own heart" (1 Samuel 13:14 NIV).
- "For the eyes of the Lord range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him" (2 Chronicles 16:9).
- "I looked for a man among them" (Ezekiel 22:30).

When God finds a godly man or woman who is wholly dedicated to serving Him, He uses that person to the limit. Examples include Moses, Gideon, David, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Adoniram Judson, William Carey, and a host of others.

"Spiritual leaders are not elected, appointed, or created by synods or churchly assemblies. God alone makes them."

God chooses and raises up spiritual leaders. Human election or appointment should simply recognize what the Lord already is doing through His most wholehearted disciples~the ones who are first and foremost servants willing to follow Jesus Christ's example (1 Peter 2:21) at great personal cost.

In Isaiah 42, the ideal servant is described as:

- Dependent on God
- Approved by God
- Modest
- Empathetic
- Optimistic
- Spirit-filled



Classic Definitions of a Leader

"Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose, and the character which inspires confidence."

~Bernard Montgomery

"Leadership may be defined as that quality that inspires confidence in subordinates as to be willing to accept his views and carry out his commands."

~Chester Nimitz

"There are only three kinds of people in the world~those who are immovable, those who are movable, and those who move them!"

~Li Hung Chang

"A leader is a man who knows the road, who can keep ahead, and who pulls others after him."

~John R. Mott

"A leader is a person who has the ability to get others to do what they don't want to do, and like it."

~Harry S. Truman

"It occurs to me that perhaps the best test of whether one is a qualified leader is to find out whether anyone is following him."

~D. E. Hoste

"The true leader will have no desire to lord it over God's heritage, but will be humble, gentle, self-sacrificing, and altogether as ready to follow as to lead, when the Spirit makes it clear that a wiser and more gifted man than himself has appeared."

~A. W. Tozer

Natural and Spiritual Leadership

Spiritual leadership often incorporates natural qualities, but it ultimately transcends them. Independent, self-confident, natural leaders usually insist on making their own decisions. In contrast, spiritual leaders depend on the Lord, place their confidence in Him, and seek His will.

Bernard Montgomery, one of the greatest allied generals in World War II, outlined seven qualities for leaders. This list also applies to spiritual leaders, who must

1. avoid getting swamped in detail
2. not be petty
3. not be pompous
4. know how to match people to tasks
5. trust others to do a job without meddling
6. be capable of clear decisions
7. inspire confidence.

Missionary statesman John Mott moved in student circles. In choosing leaders, he recommended asking whether they:

1. do little things well
2. have learned to focus on priorities
3. use leisure well
4. have intensity
5. know how to exploit momentum
6. are growing
7. overcome discouragement and "impossible" situations
8. understand their weaknesses.

How we handle interpersonal relationships also says something about our leadership potential. R. E. Thompson suggests these tests:

- Do other people's failures annoy or challenge you?
- Do you "use" people or cultivate them?
- Do you direct people or develop them?
- Do you criticize or encourage?
- Do you shun or seek out the person with a special need or problem?

Other tests suggested by J. Oswald Sanders:

- Have you ever broken a bad habit?
- Do you keep self-controlled when things go wrong?
- Can you handle criticism?
- Do people trust you with difficult and delicate situations?
- Can you make and keep friends?
- Do you depend on the praise of others to keep you going?
- Are you interested in all types of people?
- Can you forgive?
- Are you reasonably optimistic?
- Do you welcome responsibility?

Ultimately, spiritual leaders are servants. Their responsibilities include:

- showing concern for the welfare of others
- initiating wise courses of action
- providing guidance to others
- disciplining those who step out of line
- taking new responsibilities willingly

- starting each day eagerly
- not seeking praise
- not complaining
- bearing blame
- giving thanks

Some individuals are disqualified to serve as leaders. Certain traits simply obstruct a person's ability to lead effectively. This list captures seven of these qualities; people who exhibit them are typically not fit for leadership:

- People who are overly sensitive
- People who are quick to defend themselves
- People who make excuses
- People who are intolerant or inflexible
- People who are perfectionistic
- People who reveal secrets
- People who find it difficult to embrace other people's ideas



Biblical Requirements for Leaders

Insights from Paul

The apostle Paul was one of the most outstanding leaders of the early Church. The essential qualities of leadership he taught in 1 Timothy 3 remain relevant today:

SOCIAL

1. Be above reproach within the church. Don't give critics a rung to stand on.
2. Enjoy a good reputation outside the church. Don't be like the businessman whose employees always knew he had preached on Sunday because he was so ill-tempered on Monday.

MORAL

3. Be sexually blameless and faithful within marriage. This isn't a popular point, but it's just as essential now as in Paul's day.
4. Be temperate, not addicted to alcohol. Don't indulge in secret.

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MENTAL

5. Demonstrate sound judgment. Develop a well-ordered mind.
6. Be respectable. Maintain a well-ordered life.
7. Be ready and able to teach. Teaching well requires much time, effort, study, and prayer. Follow the example of John Wesley, who read widely every day and yet was known as a "man of one Book."

PERSONALITY

8. Be gentle, not a lover of controversy. Turn the other cheek. Never pick a fight.
9. Show hospitality gladly. Regularly welcome others into your home.
10. Be devoid of covetousness. Care nothing for money. Be willing to accept a ministry position that pays less, not more.

DOMESTIC

11. Maintain a well-ordered home, where mutual respect and supportive harmony are the keynotes. Never neglect your home to care for others.
12. If you're married, make sure your spouse is also willing to pay the price of leadership. If not, don't accept leadership responsibilities.

MATURITY

13. Don't accept leadership responsibilities before you're mature. Paul warns against appointing a novice or new believer. The only potential exception: when planting a missionary church overseas (compare 1 Timothy 3 with Titus 1).
14. As soon as you're in a position of leadership, begin training others. Help raise up other younger leaders. The biblical record shows that Paul did this with Timothy, Titus, and many others.



Insights from Peter

The apostle Peter was one of the other outstanding leaders of the early Church. In 1 Peter 5 he offers this advice to spiritual leaders:

- As a shepherd, properly feed and care for the flock of God. "A shepherd's work requires a shepherd's heart." This is your primary responsibility.
- Serve willingly, not by coercion. Serve out of love, not duty. "When God calls us, we cannot refuse from a sense of inadequacy" (Exodus 4:14).
- Don't focus on personal financial gain or fame. Remember Judas.
- Don't be dictatorial. Nothing disqualifies a leader faster than this.
- Set a worthy example for others to follow. Follow Jesus Christ in every sphere of life (1 Timothy 4:12).
- Serve with humility, and be willing to submit to God and others. Don't miss the lesson Jesus taught when He washed the disciples' feet.
- Remember the reward awaiting you when Jesus Christ returns. No reward on earth can compare.
- Cast your worries on the Lord. He always cares for you.

Insights from Nehemiah

Nehemiah is one of the greatest biblical leaders. Was it because of his methodology? Or character?

METHODS

1. Nehemiah inspired his countrymen.
2. He pointed out their shortcomings, yet gave them hope for the future.
3. He was a master at organizing difficult projects and diverse individuals.
4. He resisted his enemies without provoking a violent confrontation.

CHARACTER

1. Nehemiah was a man of prayer. This was his first course of action.

2. He showed courage. He risked his life for his countrymen, and didn't cower when threatened by Israel's enemies.
3. He demonstrated genuine concern for others. He identified with their sorrows and sins by fasting, praying, and weeping.
4. He exhibited keen foresight. He knew opposition would rise up against him, so carefully planned his strategy.
5. He was bold, yet cautious. He didn't reveal his plans to everyone immediately.
6. He was decisive. Nehemiah didn't hesitate to call the people to action.
7. He was uncommonly empathetic. He listened.
8. He accepted responsibility. He got the job done.

Insights from Moses

Like Moses, every spiritual leader experiences searching tests. Moses experienced these seven:

Compromise

In his epic contest with Pharaoh, Moses was repeatedly tempted to accept less than what the Lord commanded. Each time, Moses stood his ground.

Ambition

When the people of Israel turned to idolatry, God became angry and offered to wipe them out and raise up a new nation descended from Moses. The prophet prayed for the people, appealing to the Lord's glory and compassion.

The impossible situation

Moses experienced this test when Pharaoh and his army rushed toward the Israelites camped along the shores of the Red Sea. Instead of giving into fear and fleeing, Moses stood his ground and called on the Lord to save His people. Hudson Taylor noted three phases to any great work: impossible, difficult, *done*.

Failure

Moses and many other great biblical heroes of the faith failed—and yet survived, experienced God's grace, and went on to serve the Lord in even greater ways.

“Successful leaders have learned that no failure need be final, whether his own failure or someone else’s.”

Jealousy

Moses was deeply wounded by the jealousy of his own brother and sister, and later by the jealousy of Korah and his henchmen. In both cases, Moses refused to vindicate himself—and the Lord intervened. Like Moses, let God defend you.

Too much work

"The degree to which a leader is able to delegate work is a measure of his success."

Moses learned this from his father-in-law, Jethro. When Jethro saw Moses couldn't lead a nation alone, he advised his son-in-law to share authority with hundreds of other gifted, godly men of honor.

Old age

We need to remember that God always is raising up the next generation of leaders. One of those who assisted Moses, Joshua, proved to be God's appointed man. What could have been a crisis actually provided to be God's best plan to lead the Israelites into the Promised Land.



15 Essential Qualities

Scripture and experience teach the following qualities are essential for true spiritual leaders:

Discipline

"Before we can conquer the world, we must first conquer the self."

Learn to obey discipline imposed from without, and then take on a more rigorous discipline from within. "Many who drop out of ministry are sufficiently gifted, but have large areas of life floating free from the Holy Spirit's control."

All leaders must first learn to follow. Cultivate self-discipline early in life. Without it, you're disqualified from becoming a true leader. "The young man of leadership caliber will work while others waste time, study while others snooze, pray while others daydream."

Face difficult tasks head-on; don't procrastinate. Accept the hardest of assignments. Rise early each morning. Retire early each evening. Learn to give and receive.

Vision

"Those who have been most powerful and permanently influenced their generation have been 'seers'—people who have seen more and farther than others."

Biblical examples of this are plentiful. Moses "endured as seeing him who is invisible." Elijah saw the vast army before him *and* the hosts of heaven.

Charles Cowman, the founder of the Oriental Missionary Society, was "a man of vision. Throughout his life he seemed to see what the crowd did not see, and to see wider and fuller than many of his own day. He was a man of far horizons."

William Carey had a vision for reaching the world while others couldn't see beyond their parish borders. The life-work of A. B. Simpson "seemed to be to push on alone, where his fellows had seen nothing to explore."

Remember, "eyes that look are common; eyes that see are rare."

Vision includes both optimism and hope. No pessimist ever made a great leader. Don't play it safe. Take risks.

“History is on the side of venturesome faith.”

Wisdom

"If knowledge is the accumulation of facts, and intelligence the development of reason, wisdom is heavenly discernment."

It "involves knowing God and the subtleties of the human heart. More than knowledge, it is the right application of knowledge in moral and spiritual matters, in handling dilemmas, in negotiating complex relationships."

Theodore Roosevelt said, "Wisdom is nine-tenths a matter of being wise in time." Most of us are "too often wise after the event."

Paul prayed that God would fill the Colossian believers "with the knowledge of his will through all spiritual wisdom and understanding" (1:9).

"If knowledge comes by study, wisdom comes by the Holy Spirit."

Decisiveness

"When all the facts are in, swift and clear decision is the mark of a true leader. A visionary may see, but a leader must decide."

When he's sure of the will of God, "a spiritual leader springs into action, without regard to consequences." Examples include Abraham (Genesis 14), Moses

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(Hebrews 11:24-27), and Paul (Acts 9). They made momentous decisions without looking back or planning an exit strategy if things turned sour.

"The catalog of saints in Hebrews 11 is a study of vision and decision. They saw the vision, counted the cost, made their decisions, and went into action." Don't procrastinate when faced with a decision. "To postpone decision is really to decide for the status quo." True leaders live with the results of their decisions. They don't blame others when they fail.

Courage

"Leaders require courage of the highest order~always moral courage and often physical courage as well."

Although Paul faced many frightening situations, they didn't stop him.

Shortly before his death, Martin Luther recalled his journey to Worms and appearance before the court of Emperor Charles V, where he was ordered to recant his teachings. He said, "I was afraid of nothing: God can make one so desperately bold."

Remember, "God calls leaders to be of good courage and not to capitulate to fear.... Because fear is a real part of life, God gives us the Holy Spirit, who fills us with power." As we see in the lives of the apostles after Pentecost, the Holy Spirit replaces fear (John 20:19) with courage (Acts 4:13). Compare 2 Timothy 1:7.

"People expect leaders to be calm and courageous during a crisis." Like Hezekiah (2 Chronicles 32), we should immediately turn to God in such situations.

Humor

Laughter is a gift of God to be cultivated. When chided for using humor in his sermons, Charles Spurgeon replied, "If only you knew how much I hold back, you would commend me."

Helmut Thielecke wrote: "Should we not see that lines of laughter about the eyes are just as much marks of faith as are the lines of care and seriousness?" Humor is an important asset in ministry.

Anger

Great leaders know when to get angry. This was true of the Lord Jesus. Anger motivated William Wilberforce to earnestly oppose and eventually banish slavery from the British empire.

Martin Luther claimed that he "never did anything well until his wrath was excited, and then he could do anything well." Anger must not be abused, of course (Ephesians 4:26).

Patience

John Chrysostom called patience the queen of virtues. Patience isn't passive. Instead, as William Barclay reminds us, it's "victorious endurance [and] constancy under trial." Patience is most often tested in personal relationships.

True spiritual leadership doesn't dictate orders or rush ahead of those who must follow. It isn't harsh with those who are weak (Romans 15:1).

Friendship

Another test of true spiritual leadership is the number and quality of one's friends. David and Paul excelled in this quality.

A. B. Simpson received this compliment: "The crowning glory of his leadership was that he was a friend of man. He loved the man next to him and he loved mankind." John R. Mott advised leaders to "rule by the heart. When logic and arguments and other forms of persuasion fail, fall back on the heart-genuine friendship."

Jesus Himself formed a deep friendship with His disciples. We do well to heed His example.

Tact and diplomacy

"[T]act is the ability to deal with people sensitively, to avoid giving offense, to have a feel for the proper words or responses in a delicate situation."

Similarly, "Diplomacy is the ability to manage delicate situations, especially involving people from different cultures, and certainly from differing opinions."

How well can you set aside your own preferences and negotiate with others without compromising principle? Joshua demonstrated great tact when he divided the land among the 12 tribes and later when a civil war almost broke out against the tribes of Reuben and Gad.

Unconsciously, William Carey was a master diplomat. One of his colleagues wrote: "He has attained the happy art of ruling and overruling others without asserting his authority, or others feeling their subjection~and all is done without the least appearance of design on his part."

Inspirational power

Leaders know how to inspire others in the most difficult of situations. When Jerusalem was in ruins and the people paralyzed with despondency, Nehemiah inspired them to rebuild the city walls within eight weeks.

General Mark Clark said of Winston Churchill: "I doubt if any man in history has ever made such grim utterances, yet given his people such a sense of strength, exuberance, and cheerfulness." After the fall of France, the British cabinet was in despair. Churchill entered their chambers and announced, "Gentlemen, I find this rather inspiring."

Executive ability

A leader must know how to translate vision into reality. God is a God of order and method.

"It is a great truth that the Almighty and All-merciful is the All-methodical too."

~Sir George Smith

15 ESSENTIAL QUALITIES continued from page 6

The Methodist church is a testimony to the organizational genius of John Wesley.

The therapy of listening

Master this ability to get at the root of problems. Don't be a compulsive talker or give an answer before you've truly heard your colleagues. Seek to understand; don't prejudge. Never be too busy to listen.

Oliver Wendell Holmes said: "To be able to listen to others in a sympathetic and understanding manner is perhaps the most effective mechanism in the world for getting along with people, and tying up their friendship for good."

The art of letter writing

Leaders must write. What we write reveals much about us. For example, note the integrity, honesty, encouragement, and concern for the spiritual welfare of others evident in Paul's letters. Letters cannot communicate facial expressions, so guard your tone when you write. Strive to be as clear as possible.

Above all else, Spirit-filled

This is the one indispensable quality. Every Christian leader in the book of Acts was Spirit-filled. This was prerequisite even for those who took care of widows.

"To be filled with the Spirit means simply that the Christian voluntarily surrenders life and will to the Spirit. Through faith, the believer's personality is filled, mastered, and controlled by the Spirit."

Indeed, genuine Christian service is simply the outgrowth of the Holy Spirit's power working through a believer who is surrendered to Him (John 7:37-39).

A. W. Tozer warns: "Whoever would be indwelt by the Spirit must judge his life for any hidden iniquities." Never forget, "each of us is as full of the Spirit as we really want to be."



Four Vital Disciplines

Through discipline and diligence, true spiritual leaders discipline themselves in several areas. Four key disciplines on which to focus include prayer, time management, reading, and growing in leadership skills.

Prayer

No one ever prays enough. Dean C. J. Vaughn once said: "If I wished to humble anyone, I should question him about his prayers. I know nothing to compare with this topic for its sorrowful self-confessions."

Prayer is the most ancient and simple spiritual discipline. Paradoxically, most also find it the most difficult. "Mastering the art of prayer, like anything else, takes time. The time we give it will be a true measure of its importance to us."

Martin Luther was as busy as any of us. When asked about his agenda for the next day, he once replied: "Work, work from early till late. In fact I have so much to do that I shall spend the first three hours in prayer." Jesus found prayer essential. So should we.

Prayer is hard work. It's a sacrifice. It can be agonizing. The Holy Spirit Himself prays for us. We're commanded to pray in the power and energy of the Spirit. We can oppose Satan and his forces by our prayers. We also can influence people.

Without exception, great leaders in the Bible knew how to pray.

"When God lays a burden on our hearts and thus keeps us praying, He obviously intends to grant the answer."

Time

"Life's value is not its duration but its donation—not how long we live, but how fully and how well."

J. H. Jowett wrote: "It is never the supremely busy men who have no time." The greatest challenge: not too little time, but redeeming the time we have (Ephesians 5:16). So set clear priorities. Delegate secondary matters.

Jesus set the example for us: He was never in a hurry. He knew he had enough time to do His Father's will, and focused on that which mattered. Master interruptions. Pray with the person who asks to see you. Set the interview on a spiritual plane from the start. Don't waste time.

John Wesley and F. B. Meyer measured their days in five-minute increments. Learn how to multi-task, especially during meetings. Do the best you can and leave the rest with God. Don't procrastinate; be decisive.

Reading

Like Paul and Tyndale, great leaders keep studying until their dying day. Foremost, read God's Word. In addition, read great religious writings both classic and contemporary. Also read biography and history and from other fields, including science.

Remember Francis Bacon's rule: "Read not to contradict or confute, not to believe and take for granted, nor to find talk and discourse, but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tested, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested."

"The leaders should read to have fellowship with great minds. Through books we hold communion with the greatest spiritual leaders of the ages."

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FOUR VITAL DISCIPLINES continued from page 7

Read for your own spiritual benefit and intellectual growth. Acquire new information and learn from the classics. Stretch your mind by reading outside your comfort zone. Read deeply, but not indiscriminately. Choose books as carefully as you choose friends.

Make notes as you read. Record significant facts, statistics, and quotations. Then "cut a channel" from your reading to your public speaking.

Growing

"Every Christian is obliged to be the best he can be for God." Continually seek to improve your leadership abilities. Reach for your potential. Maximize your strengths. Recognize your weaknesses and make needed corrections. Set goals. Take risks.

Increase your passion, especially for evangelism. Focus your life on what's most important. "Exert yourself to lead" (Romans 12:8 NEB). Demonstrate intensity and zeal as a leader, never sloth. Follow the examples of Jesus and Paul. "Keep at boiling point by the Holy Spirit" (Romans 12:11, as translated by Harrington Lees). Recall times when your heart burned for the Lord. Pray that the Holy Spirit will rekindle that passion (Luke 11:13).



The Perils of Leadership

The perils of spiritual leadership are often subtle, but the prudent leader will vigilantly guard against these dangers.

Pride

Ask yourself: How do I react when others are applauded? How do I react to my own problems and weaknesses? How do I respond to criticism?

Egotism

"One of the repulsive manifestations of pride, egotism is the practice of thinking and speaking of oneself, of magnifying one's attainments and relating everything to the self rather than to God and God's people."

Popularity

"Woe to you when all men speak well of you," Jesus warned. It's not a virtue to be disliked. But if respect and even love degenerate into adulation, beware. Urge people to set their affections on Jesus Christ.

Infallibility

No matter how Spirit-filled you are, you're going to make mistakes. Peter, James, and John are perfect examples of that. Applaud those who come up with better ideas. Admit your weaknesses, errors, and failures.

Indispensability

Don't cling to authority long after you should have transferred it to a younger person. Better to retire early than late. Never circulate the idea you're indispensable. And refuse to believe anyone else who suggests such a thing.

Elation and depression

Jesus warned against this in Luke 10:20. Elijah experienced this in 1 Kings 17-19. When you get depressed, review his story and witness how God ministered to him. Look to the Lord to renew you—and give you a larger ministry.

Prophet or leader?

Has God called you to be a well-respected leader? Or an often unpopular prophet? Don't try to pursue both roles. They don't overlap easily.

Disqualifications

Paul admitted that he even was vulnerable (1 Corinthians 9:27). Rigorous self-discipline against sexual immorality and other sins must be maintained at all times, at all cost.



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