

ROCK SOLID LEADERSHIP

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Every pastor wishes that every church member
knew this...

LEADERS ARE POSITIVE

I asked several pastors what they look for the most in choosing a leader in their church. They all started with Biblical/spiritual things, which is great. They said, “a faithful tither, someone who knows the Word, a person who is full of the Holy Spirit and portrays a love for God’s people, etc...” Then, they got down to something practical. All C.E.O.’s, Senior Pastors, business owners, and any other person who wants his or her “vision” to be successful is looking for someone who is easily liked by many people. The body of Christ needs leaders who people are drawn towards. If someone likes you, they will follow you cheerfully. People are drawn to joy, enthusiasm, consistent cheerfulness, and a smiling face. Basically, what I’m saying is, everyone loves a positive person.

Proverbs 15:13 A cheerful heart brings a smile to your face; a sad heart makes it hard to get through the day.

If you want to become a successful leader (at least in church) you need to be liked by people. After all, if someone doesn’t like you, why would they follow you? The opposite of “positive” is “negative” and people are not attracted to negativity. I’m not saying that you have to be the most popular, outgoing, enthusiastic individual at church, but you must be positive; positive when you’re not feeling good, positive when you didn’t get your way, positive when the bottom falls out, and positive when you are trying to lead God’s people into victory.

No person wants to follow someone who is negative. In fact, regardless of how smart you are or how much experience you have, people seek wisdom and advice from optimistic people. God has called us to be encouragers, not discouragers. The word “optimistic” has the same root as “Optometrist.” An optometrist is a doctor who helps people to see better, not someone who helps people see worse.

Over one hundred times a day we have the choice to live either positive or negative. These decisions we make are based on what we’re thinking. One translation of Colossians 3:2 says that we are to *set our minds and keep them set on the positive things*. This means that when you are leading your family, your employees, your spouse, or your church, we have to set our minds ahead of time to be in a “positive” mode.

We have to remember that God is a positive, forward focused God. There is nothing negative about Him. So when we speak, think, or act negative, we are going against God.

I read that it takes longer to fly from South Carolina to California, than from California to South Carolina. The reason is because of the jet stream. The Jet stream is this massive air that always flows from west to east. It always goes in one direction. So, in order for us to be Godly leaders, we have to get in agreement with God and lead His people in the “positive” direction. Otherwise we’ll be going against the natural (or supernatural) flow of the Holy Spirit.

Philippians 4:8 says “whatever is true, whatever is pure, whatever is right, whatever is honest, whatever is lovely, whatever is holy; if there is anything worthy of praise, think on these things.” Notice how Paul said the word “whatever” six times. He was saying that if you can find even one percent of something positive, then think about that. However, it is human nature to point out the negative,

whether there's one percent or ninety-nine percent of negative. No pastor wants a leader under him/her who has to be picked up off the floor every other week because they're constantly having an emotional sour day. As leaders we must make it a habit to find the good, the Godly, the optimistic thoughts and then, base our decisions on those attributes.

SOLVE PROBLEMS

One of the greatest attributes of a positive leader is to look for ways to solve the problem. It is true that there will be many situations in which the "negative" is screaming very loudly. In fact, as leaders, those under us who have what seems to be a negative situation will always approach us. We can either join with them, agree that there is a problem, or we can lead them in the direction of solving that problem.

As a senior pastor, it grieves me to be brought problems without also being brought solutions. Honestly, I'm GREAT at finding problems; ANYONE can do that. Thank God, He's also given me the tremendous gift of being a quick problem solver.

In Exodus chapter 18, Moses actually assigned leaders to become problem solvers. This is a great assignment for us to learn. If someone under you brings you a problem, teach him or her to be a problem solver by asking him or her for three solutions. Allow them to process what's going on. After enough times of finding solutions, they will have gained this valuable, life-changing lesson. Don't forget, this means that when you bring a problem to your leader/pastor, always bring three solutions with you. Pretty soon

you will have gained wisdom, experience, and will be equipped to make those choices on your own (using Godly wisdom, of course). This will actually suppress a lot of the strife you may have in your home. It's okay to present your spouse with a problem, as long as you bring him/her solutions. Proverbs 21:19 says that it is better to live in a tent in the desert than with a nagging and fretful woman. I'm sure that verse goes for a fretful man, too. We don't realize how safe and peaceful our homes should be. A lot of homes are filled with negative, fault finding people, who love to present problems without ever coming up with ways to solve those problems.

LEARN TO GREET

If you've never experienced a positive, loud, excited, enthusiastic greeting from someone who loves you, my friend- you have been missing out! This is one of the greatest blessings we can give someone. I heard someone say that the two most favorite words every person loves to hear is their first and last name. As leaders we should always greet those whom we want to lead with a loud, enthusiastic greeting that includes their name. Therefore, know the names of those whom you want to lead. I can honestly tell you that nobody is going to follow someone who doesn't care enough to learn their name.

This principal can be used in your home or even at the office. If you really want to brighten someone's day, use a "super hero" name for him or her while still involving his or her real name. As an example, one of my sons name is Zach. So we will call him "Big Zach," or "Zach Attack," or we will rap a rhyme about him when he comes walking in the door from school.

With our son Asher, we will call him “the Hulk.” With Elijah, we will say “How’s the man with the plan who ain’t got a tan?” We call Logan, “Logy Wogey.” Selah is our “Princess Selah.” And if I told you what I called my beautiful wife this book would have to be rated PG 13.

This concept can and should be used for our church as well (except for the names you use on your spouse). Sensational Suzy, Marvelous Mary, “the smiling couple” and any nickname or positive adjective that you can think of and using it to describe your fellow servants will always warm someone’s day.

OPTIMISM BREEDS PROMOTION

People love to be promoted. Leaders should be people who have fun serving God and fulfilling their destiny. Have you ever seen someone serving God who isn’t having fun? Does that make you want to serve God with them, or stay far away from them? One translation of first Corinthians 13:4 says that *Love is kind...* love is never negative. In other words, when we are portraying God, we should be as positive as we can be.

Negative people miss opportunities for promotion. One of the main reasons that a person cannot lead God’s people if they are negative, is because negativity spreads like wild fire. Leaders are people of influence and I do NOT want any person to influence my friends in a negative way.

Call me “crazy” but I think it’s FUN to fulfill my destiny and continuously receive new and exciting promotions that God has ready for me. In Numbers chapter thirteen Moses sent twelve men into the Promised Land to spy it out and determine the best course of action. Ten of the twelve men came back and said, “the land is rich and fertile and it flows with milk and honey. But there are giants, and we are not strong enough to attack them; they are more powerful than we.” The other two spies gave a more positive report. They said “let us take the land; we are well able to conquer it.”

There were two million Israelites waiting and listening to hear what the spies said. Within minutes all two million people began crying and complaining, saying “we wish we had died in Egypt.” After it was all said and done, the Bible says that those ten spies brought back “an evil report.”

Notice how the Bible refers to something “negative” as “evil.” Why is that? It’s because whatever goes against God is called evil, and remember, our God is a positive God.

Unfortunately, that evil report spoken by ten leaders destroyed the lives of two million people. Only two people made it into the Promised Land, and it is no coincidence that those two people were the two positive spies.

You could say that there were two million people up for promotion. God wasn’t looking at who was the smartest, who had the most experience, or who had natural leadership ability. God was looking at who was POSITIVE. Let me encourage you to stay away from negative people. Do not hang around them, and please don’t listen to what they say. Negative people will talk you out of your dreams, they’ll dominate the conversation, and they will ruin the atmosphere of your office or home.

Silence may prevent you from being negative, but it doesn't qualify you for being positive. We have to be verbal in order to be positive. So if you are a quiet person and want to successfully lead people, SPEAK UP! Your mouth shows what your heart is full of. Hopefully, you are full of Jesus.

As you wander through life, wherever you go, keep your eye on the donut and not the hole. It's easy to stay focused on the hole, but if you want to be a successful leader, follow the command to set your mind on the positive things.

LEADERS INITIATE

One of the greatest qualities you will find in a person who accomplished great things for the kingdom of God and led many people in a direction of true victory is that they have initiative. Someone who has initiative is able to see a problem and then quickly fix that problem. You can have 1,000 people following you, but if you don't initiate change, then they will follow you around the same mountain year after year.

If you see a full trashcan, take some initiative and take the trash out. If someone is sitting alone, take some initiative and ask if you can sit with him or her. A true leader doesn't wait to be asked before he/she acts, a true leader creates momentum when there is none.

All through the Bible the men and women who produced the most fruit were those who took the initiative to get things accomplished. When we get to church on Sunday morning, we shouldn't look for how we can get a blessing; we should look for ways that we can be a blessing. The people who complain the most are the ones who never get anything accomplished.

I find that there are two kinds of Christians: dreamers and doers. And really, that one statement can separate a leader from a non-leader. Are you dreaming, or are you doing? Do you see things that need to be fixed, accomplished, and taken care of? Or do you fix things, accomplish tasks, and take care of people? What have you accomplished this week? Have you served anyone? Have you been convicted of anything and repented to God? Have you made a new friend at church? If your answer is NO, and you desire to continue to lead God's people, it's time to get up and get something accomplished. Good intentions don't produce anything for the kingdom of God.

DON'T STOP NOW!

It's easy to get stuck in a rut, where we're not growing spiritually or improving our relationship with God. It's easy to get lazy and comfortable with the level that we have already reached. The problem

with that is, you will get passed by. As a pastor I am required by God to produce opportunities to train, develop, and grow every member of my congregation. Those who continuously take part in tiny groups, small groups, Bible studies, etc. will surpass those who don't take time to study the Word and serve others. Proverbs 1:23 says that complacency will destroy the prosperity of people. What this means is that wherever you are right now, no matter what you've obtained, how smart or successful you are right now, once you "throw in the towel" when it comes to stretching yourself spiritually, you will begin losing all you have worked for thus far.

Every leader is constantly in a gear; they are in the forward gear, the reverse gear, or in neutral. I do not want anyone who is in reverse or neutral leading the sheep God has entrusted me with. No matter how "slow" you are driving, as long as you are in the forward gear, you're growing. Will Rogers said "even if you're on the right track, if you sit down, you'll eventually get run over."

Proverbs 4:18 The longer righteous people live, the brighter they shine. That tells me that God wants to take us further than we are right now. If your life hasn't been getting brighter and brighter, either you've fallen asleep at the wheel or you haven't taken advantage of the open doors your pastor has available to help you grow. We are commanded several times in the New Testament to find our God given gift, develop it, and constantly use it to help build the body of Christ.

DON'T SETTLE FOR "GOOD ENOUGH"

One reason that leaders stop improving their walk with Christ is because they experience a large attack from the enemy. Satan loves to knock us down and then kick us when we're down. Don't be fooled into allowing a setback, a failure, or even an offense, to stop you from getting back up and moving forward. Don't let the enemy whisper that subtle lie in your ear, "it's okay to settle where you are. At least it's good enough." God's not looking for leaders who *settle*, He's looking for mighty men and women who will step out and honor the God of More than Enough.

In Genesis 11, Terah took his son Abram and set out to the land of Canaan (the promised land), but when they got to the city of Haran, the Bible says that they settled there. No doubt it was hard to travel back in those days. They didn't have "Two Men and a Truck."

Terah, Abram's father, started great. I find that most leaders are very excited to be asked to lead. We all start excited, ready for the challenge, focused on the future. However, after things get tough, someone hurts our feelings, or the enemy attacks, many former leaders stop and settle in the land of Haran. Haran represents the land of "good enough." Don't settle for the land of "good enough."

There's something called "destination disease." This is a disease that anyone can get regardless of race, age, nationality, or even religion. It's when we reach a certain goal in life, a position in our career, a level of comfort in a relationship, then we kick back and put our car in neutral. But what we don't realize is if we aren't changing, then nothing is changing. And if nothing is changing, then everything is staying the same.

Leaders don't stay the same; we are constantly going forward. When is the last time you experienced increase; increase in your finances, marriage, small group, whatever area of ministry you oversee? Have the people whom you lead grown spiritually? Does

your family have more peace this year than they did three years ago? Are you more in Love with Jesus today than you were five years ago? If the answer is NO, then maybe you (as the leader) have gotten stuck. If we keep doing the same thing, the same way, year after year, then nothing will change. Therefore, if I'm not receiving increase in my ministry it's not God's fault. He doesn't need to change, I need to change.

DON'T BE PASSIVE

A passive attitude is the worst attitude a leader can have. A passive attitude portrays the same attitude that you see in someone who doesn't care at all about the call of God on his or her life. One person may be in neutral and the other in reverse, but neither is moving forward.

What's interesting is that Abram (Abraham), the father of our faith, didn't settle for "good enough." In Genesis 12:5 it says that Abram took his wife, his nephew, and all the possessions they had in Haran, and went to the land of Canaan. I don't know about you, but I would have rather had Abram as a leader in my church, than Terah.

Terah was called by God to take those whom he was leading to the land of Canaan, but he didn't. For whatever reason or excuse, Terah got stuck in a rut and never got out.

We should force ourselves to get in a place where we are constantly growing in the wonderful things of God so that we don't stay in a rut for years at a time. I refuse to be at this same place next year. I will constantly grow as a pastor, a husband, a father, and a friend. My destiny is too important to settle where I am. I love my family, my friends, and my fellow leaders too much to stay where I am right now. I like where I am today, but

I know I'll like where I'm going to be a whole lot more!

ALWAYS IMPROVE!

One thing that helps me to stay forward focused is when I ask God, my wife, and my closest friends "what are some areas in my life that that I can improve in?" These people love me very much and they never condemn or criticize me. They always praise me, cheer me on, and then graciously ask me questions concerning certain areas of my life in order to help me hear what God is trying to tell me. However, if I am unaware of areas that I need to improve in, I will never be the conqueror God has called me to be and it will be that much easier to live a lazy life. I can never be a conqueror if I never step out onto the battlefield.

Proverbs 10:4 Laziness will make you poor, but the hand of the diligent makes rich. Could it be that we're not being promoted in certain areas of life because we've gotten lazy? When is the last time you listened to a teaching CD, or read a book? Do you take notes in church? What are you doing to improve the skills or ministry that God has put in your lap?

Our inspiration needs to be backed up by our perspiration. Stop wishing that you could touch more lives, help more people, or have more responsibility. Just do it! Like the Nike commercial. Trust me when I tell you, whatever we give our time, money, and energy to, we will end up falling in love with. Don't you want to fall in love with Jesus and His people? Then stop wishing and start doing. There's no such thing as a complacent leader. Those two words don't belong in the same sentence. Let this chapter relight a fire that once burned bright on the inside of you. Fan the flame!

Humble, hard working leaders receive eternal rewards in Heaven and touch many lives on earth.

LEADERS HAVE INTEGRITY

This chapter, by far, is my favorite. God will never excel someone in a position of leadership unless they have strong convictions to become and grow, as a person of INTEGRITY. All throughout the Bible we see that one of the greatest qualities a Christian can have is to be a person of excellence and integrity.

Luke 19:17 Well done excellent servant! Because you have been faithful with little, I will put you in charge of much.

Do you see the two qualities that Jesus first requires of any person before He puts them in charge of much? The answers are *excellence* and *faithfulness*. Excellence is when we go the extra mile to do what's right. Excellence is when we keep our commitments. In other words, a leader does not tell someone they're going to do something and then not do it. If that person has a reason that they couldn't keep their commitment, they always let their leader know ahead of time.

A man or woman of integrity will always give 110% to whatever they commit to, whether they get paid \$8 an hour, \$20 an hour, or volunteer. If a person of integrity can't do something 110%, then they don't make that commitment. Not one time in the entire Bible did God use a leader who was mediocre, half hearted, sloppy, lazy, or slack.

EXCELLENCE GOES A LONG WAY

In Genesis chapter four, Cain and Abel (two brothers) both brought an offering to God. However, God was much more pleased with what Abel offered than what Cain brought. The Bible doesn't go into detail, but it does say in Hebrews 11:4 that Abel offered God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain. I imagine that Cain brought a sloppy attitude, showed up late, left early, and possibly forgot to take a shower. I can imagine that Abel was smiling as he entered into the presence of God, holding his very best offering, dressed for success, and desired to please God with his whole heart.

Leaders go the extra mile. In Bible days, when a Roman soldier was walking through a city, they could require a person to carry their armor for one mile. After that mile they had to find someone else to carry their equipment. Jesus said in Matthew 5:41 If someone compels you to go a mile, go with him two miles. In other words, if you're asked to usher, don't just stand there and do the very minimal to get by; escort people to their seat, ask someone who's coughing if they need some water, smile when you pass out the bulletins. What I'm saying is, look for ways that you can go the extra mile.

If you only do the very minimum of what has been asked of you, you will never be able to lead anyone else. God doesn't want leaders who are inactive; He's looking for leaders who go above and beyond the call of duty. No matter what your position is in the kingdom of God, be as excellent as you can possibly be. God hasn't called any of us to be average.

Colossians 3:23 Whatever you do, do it with all your heart as for the Lord and not for men. Remember that the Lord gives rewards. Too many people serve in many areas with half their heart instead of one or two areas with all their heart. Please don't ever forget that when you clean up the breakfast table in the fellowship hall, you're not doing it for men, you're doing it for the Lord.

GOD IS WATCHING

My wife, Alison, has always been a woman of integrity. One of the first attractions I had to her, other than her outward beauty, was how honest and excellent she was in all she did. Before we got married she worked at a tanning salon. She once told me that her back was hurting due to cleaning the tanning beds. Ali isn't very tall and those tanning beds are very deep, so it takes a lot of effort to clean them and wipe them down. Even though her boss only asked her to clean the bottom of the beds, Ali always went the extra mile to clean the top of them too. She could've done the minimal required and got a way with it. Nobody would've ever known if she had never cleaned the top of the tanning beds. Her boss wouldn't have cared either way. However, Ali told me how she loved her job and always felt compelled to go the extra mile. Is it any wonder why God promoted her so much in life and allowed her to marry me? What an honor! What a promotion! What a great leader she has become by being my wife? (I'm only kidding...for the most part).

Let me ask you a question. If you were God (and thank the Lord, you're not), and you were looking for a leader to lead your children, wouldn't you look for someone who has integrity and goes the extra mile, even when nobody is looking? Alison knew that no person was watching her. She knew that taking the extra time and effort to clean the top of each tanning bed wasn't going to get her a raise from her boss, but Ali also knew that she wasn't working unto man, she was working unto God! In the Greek language (which is what most of the New Testament was originally written in), the word "excellence" can be translated into the word "prosperity." We all want to prosper, but it won't come if we're slack, half-hearted, always looking for the easiest way to get by, lazy, or dishonest.

DON'T EMBARRASS GOD

Matthew 5:16 Make your light shine, so that others will see your moral excellence, and praise your Father in heaven.

It is downright embarrassing to have a leader who represents me leave a mess behind, misspell words on a handout, leave a bathroom dirty, do just enough to get by, etc. If I get embarrassed when someone represents me with a lack of integrity, just think about what it does to God. We are representatives of Christ. The Bible also translates that word into "Ambassadors." This means that everywhere we go we are representing Almighty God.

One of the greatest attributes that a leader possesses, that brings me as a pastor such joy and sense of loyalty, is when a leader sits on the front row of church, worships with all their might, and has a Bible in their hand during the sermon. The only other quality that

puts the icing on the cake is when they take notes. This, to me, shows loyalty, commitment, excellence, and is the greatest example of leadership that can be shown. People are watching leaders more than anyone else. Each leader should be someone who I, as the pastor, want to “rub off” on the other church members. I want my church family to imitate our wonderful leaders.

If you don't have enough integrity to call your leader when you aren't going to be at church, or at a small group meeting, or a music practice that you have committed to, then why would God allow you to be a leader over people who do have integrity in those areas? If you don't have the integrity to show up on time when you're serving, then how will you have the integrity to show up on time when you're leading? What kind of ambassador are you?

INTEGRITY EARNS YOU REWARDS

I heard about this General Contractor who didn't have much work due to the economy. His best friend was a very wealthy man and felt compelled to help his friend out. So this wealthy businessman gave his GC friend a check for \$200,000 along with a set of plans for a new house. He told the GC, “I want you to build me a new home. I don't have time to bother with it. I believe you will do a good job and I promise to pay you very well when you're done.” This Contractor was so excited. After studying the plans he had a thought, *If I cut a few corners nobody would know and I could pocket some of that \$200,000.*

He purchased the cheapest concrete possible. He watered it down and saved almost \$4,000. He bought the cheapest lumber he could find; it was bent, crooked, and warped, but he didn't mind because he knew it would be behind the walls and nobody would see. In fact, he did the same thing with the plumbing, the electric, and many other areas of that house. When it was all said and done he was able to pocket nearly \$50,000 and still have his friend's \$200,000 home built according to the plans (as far as the eye could see).

He called his wealthy friend to come by and see the new house. This businessman was very impressed. On the surface the house looked perfect. As they continued touring the home, the General Contractor was anticipating the payment from his friend who promised to pay very well. After they finished admiring all the work, the businessman looked at his friend and said, “I don't need a new house. I already have a beautiful home. I simply wanted to help you out.” He threw the GC the set of keys and said, “Congratulations! You just built yourself your brand new home!” This contractor almost passed out. He couldn't help but think, *If I knew this was going to be my home, I would've done a lot better job.*

The truth is, we are all building our own home. Every compromise we make puts a crack in our foundation. Psalms 18:20 tells us that the Lord rewards us according to our integrity. What kind of leader are you? Do you do the very minimal required, or do you honor God with every minute of service you give to His body?

That builder moved in to his new home and within three months there were foundation problems. Six months later the walls were cracking, the plumbing leaked, and the electric didn't work. It cost him more to fix all the problems than the \$50,000 that he saved by being dishonest.

Leaders come and leaders go. Most leaders without integrity last about as long as that house. Between six and nine months it is very

apparent what kind of fruit a ministry leader is producing, all dependant upon their level of excellence. The level of our integrity will equal the level of our rewards.

BE HONEST

I love honesty, and I hate dishonesty. *Honesty* and *transparency* go hand in hand. Some people think honesty is defined as not lying, but I believe that a humble person who has integrity will be very transparent. Which in turn, is real honesty. I am very careful to guard my heart from people who are not transparent. The friendship we have with others is based on the level of transparency they choose to live by. That level of transparency allows us to see how much we can trust them. Why would someone not be transparent unless they are trying to hide something? Maybe they are hiding hurt, pain, un-forgiveness, insecurity, addictions, etc. Either way, it's still unhealthiness.

One of the greatest hurts that a pastor can face is when a leader is deceitful or dishonest. I don't brag on myself much, but I will say that I strive to be a very honest man. In fact, I have been told that I'm too honest at times.

I enjoy being 100% transparent. My motto is, the more transparent someone is, the more you can trust him or her. Why is that? Because the only way you know how much you can trust someone is based on how much you know someone. The level to which you can trust them is based entirely on the level of their integrity. In other words, you can't trust a person who you don't know. You have to know them first. The more you know them (or the fruit they produce), the more you know which areas you can trust them in and which areas you can't trust them in.

I know my children very well. I know almost everything about them. This gives me a lot of information to determine what kind of fruit they produce and in what areas of their life. If one of my children has a lot of integrity when it comes to keeping their room clean, then, I can trust them with new furniture or a bigger room one day. If one of my children always irons their clothes, puts them away properly, and are very grateful when we buy them new clothes, then, they will continuously get more clothes as a reward. However, that same child who keeps his room clean may not have integrity when it comes to handling money. Therefore, even though I love them very much, I cannot give them my credit card without asking for a receipt after any purchase. Basically, the higher level of integrity a person has the higher they can be trusted.

In 2nd Kings chapter 5, a very rich and influential man named Naaman discovered he had leprosy. So Naaman traveled a long way to find the prophet Elisha to heal him. Long story short, after obeying what Elisha asked him to do, God healed Naaman. Naaman was so excited that he insisted Elisha accept a gift, but Elisha refused and told him to *go on home*.

When Naaman left to go home, Elisha's servant, Gehazi, ran after Naaman and told him that Elisha changed his mind and wanted a gift in return for the healing that took place. Naaman had no idea that Gehazi was lying so he gave Gehazi 3,000 pieces of silver and some fine clothes. Later that night after Gehazi returned home, Elisha asked him, "Where have you been?" Gehazi answered, "I haven't been anywhere."

Have you ever noticed how one compromise always turns into another, then another, then another? The enemy loves to trick us into lying instead of confessing, coming clean, and repenting. The

devil knows that one lie always turns into another lie when we aren't humble enough to be honest.

Elisha asked Gehazi a very powerful question: "Was not my spirit with you when you met Naaman?" Just as Elisha's spirit was with Gehazi, we need to remember that God's spirit is with us wherever we go and in everything that we do. Because of what Gehazi did, Naaman's leprosy was transferred to him; and that's the last we ever hear of Gehazi.

What's so interesting is the potential Gehazi had to be a great leader. Elisha served under Elijah. After Elijah died, Elisha received a double anointing as Elijah. If Gehazi had been a man of integrity, if he was honest, learned to go the extra mile even when nobody was looking, he could've received a double anointing as Elisha. Gehazi could've been four times the leader as Elijah. Friends, don't let something small prevent God from bringing you something big. Leaders don't just talk the talk; we walk the walk. We're not perfect, but it is obvious that we strive for excellence.

LEADERS ARE FAITHFUL

This is by far the most important chapter in this book.

Luke 19:17 ...because you have been faithful with little, I will put you in charge of much.

Please hear me loud and clear, Jesus will NOT put you in charge of MUCH if you haven't FIRST proven that you can be faithful with little. The greatest test that I give people who want more responsibility (leading) is to see how faithful they can be in the little areas that they are already serving in.

You would think that a good pastor would never set someone up for complete and total failure, yet it happens all the time. We all want our church members to become confident, feel special, have the pleasure of leading a group of people, and be put in charge of much. So, what do we do? We put them in charge of much, and what happens if they haven't first been faithful with little? They fail, get angry, lose the confidence that we so desperately wanted them to gain, and they leave church and live as insecure sheep without a shepherd. Friends, the Bible tells us that the more we serve our church family WELL, the more we will gain great confidence (1st Timothy 3:13).

I've done this several times and I still have to seek God's mercy and loving kindness to help heal the condemnation that I bring to myself when I picture the faces of those former leaders. People who wanted to make a difference so badly but never passed the test of first being faithful with little. I liked them a lot. I wanted them to be secure and confident without putting in the hard work, and instead of recognizing the little areas that they haven't yet been faithful with, I put them in charge of much.

I wish I knew then what I know now: *I can instill confidence, encouragement, and love into someone without putting them in a*

position of leadership. In fact, they can grow as a servant to another leader and gain much more enjoyment out of serving the body of Christ than taking more responsibility as a leader who hasn't passed the test.

If Jesus were the senior pastor of Solid Rock (wouldn't that be cool?) He would never have allowed those beautiful people to have a leadership position. Not because He didn't love them, not because they weren't amazingly gifted, but simply because they were not yet faithful in the little areas. If someone complains or has a bad attitude when they're asked to do something small like clean the bathroom, take out the trash, or burn CD's, then they will never be in charge of much.

DREAMS FULFILLED

In the book of Genesis, God gave Joseph a BIG dream. This dream, if fulfilled, would put Joseph in charge of an entire country. However, just because God gives you a dream doesn't mean that it's going to come to pass, we have to pass the tests. Even though God wants us to be in charge of much, He loves us too much to allow that to happen without first being faithful with the little. He knows that it could be detrimental to give someone much, only for him or her to lose it due to not having gained the wisdom, character, and attitude that comes from being faithful with the little things.

When Joseph shared this big dream with his brothers, they became jealous of him and sold him into slavery. Joseph was so faithful and such a man of integrity that his master put him in charge of everything he owned.

Unfortunately, the enemy attacked Joseph and caused him to be accused of a crime that he didn't commit. Joseph was thrown into

prison. His attitude remained Godly, he continued to use his God given gifts and talents while in jail, and even the warden of the prison put Joseph in charge of everything in the entire jail. The Bible says that the Lord was with Joseph and made all he did to prosper.

If our God is a faithful God, don't you think that He will cause us to succeed when we too are faithful?

After thirteen years of being faithful in the smallest of areas as a slave and a prisoner, God allowed Pharaoh to have a dream that nobody could interpret, nobody except for Joseph. What if Joseph hadn't been faithful in the jail? What if Joseph thought, *I'll start using my gifts and talents after I'm in charge of much?* Pharaoh would've never heard of the young man in prison who could interpret dreams. If that had been Joseph's attitude, he would've never been put in charge of all of Egypt.

SMALLNESS BRINGS BIGNESS

A lot of people say, "after I'm in charge of much, then I'll be faithful with the little." But friends, it doesn't work like that. How can God trust us with more, if we can't do what's right with the little He's already given us?

You would think that "attending church faithfully" would be a given expectation for any potential leader (if they are in town and physically healthy), yet many people need to be reminded of this. It's actually very easy to spot a true leader; they're on one of the first few rows at church, with their Bible in their lap and their hands lifted high, and/or they are serving other members of the body as much as they possibly can while still enjoying the church service. Our leaders are an example to others; they are a light to the world, a witness with their life.

So, how is it that a person who wants to lead others in the body of Christ stays home on a Sunday morning when they have company in town? If you were in love with Jesus, wouldn't you want your family and closest friends to worship with you and not keep you from worshipping? Do you realize that when you allow someone else to keep you from serving your church family, you have subconsciously portrayed to that person that they are more important and of greater value than Jesus Himself? It's like telling them, *You come before my church family, my service to the King of kings, and my day to worship the Lord with fellow believers.* I wonder if Jesus ever gets sad when we show our love to a person more than toward Him and His body.

If I steal from God with the little I make now, do you think God is going to give me more to steal from Him? If I don't bring my Bible to church when I'm sitting in the pew, I won't bring it to church if I'm preaching. If I can't let a little offense go as a server, how will I have the maturity to let a big offense go when I'm a leader? (Trust me, the more you lead, the harder it is).

Numbers 12:7 Moses is My most faithful (reliable, proving trustworthy) servant; I put him in charge of all My people.

When you see someone at Solid Rock who gets to church early, tithes their income, serves with their whole heart each week, worships God freely and lives to love people- that person is either a successful leader, or they are going to be one very soon.

FAITHFULLY OBEDIENT

When we get to Heaven, God isn't going to ask us how many TV shows we watched, or how many hours we spent on Facebook, or how many church services we attended. He's going to ask us, "How many disciples did you make?" In more applicable terms, were you faithful in the little areas of ministry so you could be put in charge of bigger areas, and thus able to lead more people into a mature walk with Me? Luke 12:48 to whom much is given, much is required.

Pastors have common inside jokes about people who can't go three weeks at being faithful in an area, and at the same time they're begging the pastor to put them in charge of something. If a small group member won't do the work of the small group, will they do the work if they were "in charge" of that small group? If a member of the prayer chain doesn't take the time to pray for the concerns they get via email should they be asked to pray for people at the altar? If a member of the church doesn't faithfully tithe his or her income (which Malachi says is stealing from God), should they be trusted to teach our children, youth, or adults about putting God first in the area of finances?

If we don't fulfill the requirements asked of us where we are today, why should we be given more which will in turn present us with more requirements?

David started off as a shepherd. Back then the shepherd was one of the most insignificant jobs. Most of the servants or even slaves were the shepherds. Yet David served in that position faithfully. Day after day David took care of what belonged to another man as if it was his very own.

Luke 6:12 if you have not been faithful with what is another man's, who will give you your own? Because of his years of faithfulness, when God was looking for a king, He went straight to David. Even

though David's success happened overnight, it was the years and years of honoring God in the insignificant areas, behind the scenes, that caused the open door for David's life. David could've easily slacked off when he wasn't getting any recognition, but he knew the Biblical truth of leadership: be faithful with little and God will put you in charge of much.

I wonder how many people had the same opportunity as David and Joseph, but they were unreliable and never passed the test? There's a potential leader in all of us. So take the little God's already put in our laps and be faithful with that, then you'll see God begin to trust you with much more, just like He promised.

LEADERS LEAD THEIR FAMILY

Sometimes we read things in the Bible and immediately make excuses for why it's okay to completely ignore that scripture or passage. I'm a pastor and I've done it. I don't know why I do it. When we do this, I believe subconsciously we're saying, "my way is better than God's way. God's way is old school and too strict." As an example, the book of Timothy was written for a Pastor to understand the role of a church leader. God has always had standards for anyone who leads His children.

1st Timothy chapter three: If someone is eager to be a church leader, they desire an excellent work. A church leader must be without fault; he must have only one wife, be sober, self-controlled, and orderly; he must welcome strangers in his home; he must be able to teach; he must not be a drunkard or a violent man, but gentle and peaceful; he must not love money; he must be able

to manage his own family well and make his children obey him with all respect. For if a man does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of the church of God? He must be mature in the faith, so that he will not swell up with pride and be condemned, as the Devil was. He should be a man who is respected by the people outside the church, so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the Devil's trap.

Church helpers must also have a good character and be sincere; they must not drink too much wine or be greedy for money; they should hold to the revealed truth of the faith with a clear conscience. They should be tested first, and then, if they pass the test, they are to serve.

Their wives also must be of good character and must not gossip; they must be sober and honest in everything. A church helper must have only one wife, and be able to manage his children and family well. Those helpers who do their work well win for themselves a good standing and are able to speak boldly about their faith in Christ Jesus.

Wow! Do you see it all? Did you see the word *excellent*? Did you see the part about *money*? Did you read what happens when a leader is not mature in the faith? Did you read the part about being tested first? You cannot be a gossip. You will not be able to speak boldly about Jesus until you have done this work well. It's interesting how many people want to get in a position to speak or preach without ever doing what the Bible clearly says is the prerequisite steps.

THIS LETTER IS FROM GOD

I'm sure there have been times where you received something in the mail that you didn't necessarily LIKE! Maybe it was a bill that

was not accurate, or a letter from a relative that irritated you. When this happened, did you get angry with the mailman?

Well friends, I am the mailman. I didn't write these letters. They came from God. The Apostle Paul wrote them for the pastors and the church all through the power of the Holy Spirit directly from the throne of God Almighty. So don't shoot the mailman. I am simply the messenger.

Would you be angry if your church held the standard that the BIBLE says is the best and wisest way? Would you want your church to go against God's Holy Word? If so, take it up with God because we ain't changing. We will strive to always obey God. This is the ONLY solution. This is the ONLY way to fulfill what GOD has for us.

How many of those scriptures above did the enemy deceive you into reading so quickly and nonchalantly that it didn't hit home? I know it's easy for us to say, "*Man, I'll never be able to grow in all those areas!*" However, that's not true. In fact, it's actually a lot easier than it looks. If you're humble and teachable, it will happen. How? My honest answer is: through tiny groups or short groups. Getting together with people of faith and verbally discussing what God is saying in His Word.

FAMILY FIRST

The last references I want to point out are the scriptures about managing your family and having children who respect and obey you. This is a quality that God says we need to mature in before we try to lead His children. Doesn't this make so much sense? If you can't manage your own immediate family, how in the world can you manage someone else's children? If we can't get our own kids to attend church, serve, represent God in their outfits and attitude, stand up during worship, obey us or show respect, then what makes us think that we can encourage someone else's kids to do

those same things? If we can't lead the children who we love the most, how can we lead the children who God sends our way?

Believe me when I tell you that this has to be the most difficult test. It's not easy to manage your family. Ali and I have five children and we have each other. Trust me, it's not simple, but it's worth it. It's worth staying up all night long to talk through an issue until there's peace in our home. It's worth forcing our children to attend church until it becomes a habit. It's worth the time, the energy, the humility, and the emotional struggles, to have a fun, faith filled home.

How dare we take on the responsibility to pour into a person at our local church MORE than we do our own spouse and children? I'm not saying you shouldn't serve, give, lead, or encourage until you have the perfect family! I'm saying that we should get our lives in balance.

GET BALANCED

If you don't serve your husband, but you give everything you have to your "ministry," what is that going to do to his faith? If you attend church, pray, worship and love Jesus, but you don't bring your children with you, what is that saying about Jesus? *He's not really that important.* If you are able to force your children to go to school, how come you can't get them in church? Don't you want to do all that you can to prevent your family from going to Hell?

Please take this in balance. Our family put the “funk” in “dysfunctional.” We have had our fair share of internal family feuds. I personally have had the feeling, *I can't believe I'm a pastor who just screamed at the top of his lungs at his own children*. But, at the end of the day, we WILL worship Jesus together. And no matter what happens, I WILL be at church. I will serve my church family, I will bring my offering, and whoever lives in my house, will do the same thing.

We don't get burned out in church ministry, and we don't ignore our family. One way that our church enforces this safe boundary is that our leaders don't oversee more than two areas of ministry and those who serve don't serve in more than three areas of ministry.

PERSEVERE

I don't think the book of Timothy is saying that we shouldn't lead unless we have a perfect family, or no one would become a leader. Every Christian is supposed to be part of a local church and serve in some area at that church. Everyone should serve, but only those who are WILLING to lead their family should lead others.

If you haven't been leading your family properly, I encourage you to get all the material you can. Lead by example. Pray for God's help, and do whatever it takes to submit to His Word. One quality I love to see in a leader is perseverance. That means that when the going gets tough, the tough get going. Don't stop moving forward. Make a list of short-term goals for you and your family. Pursue those goals each week and within a few months, even though there's no perfect family, you will have a peace about the direction of your home. You will see God's favor in a new way. And you

will be confident in leading His children in that same Biblical direction.

LEADERS PUT GOD FIRST FINANCIALLY

The Bible tells us that our own heart can deceive us. In other words, a person can think with everything in them that their heart is in the kingdom of God and they love the church and want to serve it, and be totally misled at the same time.

Matthew 6:24b You cannot serve both God and money.

If you think it's difficult as a pastor to tell when someone is genuine about their desire to lead others and whether or not their heart is in the right place, you're wrong. Regardless if the potential leader has succeeded in every way this book has described, unless they are a faithful TITHER they have no business leading at Solid Rock. The number one way that a pastor knows if someone's heart is in the kingdom of God is if his or her money is there also. This is why I require every leader who serves God's people with me, to tithe. The tithe is the first ten percent of our income, and wherever we put our treasure, that is the direction our heart is going to go.

Matthew 6:21 Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

To be honest, we really require our leaders to be givers. A giver is someone who puts God first in the area of his or her finances with the tithe (which is the minimum requirement from Jesus), and then listens to the voice of the Lord for further direction in the area of giving. God may tell you to give someone a cake, buy someone's lunch or bless somebody with a \$100 bill, but all of that comes after the tithe.

Proverbs 3:10 Honor the Lord with the first of your income and you will overflow with more than you need. Notice that the scripture doesn't say that you will be blessed first, and then you obey God. It says to obey God and then you will be blessed.

WHERE IS MY HEART?

If you had the choice between a faithful tither or a non-tither to pray for you, lead you in a bible study, teach your children, lead you in praise and worship, which would you choose? Before you answer that, remember that this determines if their heart is really in the kingdom of God and for their church family!

Let me ask that same question a different way. Do you want someone pouring into you who loves you, or someone pouring into you who says they love you but they really don't?

This subject is one of my top three most favorite Biblical subjects of all time and I could easily write thousands of pages on the topic of financial obedience, but I'll spare you.

There are over 2,000 verses in the Bible about money.

Approximately 60 of those verses are about how we should enjoy the money God has blessed us with. Approximately 1,940 verses in the Bible about money discuss what a battle money can be if we choose to disobey. The way I see it is, if a leader can pass the money test, they are on the way to pass all the other tests that will arise.

There are so many things I would like to teach you about this subject, but instead I'll share my honest, transparent heart on the matter. Every person who has ever hurt my family, our church, or me, was a non-tither. There has never been a faithful tither at Solid Rock who didn't grow spiritually, worship freely, serve loyally, and give unselfishly to our church body. I care so much about the amazing people God has entrusted me with that I will never allow someone to lead them whose heart isn't truly in the kingdom of God.

TITHERS HAVE INTEGRITY

Every non-tither who joins our church, leaves in a negative way. This tells me a few things. 1) Even though they gave their word that they would honor God with the tithe before they joined the family, they lied. 2) They loved money more than God. 3) Their heart was deceiving them and they didn't even know they were being deceived. 4) Sooner or later, no matter what I do for a person or how much I care about them, if they don't put God first financially, they will leave the family of God.

That last point hurts me like you wouldn't imagine. Do you know what it's like to pour your time, energy, and care into a person only for them to turn their back on you and walk away like it's no big deal? This is what non-tithers do. That is why I will never get close to another non-tither again. I am told to guard my heart. I am also told in 1st Corinthians 5:11 to never associate with a Christian who is greedy.

Remember, when we refuse to bring the tithe to our local church, we are stealing from God (Malachi 3:10). Let me ask you a question; is it just as wrong to steal 1%, as it is to steal 9%? If a person is only bringing 9% to God they are still stealing. This is a gauge to determine the level of a person's integrity. If a potential leader has heard what God's Word says about this area and refuses to obey it, then if they will steal from God, even 1%, just imagine what they would steal from their brothers and sisters in Christ. I've discovered that my time is worth a lot more than money. I don't like my time to be stolen; I want my time invested. Every

person who does not tithe and knows what God's Word says concerning that area, will steal the time and energy of those around them. When my heart isn't right, no matter what else I do, nothing is going to change. Everything in life flows out of my heart.

MONEY ISN'T EVERYTHING

It's so funny to hear someone who wants to lead others, give an excuse for why they can't tithe. I've heard every excuse there is and I have an answer for every single one. They think it's about how much money they have, what they've been through, the bills that aren't paid, etc... But the only real reason is because their heart isn't in the church, the people, or Jesus. I don't know about you but I want people who rely on God, not money, speaking into my life.

If this book was for the average believer, I would give you hundreds of amazing scriptures and deep powerful points to prove this point to the fullest; However, this book is for potential leaders, people who already know what the Word of God says about tithing. If you happen to be reading this and want more information please see my book titled "The Power Of Money".

God said to tithe. Jesus pointed out that even immature Christians tithe. Money is so powerful that over 90% of all strife in marriages is due to money. Jesus was betrayed for money. I have friends who will most likely go to Hell when they die because they love money so much, (it's all they think about and talk about). Personally, I like having money but I don't want money to have me.

2nd Timothy 3:1-4 in the last days people will be selfish, self absorbed, lovers of money, greedy for wealth... Instead of loving

God, they will love pleasure. They will hold an outward form of godliness, but their religion is not real.

Tithing is a choice. A simple choice. Am I going to obey God, or not? Do I want to put my heart into the Kingdom of God or do I want to put my heart somewhere else?

LEADERS SHOW RESPECT

One of the greatest goals for a leader is to help people hear from God on their own. The entire New Testament has two main principles: 1) Jesus is the only way! and 2) We can go directly to God, through Jesus Christ, anywhere at anytime.

Hebrews 10:19 Friends, we have complete confidence to go directly to God, by the power of the blood of Jesus.

Yet for some reason, our flesh wants so badly to give OUR wisdom, announce OUR suggestions, and proclaim OUR advice as loud as we can BEFORE we invite people to seek GOD and His Word on their own.

It is very disrespectful to tell someone what we think they should do about areas in their life that do not concern us or have nothing to do with us. When I see or hear people doing this, it makes me cringe on the inside. I can see the confusion that it brings to a person to hear advice that they didn't ask for, especially when it goes against what they thought God was telling them deep in their hearts.

1st Peter 2:17 Show respect for all men.

LEADERS ARE NOT RUDE

If someone is given influence over other people, that influence will be ruined if the leader doesn't know how to control their mouth. It is very disrespectful and rude to constantly tell people, "well, if I were you, I would..." or "I think you should..." or "God is telling me that you need to..." I want to tell that young believer- YOU CAN HEAR FROM GOD ON YOUR OWN. Or, you can ask advice from people whom you trust and respect.

1st Corinthians 13:5 Love is not rude (unmannerly). Love is not selfish.

Leaders are people who are spiritually mature. They understand the value of having a relationship with the Creator of the universe. Leaders are also incredibly wise with a lot of great advice to offer. Therefore, leaders always ask permission before giving suggestions or advice to anyone whom they want to have a healthy relationship with. This principal helps to BUILD huge amounts of influence in the lives of their fellow Christians.

We have so many people around us who can give us advice as much as they want to without ever asking our permission: policeman, teachers, landlords, bosses, parents (if you still live at home), and any other form of authority. This is why people feel safer, more relaxed, and allow their heart to open up when they are around Godly leaders who are respectful. I learned a long time ago that it is much easier to be humble (which is the greatest attitude Jesus said anyone could ever have) when we are in an atmosphere that brings us safety.

LEADERS REQUIRE RESPECT

It is so very easy for a humble leader to allow other members of the church to constantly pour new ideas, thoughts, suggestions, and advice down their throat while just smiling and swallowing every ounce of that unasked for, and many times- unqualified advice. Most leaders have given a lot more time, energy, and caring to the church than the people who love to tell their leaders everything they should be doing differently. This is why all Rock Solid leaders not only give respect, but they require respect as well. You can still be a humble person and at the same time let that person know that you would love for them to ask your permission BEFORE they continue to give you advice that was not asked for.

Proverbs 15:4 Kind words bring life, but cruel words crush the spirit.

LEADERS GIVE GODLY ADVICE

When someone is humble enough to come to a leader for advice, they always ask lots of questions in order to hear that person's heart, as well as help them to hear what the Lord is trying to tell them.

Proverbs 18:2 a fool does not care if he understands a thing; he would rather reveal his personal opinions.

I find that it is so much more effective if I can help someone hear from God rather than give them advice that comes only from myself. As long as you are willing to take the time to ask lots of questions, you will always be a great counselor. Lazy, selfish people never take the time to really hear and try to understand what is really going on in the heart of a confused, upset, person. In fact,

if you really want to be the best leader you can be, you will learn the great tool of: Counseling Through Praises.

1st Corinthians 14:3 The prophet speaks to people for their edification, encouragement, and comfort.

If someone comes to you for wisdom, it's because they know that you think they are wonderful. If you don't think that those people who you serve so well are wonderful, then they will never seek you out for advice. I LOVE asking for help from awesome people who think I am the greatest and most wonderful person on the planet. No matter how far gone someone is, as long as you have shown him or her your approval, acceptance, and love, they will always come to you for advice. This doesn't mean you have to approve of their life choices, but leaders are great at LOVING everyone.

LEADERS DON'T GET OFFENDED

Ok. Leaders DO get offended. Everyone gets offended. But a mature believer, a spiritual Christian, and a leader in the body of Christ, will always handle an offense in a Biblical manner.

If there is anything that hurts a pastor, it's when someone who they love, serve, give to, pray for, and work hard to help, gets offended and doesn't handle that offense correctly.

How do immature people handle an offense? They speak negatively about the person or situation in which they got offended, they hold on to a root of bitterness (which ultimately takes them out of church), they blow up at something very small or

insignificant, and/or they start treating the person who offended them in a disrespectful way. The worst of all is when someone leaves a church because they got offended (whether someone hurt their feelings on purpose or on accident).

Ephesians 4:2-3 Make allowances because you love one another... (put up with one another in love).

Real Godly leaders understand that most of the time nobody purposely offended them. This is why it's easy to make allowances for one another. Only prideful people think that someone woke up one morning and thought about what they could do to offend them or hurt their feelings. Loving people requires that we quickly forgive them when they hurt us, whether purposely or on accident. This doesn't mean that our level of trust continues as it was before the incident, but we must always quickly forgive.

1st Corinthians 13:5 in the amplified Bible tells us that "Love is not touchy or resentful. Love is not easily offended."

There *are* offenses that come to us that need to be dealt with in a Godly way. Yes, we should forgive, but there also comes a time in which we should go to that person in a mature, healthy, manner. It takes a lot of maturity to handle an offense the way God commanded us to. Leaders are so GREAT at handling offenses.

Matthew 18:15 If a fellow believer sins against you, go to him privately and tell him. If he listens, you have won a friend.

Notice how Jesus said that the ultimate result from handling an offense His way, was to win a friend. In other words, there is a way in which we can approach a situation in such a mature way, that our friendship can grow. If you are a leader, then you will have several opportunities to get offended. The more people you come in contact with, the greater the chance of getting offended. So, how are we to approach a person who has offended us? Easy! We can

humble ourselves, ask questions, and try our best to UNDERSTAND the heart of the person whom we got offended by.

LEADERS ASK QUESTIONS

As a senior pastor, I will NEVER allow someone to get close to me who doesn't love me enough to either forgive and forget the times I offend him or her, or come to me as a friend and deal with that offense. The wisest and most effective tool that any person could ever learn is the simple, humble act, of ASKING QUESTIONS.

Proverbs 18:13, 15 Listen before you answer. If you don't, you are being stupid and insulting.

Intelligent people are always eager to learn; and the ear of the wise inquire knowledge.

I require those believers who serve with me to start off every conversation concerning an offense with the question, "Pastor, can you tell me why..." I LOVE being asked why I did what I did, or why I said what I said. This shows me that they are yearning for knowledge and that they desire to understand.

If your purpose is to let someone know that your feelings are hurt or to prove someone wrong when they offend you, then you will never keep the friends God has brought into your life.

Leaders love to ask lots of questions in order to understand why the person did what they did.

Proverbs 2:3 Beg for knowledge; plead for insight and understanding.

I think about Jesus. He didn't spend much time with people who didn't want to understand Him. There were towns of people who He could have ministered to, but they got offended and never had the desire to talk to Him face to face. Instead, they allowed the enemy to deceive them into holding on to the offense and missing out on a great blessing.

In the original Greek language, the word *offense* is the same word they use for the word *bait*. It's used in reference to luring an animal into a trap. In other words, when someone offends us, that's the enemy luring us into a trap to live upset, bitter, angry, discouraged, and end up walking away from our church family.

James 1:19 Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, and slow to take offense.

Remember, God isn't asking you to be in relationship with every single person, nor is He asking you to trust everyone at the same level. God is asking us to be quick to forgive, and be mature enough to go to the person who offended us and ask them questions so that we can hear their heart. This is something that Rock Solid leaders are very good at.

FROM THE HEART OF A PASTOR

This chapter would've been fine if I had stopped writing after the above paragraph, but I just can't stop. I have to step out of my "author mind" and speak to you directly from my heart.

Don't be a baby. Stop crying every time someone looks at you the wrong way or says something that you don't like. Let little things go. There's nothing worse than being in relationship with someone who you have to walk on eggshells around.

Pastors cannot stand to be around people who get easily offended. It's awful. It's a waste of our precious time. We serve, give, pray, study, work hard, and do our very best to please God. Then some selfish, rebellious, non-growing adult gets their feelings hurt and creates more stress and drama than the devil himself. Pastors LOVE it when people ask us questions to seek understanding, but

that's not what happens most of the time. This is why there are very few Godly leaders and also why many pastors quit, have mental and emotional breakdowns, and even commit suicide.

Pastors constantly hear about someone who's offended at them and talking about them behind their back. It's sad. Rejection is the hardest, cruelest, and greatest pain that a person can face. Out of every profession in the world, I would guess that pastors face more rejection than anyone else. Honestly, most of the time, it comes from non-tithers who get offended and handle it the wrong way. We do every single thing that we can possibly do in balance and in line with God's Word, only for someone who we serve with our whole heart to walk out on us (reject us) just because they didn't get their way or someone took their pacifier.

After this person has gossiped and lied about us, then put negative seeds in the hearts of others about us, they spit in our face by telling us that we didn't do a good job in some area that has NOTHING to do with the original offense. They walk out of the church making sure that we feel the rejection that they are trying to give. After that, we cry in our hearts so deeply that we ask God why He even sent them to us in the first place. We wish that we had never met them, served them, poured into them, or helped them. If they had ONLY asked us questions to understand our motives. If they had only sat down and allowed us to share with them how we did our very best to obey God's Word. If they had only given us the opportunity to repent when/if we violated God's Word in any way, shape or form.

Instead, they fell in to the trap of the enemy. They let something so small and insignificant take them away from Jesus and His body. Now they have to start all over with the thoughts *This new church*

won't do me wrong like that old one. But they don't realize that the offense is in THEIR heart, not in a building or a group of people.

What do you think happens to them next? Of course, they get offended at their new church! They reject another pastor. They walk away from another leader who God sent to train them as a disciple of Christ. They treat their new church family the same way as the previous one, until they leave another church. And on and on the process goes until they simply obey God and grow up! Or not!

What's so sad, is that this person has offended us (the pastor) MANY times. How did we handle it? We forgave them, covered the offense, prayed for them, asked them questions, or went to them in humility and discussed the offense. How did THEY handle it when WE (the pastors) offended them? Not very Christ-like.

Let me encourage any pastor who is reading this: use leaders whose heart is in the Kingdom of God (faithful tithers), and leaders who will always come to you and ask questions in a positive light when they are offended or don't understand something. Once you require that out of your leaders and go through the process with someone under you, your life will be changed. You will LOVE that person more than you ever realized you could love a friend, and you will serve them with a high level of enjoyment and enthusiasm like you never have served anyone before. All because they humbled themselves and obeyed God in the simple area of handling offenses.

LEADERS ARE THE GREATEST SERVANTS

So many people are deceived into thinking that a leader is someone who bosses people around and gets a lot of recognition.

Unfortunately, that's not the Biblical definition of a great leader.

When untrained people think of a leader, they may think of General Patton, or the C.E.O. of the company they work for.

However, this is not the way our Lord Jesus described the qualities a leader should possess.

Mark 9:35 Jesus said, If you want to be the greatest you must learn to be the servant of all.

The more people who you serve, the greater the leader you are.

WHY WOULD ANYONE FOLLOW YOU?

What have you done for the people? Did you invite them to church? Did you greet them when they came in and made them feel at home? Did you bring them water when they were thirsty? Did you call them and encourage them? Did you work very hard to bless them in a great way? If not, then I have two more questions for you.

1) Why would they want to follow you? 2) Why would you want to lead them? I can't lead someone from my heart if I don't love him or her. This is why I want a healthy relationship with every member of our church; otherwise I'm leading them for the wrong reasons.

Rick Warren said that the sign of a mature Christian is when he/she takes off their bib and puts on their apron. Children wear bibs and

want others to meet their needs, but those who wear aprons have learned to serve others.

A leader begins leading people through servant-hood long before they are given a title. Ask yourself this question; have I ever known a selfish person who is happy and fulfilled?

I'm sure your answer is NO. So, is your mind more on yourself and your needs, or on those whom you desire to lead closer to Christ?

Matthew 20:28 the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve and give His life.

The GREATEST LEADER of all time came to serve.

Whether you realize it or not, the reason you were created was to serve others. Just as the disciples were arguing two thousand years ago about who would be the greatest, we are still arguing about that today. The answer is still the same: the greatest among you, is the greatest servant.

LEADERS SERVE JESUS

This should come without saying, but then again, I think that about a lot of things, Godly leaders serve Jesus, not themselves. You may be wondering how you, one out of a billion people on planet earth, could serve Jesus Christ, the Son of God? Easy! Serve His body, the church!

Matthew 25:40 Whenever you did it for any of My people, no matter how unimportant they seemed, you did it for Me.

Every time you bring someone to church, open the door for them, pass out a bulletin, bring your tithe, pray for the person who is sitting next to you, provide water for the kitchen, clean up after breakfast, give a teenager a gift card, etc, you are serving Jesus Himself. And if your motives are pure, then you will also receive a

reward. Promotion comes from God alone, therefore, when we serve Him with wisdom, humility, and a pure heart, no force from Hell itself can stop promotion from coming your way.

LEADERS ARE GIVERS

Another word for *servant* would probably be *giver*. When we bring the tithe, we have done what is required. After that, it's time to listen to the Holy Spirit and become givers. Being a Biblical GIVER requires us to go beyond what is expected of us, and go the extra mile. I'm sure you already know the story of the "Good Samaritan" in Luke chapter ten, but let me describe the four main characters of the story, (the characteristics they portrayed) the way I see them in my mind.

1) The Jewish man: The Jewish man, in my analogy, represents the body of Christ. He represents someone who is a member of Solid Rock, our local church.

2) The robbers: The Bible says that a Jewish man was attacked and robbed. In what way can we "rob" God? (I'm assuming you figured it out already, but just in case you didn't- non-tithers). These robbers took something that did not belong to them. They came to the body of Christ (a member of a local church), and stole something from him. The Jewish man may not have been a member of the same church as the robbers; nevertheless they coveted that which was not theirs. They were thieves. They stole.

Notice that the only reason they came to the Jewish man was to TAKE. No doubt they were extremely selfish. They were looking

to steal anything they could: time, energy, caring, and yes, clothes and money.

3) The priest and the Temple assistant: These people represent most of the Christians today. These were religious people. That's right, religious people. They have already done their part. These people are the tithers. They attend church, look the part, talk the part, bring the exact ten percent, and they are done with their "good work" until next Sunday rolls around.

The priest and the Temple assistant both saw someone in need, and yet they turned and went as far away as they could.

I'm sure you're thinking, "I would never have ignored such a need like that." But every Sunday when we attend church and the body of Christ is ALL AROUND US, what needs are you meeting? Who are you serving? Are you their to a) get what you can get and then leave, b) do your "good work" for the week, c) or see how you can serve (lead) those around you closer to Jesus?

4) The Good Samaritan: This man was a giver. He was on the look out for a need that he could meet: emotionally, physically, financially, spiritually, etc. The Bible says that this man spent TIME on the Jewish man, ENERGY bandaging his wounds, and FINANCES to pay for his hotel.

My point is that if this Samaritan man were a leader in his church, he would definitely have someone following him. That Jewish man would spend the rest of his church life serving joyfully with that Samaritan man.

Who have you served lately?

Let me tell you a gigantic secret: people who don't serve the body of Christ are the FIRST ones to complain and say, "this church doesn't do enough for me." This statement always brings me such laughter. I can almost quote exactly how it's going to come out of the person's mouth.

There are three things that prevent people from serving Jesus: self-centeredness, selfishness, and self-pity. What is the root word that you see in all three words?

The reason that people who don't serve others always find where THEY are not being served is because we reap what we sow. If you don't serve, you won't be served. This is why it is so important for leaders to encourage everyone around them to serve and to hold those under them accountable for how well they are serving. It is a JOY to serve Jesus. As long as you are staying in your gifting, guarding your heart well, and serving in areas where you have God's grace, your life will always be fulfilled, sweet, and enjoyable.

If you are leading someone, please continue to serve him or her by holding him or her accountable. Call them, text them, email them, and encourage them in every area this book has listed. You are a leader, so lead!

If someone refuses to give (love), serve (love), tithe (love), and they know better, then don't waste too much time and energy on them, otherwise you aren't making a good investment. We only have a certain amount of emotional, mental, and physical energy. Therefore, we must INVEST our energy and not waste it. If this is a principle that you haven't grown accustomed to yet, take a good look at the past five years of your life.

Who have you been pouring your energy into, and what kind of investment was it? Did you get a good return? Did a lot of healthy,

NON-SERVERS WILL STEAL YOUR TIME

spiritual fruit come forth? Or does it look as though the effort you expended didn't bring about a lot of return?
Let today be a turning point in your life.

HUMILITY IS THE GREATEST QUALITY

I heard someone once say that the branch which bears the most fruit is the branch that is bowed lowest to the ground. The number one quality that I look for in a friend is humility. The level to which a person will succeed in life, and as a leader for Jesus, is based on their level of humility. The quality of your marriage, parenting, friendships, finances, ministry, prosperity, joy, and physical health is all based on your humility in that area of your life. The level to which you are successful in every chapter in this book is based on your level of humility. The level to which God moves in your life, The Holy Spirit speaks to you, and Jesus changes you, is based on your humility. Nothing that the Spirit of God wants to produce in our lives can come without humility.

LEADERS ARE HUMBLE

I lied to you in previous chapters when I mentioned what the most important chapter in this book is, or which was my favorite. Humility is by far the greatest attitude and heart that a person could ever have. Everything in your entire existence on planet earth is all based on how humble of a person you are. One of my top five most favorite scriptures in the Bible is *Isaiah 66:2 I created the whole universe but the only thing I am looking for is a humble man.* This is the only thing that God is searching for. Will you qualify? It's not hard. All we have to do is deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him. In other words, we have to be more Christ-centered and less SELF-centered.

HUMBLE PEOPLE HAVE A PASTOR

God is so good and wise to have sent us gifts to train us to become healthy leaders. These gifts aren't just something that you'll open up and use once or twice and then take to Goodwill, these gifts are inside of certain people who are on planet earth right now. They are apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, and pastors. *Ephesians 4:11-13 God gave...Pastors (shepherds of His flock)...to develop and fully equip the saints so they would learn to serve and the body of Christ (the church) would grow strong.* How will the church grow strong without a pastor? How will you grow strong without having a pastor? No person will ever become

great in the Kingdom of God without having the covering of a pastor. Even pastors have pastors. Though the purpose of the pastor is extremely clear in scripture, many people think that they can succeed without a pastor. By the way, just because a person attends church doesn't mean they have a pastor.

Matthew 9:36 When Jesus saw the crowds, He felt sorry for them because they were harassed, distressed, dejected, and helpless, as sheep with no shepherd.

Isn't it great that you were created for a particular purpose, have a desire to succeed in that particular area, and the Creator of the universe gave you a gift that will help you accomplish all you were meant to accomplish? This is like being given a Lamborghini with your own personal mechanic to maintain your vehicle for as long as you desire. The Lamborghini is your gifts and callings, and the mechanic is your pastor, both given to you by God Himself.

HUMBLE LEADERS SUBMIT TO AUTHORITY

Humility is not weakness. It's when we're secure enough in who we are to submit to authority, recognize our own flesh patterns, admit fault, and receive correction without getting our feelings hurt.

Hebrews 13:17 Obey your spiritual leaders and submit to them, for they are constantly keeping watch over your souls and guarding your spiritual welfare, as men who will have to render an account.

Do your part to let them do this with gladness and not with sighing and groaning, for that would not be profitable to you.

I would love to say that this is my favorite verse in the Bible because it reminds everyone to do their part so that I (the pastor) serve them with gladness, but it's not my favorite verse. Why? Because it is a very sobering thought that I am called by God to constantly keep watch over the souls of the members of Solid Rock and that I have to give an account to God of my service as a pastor.

The success you will find and develop from every chapter in this book can be measured by how humble you are.

Proverbs 18:12 Pride leads to destruction; humility leads to honor. Which direction have you been going in lately, *destruction* or *honor*? If areas in your life have come to destruction, such as relationships, finances, opportunities, promotions, etc, could it be that you had a high level of pride in your heart?

HUMBLE LEADERS CAN BE CORRECTED

There are many ways to correct someone, and if that correction is done with respect, kindness, and love (and many times through praises), then a humble person receives it and grows from it. A prideful person gets their feelings hurt and sometimes acts negatively based on a prideful heart.

Proverbs 19:20 Hear counsel, receive instruction, accept correction, so you will be wise.

Proverbs 15:32 He who refuses instruction despises himself, but he who accepts correction becomes wiser.

Proverbs 15:12 Conceited people do not like to be corrected; they never ask for advice.

It takes a lot of love and practice, but there is a point to where a leader can correct someone and that person doesn't even know

they're being corrected, unless their heart is full of pride and they have no desire to change.

1st Peter 5:5 submit yourselves with humility (free from pride). Humble yourselves so that God may promote you.

The good news is God wants to promote you. The bad news is it won't happen unless you will humble yourself by submitting to authority God has put in your life. Please take note that there is NO such thing as a perfect authority figure. Just like there is NO such thing as the perfect leader, or perfect church member, or visitor, or child. BUT there is such thing as a HUMBLE pastor, a humble leader, and a humble friend.

Personally, I enjoy being corrected in the RIGHT way. I desire to know if I am headed in the wrong direction or if there is a better way than the way I am going. This takes a lot of humility and a lot of confidence. I'll admit that it is easy to become so insecure in an area that you want to destroy the person who is correcting you. That's why I pray every day for wisdom and humility in my life. Once again, questions and praises are always the GREATEST way to bring correction and instruction into my life and the lives of those you lead.

GOD GAVE US AUTHORITY FIGURES

How do you respond to the authority that God has put in your life, especially the *gifts* that He gave you? One of the worst attitudes a person can have is a *combative* attitude. This is when someone is always trying to go in the opposite direction as the pastor. The sad part is that when someone goes against the authority God's put in their life, they are going against God Himself.

Romans 13:1 Obey those who have authority over you. For no authority can exist without God's permission.

You may not agree with the pastor, you may not like his/her idea, you may not understand why they are doing what they are doing, but God Himself established that authority and that person is a gift to you from God. This doesn't mean that you can't ask questions to understand his/her choices, but it does mean that in the end, after the final decision is made, you are to submit to that request (as long as it is Biblical). If you want to be blessed, you will submit with a good attitude.

This is probably one of the greatest tests we will ever face. What do I do when my pastor hurts my feelings? The Godly answer is, most of the time, go to him/her and deal with it Biblically.

When we disobey the authority over us, we are actually disobeying God. In Genesis chapter sixteen, Hagar, Abram and Sarai's servant, became pregnant and proud. The details are many, but the point is that verse six says- When Sarai dealt harshly with Hagar, humbling her, Hagar ran away.

The reason most people never get to a real place of promotion is because they run away when they don't agree or think they always have a better way.

If you are a leader at Solid Rock, you are blessed to have a pastor who will ALWAYS hear your heart on a matter. Even though there IS a time to share our hearts, there's also a time to smile and serve with your whole heart, as if God Himself has asked you to carry out the vision that was given.

You would think that because Hagar's authority figure could have been a little too harsh, or maybe even flat out wrong, that God would've told Hagar to keep on running. But God's dream for our

lives is to be humble enough, like David, Joseph, Moses, Deborah, Ruth, and many more, to receive promotion time and time again through the process of submitting to the authority God has put in our lives.

Genesis 16:9 the Angel of the Lord said to her, Go back to Sarai and humbly submit to her hands.

God isn't just asking us to submit with our actions, He is looking at our heart.

True humility is when we humble ourselves and say, *God I don't understand and I may not even agree, but I am clay in Your hands. I love and respect YOU so much that I am going to deny myself, take up my cross, and follow You.*

CONCLUSION

Thank you so much for taking the time to read this book. My prayer is that it has opened your eyes, not only to the importance of growing as a leader in your local church, but in many other areas as well. I believe that this information can be applied in our homes, our schools, our relationships, at work, and will impact all of those around us in a positive, faith-filled light.

I often think about the last day of my life on earth and the first second of my life in Heaven. The points made in this book help me to stay on track and not waste the life God's given me. I don't want to look back and wish I had trusted God with my finances, spent more time serving my church family, learned how to counsel my children through praises. I'm going to start today!

I realize that some of these principles may seem out of reach for where you are in your walk with Jesus, but His Word tells us that we CAN DO all things through Christ Who strengthens us. That means, if it's in His Word, then He will give you the strength to obey it. Search your heart daily. Ask God for His power. Pick up this book every few months and read it again, asking God to show you new ways to grow and become the disciple He's called you to be receiving all He has in store for you! You are a leader in the body of Christ!!!