

Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION I

The Privilege of Leadership Bill Hybels

“You are the most important person you will ever lead.”

The God-given gift of leadership is granted to a relative few, but the influence of an individual leader impacts many. Entrusted with the privilege to lead, you can energize everyone around you toward a brighter future. But, to lead diligently as Romans 12:8 instructs, it will require great humility and discipline. It will take attentiveness to your soul's health and an awareness of how this affects you and others.

- In what ways are you currently leading yourself well and caring for your soul? How is this impacting your relationships with God and those around you?

Truth be told, you are not only the *most important* person you will ever lead; you are likely the *most challenging* one as well. You know your weaknesses and growth edges, temptations and struggles, hang-ups and bad habits. And, like most leaders, you likely pray your blind spots do not blindside you or those you lead along the way.

Like a city whose walls are broken through is a person who lacks self-control.
Proverbs 25:28 NIV

- Be completely honest. What is one area of your self-leadership that has started slipping lately? (I.e. eating, exercise, rest, recreation, reflection) How has this opened your soul up to become unhealthy? How will you get back on track?

Leaders are critical thinkers and constant tinkerers, dealing with complex challenges daily. But when traversing the waters of their own heart, course correcting toward soul health can be difficult. To lead yourself well will require looking beyond yourself for help, to Christ and His community of followers to receive the example and encouragement to live from a healthy soul.

Spend a few moments reflecting on Jesus' words about the importance of continually staying connected to Him:

“I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.”
John 15:5 NIV



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION I (continued)

The Privilege of Leadership Bill Hybels

Mere striving and more activity will not get you closer to the goal of a healthy soul. Just like cultivating soil is needed before planting seeds, your heart needs space and time to be restored before it gets redirected.

*Search me, God, and know my heart;
Test me and know my anxious thoughts.
See if there is any offensive way in me,
And lead me in the way everlasting.*
Psalm 139:23-24 NIV

Read the Psalmist's prayer above several times slowly. Then in the space below, write out whatever thoughts, memories, or emotions God's Spirit surfaces in you.

Imagine how the cascading impact of your leadership influence would grow in depth and breadth if you lived and led from a healthy vibrant soul. Whatever is stirring in your heart can be used by God in your leadership if you let Him. And, in community with others, you can come together as leaders to lift each other up in the humble and disciplined practice of self-leadership.

*Therefore encourage one another and build each other up,
just as in fact you are doing.*
1 Thessalonians 5:11 NIV

- Who is a trusted person in your life you can invite to come alongside you as you seek to be the best leader you can be?

Pray that God will identify this person and commit to sharing with them what you are discovering about the privilege of leadership and the significance of self-leadership.



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 2A

No Higher Honor Condoleezza Rice

“The most important quality of a leader is irrepressible optimism.”

Every leader faces times that are tremendously rewarding and extremely taxing - sometimes on the same day! The strength to exhibit positivity and perseverance in season and out is forged not simply found.

- Recount a recent situation when you were surprised by your own optimism in the midst of a leadership challenge. Where do you think your enthusiasm and confidence came from? How did this keep you or others on a positive course?

Condoleezza Rice's life story and rise to leadership is remarkable. Yet, if you had the chance to sit with her, she would say the same about you. Your “greatness” is not because of what you do, but who you are.

In fact, Ephesians 2:10 says you are an original masterpiece created by God himself. This truth, combined with your unique story of strength and struggle, has helped make you the leader you are today.

We know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope.
Romans 5:3b-4 NIV

- In your life, what seasons of suffering have caused perseverance, character, and hope to grow in you? How has this translated into optimism being part of your life and leadership?
- It may be you have little optimism to draw from and pass on to others in this leadership season. How can you embrace your discouragement, bring it before God, and receive His love and acceptance of you in the midst of it?

Christ set the ultimate example of victory surfacing out of struggle. Your story has similar themes that can remind you and others that hope is on the horizon. Thank God for the honor of being transformed by Him so as a leader you can now bring this same possibility to others.



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 2B

Great By Choice Jim Collins

“What's your 20-mile march?”

Few leaders take on life and death expeditions like the journeys taken by Roald Amundsen and Robert F. Scott across Antarctica, yet the stakes in ministry are just as high. In 1 Corinthians 9:24-25, Paul emphasizes the importance of focused preparation and performance toward an eternally lasting goal.

- In your personal life, what daily decision(s) or discipline(s) do you engage in so you do not get off course or lose ground as a leader?
- What impending challenge is ahead of you that causes you to recoil inside? How much does frustration and fear weigh on your heart and hold you back?

The optimal time for you to decide to put one foot in front of the other is *before* the going gets tough. As a leader, your conviction and choices on the front end of your commitments will help you muster the courage to follow through to the end.

Consider these powerful words by Jesus to His followers:

Then he said to them all: “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will save it.”
Luke 9:23-24 NIV

As a leader, you must make a choice how you will respond day in and day out no matter what temptations or trials beset you.

- What ‘burden’ are you aware of that you carry as a leader each day? How is this a humble sacrifice on behalf of others? When giving up or giving in seems like your only option, where do you draw the strength to remain consistent?
- When you feel weighed down and alone, consider inviting God to join you. What ‘weight’ will you bring to Him today for the sake of your soul as a leader?

Take a few moments to talk with God and prayerfully recommit yourself to your “20-mile march” as a faithful leader in ever-deepening relationship with Him.



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 3A

Against Apathy
Marc Kielburger

When something stirs deep within a leader, they cannot help but move from apathy to action, to pursue making a difference in the world in some substantial way. But all too often, while the small spark inside this same leader rapidly turns into a roaring fire of success, the state of their soul slowly gets snuffed out.

You may have experienced this in your own leadership. It begins with a moment that catalyzes you to head in the direction your heart was moved. But over time a shift takes place, one in which your passion and compassion levels begin to die out. In the end, you are left with embers of a vision that no longer fuels positive change in your own life or the people around you.

If you want to leave a lasting legacy behind as a leader, it is crucial for you to take the state of your soul seriously - for everyone's sake. Carve out time alone with God to prayerfully reflect on the following questions based on Marc Kielburger's five legacy-leaving cultural traits. How is your heart doing in these areas?

Listening - How are you growing in listening attentively to God? To the desires and cries of your own heart? To the people around you? To your world?

Community - What steps are you taking to cultivate an intimate relationship with God? With your family and friends? With your neighbors and colleagues?

Meaning - In what way(s) are you laying a foundation of love where you live and lead? Who are you building into and letting build into you for the better?

Gratitude - Where are thankfulness and joy being expressed in and through you? Where do you need to be stretched to develop an attitude of gratitude?

Legacy - What values and virtues do you want to leave behind? Where is this happening or being hindered in your life? Specifically, what do you need to start or stop doing for this to change? Who can you rally around you for support?

Taking honest inventory of how you are *really* doing can be a game changer if you want to leave a lasting legacy as a leader, but gaining perspective is only the first step.



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 3A (continued)

Against Apathy
Marc Kielburger

Knowledge without action is just information. Transformation happens when you take what you have learned and put it to good use.

- Which one of the five traits do you feel needs your attention most in the next thirty days and why?
- In the space below, describe how you would be different if you were to develop in the trait you identified? What impact would it have on the people closest to you and the culture where you lead?

Ultimately, where love is absent, lives more than likely lack transformation. If you, as a leader, want to be the change you want to see in the world, your love levels matter.

We can do no great things; only small things with great love.

Mother Teresa

Jesus expressed the greatest form of love through His life, death, and resurrection. He taught about the importance of self-sacrifice and servanthood, and also lived it out perfectly in front of His followers and a watching world. Consider the weight of what Christ considered success when it comes to love and life:

"Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends."

John 15:13 NIV

Throughout the next 24-hour period, express your gratitude to God for extending His great love to you. Thank Him for highlighting, and refueling, an area of your heart that needed to be rekindled in the way of love. Remember the people He placed in your life along the way who gifted you with genuine love and inspired you to do the same. And, be mindful of moments where God's Spirit is reigniting your soul to be more receptive to His great love. Ultimately, pay attention to God's invitation to graciously extend Christ's love to each person He places in your path of life.



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 3B

Half the Sky: Leadership in the Face of Opposition Sheryl WuDunn

Is this what you typically hear from someone unjustly stuck in jail?

*Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!
Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.*
Philippians 4:4-7 NIV

When hardship finds you, is your first thought to turn toward God in worship and praise? Are you an advocate for kindness, hope, and gratitude? Do you anticipate divine peace after talking to God during difficult days?

Paul, the writer who penned four books of the Bible from jail, was no stranger to opposition. In 2 Corinthians 11:23-27, you can read his litany of unfortunate and life-threatening events. Like this early church founder, opposing forces attack you too.

- Go ahead, get it out! What challenges do you deal with day in and day out?

Now, take a closer look at how Paul ends his rant:

Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.
2 Corinthians 11:28 NIV

Sheryl WuDunn did a tremendous job reminding leaders that there are only a few effective ways to increase happiness, and one is to **“contribute to a cause greater than yourself”**. Based on Paul's words, it is apparent that he had a grand vision for the church and a time-tested plan for you to remain joyful amidst opposition.

- Read through Philippians at least once this week. In light of Paul's imprisonment, what encourages and challenges you most as a fellow leader facing opposition?
- How has investing your life in something bigger than yourself increased your experience and expression of happiness? If happiness is a growth-edge for you, what could God be inviting you to be part of that is *greater than yourself*?



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 4

The Strongest Link Craig Groeschel

“Authenticity trumps cool every time.”

Leaders are regularly tempted to pursue whatever will help their organization or themselves be accepted as *relevant* rather than *real*. They sometimes trade in what matters most for whatever ensures they get into the slipstream of what is *trending* instead of what is *timeless*. Consider this counter perspective from typical leadership:

[T]he Christian leader of the future is called to be completely irrelevant and to stand in this world with nothing to offer but him or her own vulnerable self.

Henry Nouwen (*In the Name of Jesus*, pg. 30)

- How do you feel when you think of being categorized as “irrelevant”? What truth about this quote does your heart resonate with or want to resist?

As a twenty-first century leader, you must know that leadership is proving to be far less about your position and much more about you as a person. Your responsibilities and authority pale in comparison to who you are becoming and how you relate to people. You may receive honor because you are “the leader,” but genuine respect will only come in response to your integrity and transparency of character.

Schedule 20-30 minutes of time alone to wrestle with the following two verses. Write out your thoughts and prayers to God. Ask Him to highlight incongruent areas in your life and leadership. Receive His forgiveness for past failures and allow yourself to be encouraged toward a more honorable and respect-worthy future. Commit to one or two steps that will move you toward becoming an authentic servant leader.

*The integrity of the upright guides them,
but the unfaithful are destroyed by their duplicity.*
Proverbs 11:3 NIV

“Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last, and the servant of all.”
Mark 9:35b

You have a tremendous opportunity to transform lives as a leader, and even more so as one who is truly authentic among those you lead. Your willingness to invest in *who you are over what you do* will make the most impact.



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 6A

Courage to Act
Pranitha Timothy

“God gave me this voice; feeble, yet powerful in His hands.”

Great leaders are marked by great humility and great courage on behalf of others. They recognize their God-given responsibility to speak up for those who cannot speak up for themselves. Having allowed God to transform their own heart, they mysteriously experience great weakness within them as a deep source of strength.

Carve out space in your schedule to slow down and reflectively respond to these soul-shaping questions and Scriptures:

- In your life, what past or present weakness has God used to grow humility in your heart and leadership?
- How hard was it for you to release your pride in order to embrace the reality of your weakness? How long did it take for your perspective to shift with regard to your personal struggle(s)?
- How has personally wrestling with weakness(es) transformed the way you view and value struggles as a potential source of strength? What role does your relationship with God play? What impact has relying upon and leaning into His power made in your life and leadership?
- What is one hope-filled message God has highlighted in your story that you now courageously and powerfully carry on His behalf for the sake of others?

[The Lord] said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ’s power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ’s sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties.

For when I am weak, then I am strong.

2 Corinthians 12:9-10 NIV

You may be surprised to learn that God can use your own *struggle with having struggles* as a source of strength for His purposes. After reflecting on this Scripture, celebrate God’s goodness and thank Him for His grace and His power.



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 6B

Angustia Durante las Decisiones Dificiles
(Leading Through the Anguish of Tough Decisions)
Mario Vega

“The heart finds comfort with every new step of integrity.”

Professionally or privately, no leader is perfect. Some openly address their faults and failures; others attempt to bury their sins hoping never to be found out. Mario Vega ended up in a situation where he was called to follow through in doing what was right for another leader’s moral failure. Whether trust has been broken *with you* or *because of you* as a leader, growing in confession is critical to lead faithfully.

*Whoever walks in integrity walks securely,
but whoever takes crooked paths will be found out.*

Proverbs 10:9 NIV

- Reflect on a time when you did something wrong and your inner guilt kept you wondering how long it would take someone to find out? How did opening the door to this sin lead you down a cover-up pathway to keep the truth hidden?

Prayerfully consider these words of the Psalmist David who sinned gravely before God and his people while in his position of authority as King:

*When I kept silent, my bones wasted away through my groaning all day long.
For day and night your hand was heavy on me; my strength was sapped
as in the heat of summer. Then I acknowledged my sin to you and did not
cover up my iniquity. I said, “I will confess my transgressions to the Lord.”*

And you forgave the guilt of my sin.

Psalm 32:3-4 NIV

- Is there a questionable area of your professional or personal life that needs your attention? Are you willing to come clean and face whatever consequences are necessary? How would it feel to tell someone you mutually love and trust?

The roadway of righteousness is good but never easy, it is the path less taken by so many leaders. Invest in your heart and those you follow; commit to character today.

*The highway of the upright avoids evil;
those who guard their ways preserve their lives.*

Proverbs 16:17 NIV



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 7A

A Leader of Unimaginable Influence John Ortberg

“Where, before the church, was there a movement that actively sought to include every single human being?”

Jesus Christ was arguably the most influential leader in human history. Yet, His far reaching impact did not come by power and might, but through servanthood and self-sacrifice. He never leveraged human popularity, never exploited His divine position, and He never gave people preferential treatment. Jesus unashamedly blew through barriers that typically breakdown relationships to demonstrate the love of God for everything and everyone He created.

So the Word [Jesus Christ] became human and made his home among us. He was full of unfailing love and faithfulness. And we have seen his glory, the glory of the Father's one and only Son.

John 1:14 NLT

As a leader, Jesus Christ was - *and still is* - worthy of worship and being emulated in every way. A handful of His attributes that historically stand out include humility, love, forgiveness, grace, and truth.

Worship Jesus. Thank Him for revealing God's character and heart for humanity. Take time to worship Him by expressing your gratitude in prayer and praise.

In addition to giving the world a perfect image of God and the possibility of having a restored relationship with Him, Jesus also invited everyone into the epicenter of a radically loving community. As such, the church really is more than an organization; it is a body of believers faithfully committed to living in the way of Jesus Christ.

- How might God be inviting you to live out one of these characteristics of Jesus in your community? Invite Him to guide you in influencing others as Jesus did.

Pray for Community. Invite God to shape the people and places you lead into a transformational community known for its unprecedented inclusivity and generosity.



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 7B

Changing the Odds Geoffrey Canada

“Hope is infectious, but so is despair.”

Leaders are to tenaciously carry themselves and their vision in good times and bad. So, what happens when endurance wanes in their spirit, when hope has disappeared from their heart? Your leadership influence permeates the heart of everything and everyone you lead. If you are feeling hopeless, the people you lead will feel it too.

- In what way(s) has your heart begun to lose hope as you lead?
- Where have you encountered enough resistance to settle for a lesser vision?
- What toll has this emotional drain on your soul played in sapping energy and inspiration from you and the people and places you lead?

You are not the first leader to face hopelessness. Take heart, there is a path that leads back to possibility, a perspective that can bring you back to a place of true hope.

Do you not know? Have you not heard? The Lord is the everlasting God, the Creator of the ends of the earth. He will not grow tired or weary, and his understanding no one can fathom. He gives strength to the weary and increases the power of the weak. Even youths grow tired and weary, and young men stumble and fall; but those who hope in the Lord will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint.

Isaiah 40:28-31 NIV

- Read the passage above several times slowly. What word or phrase stands out to you most in your present despair? What do you want to say to God about this? What does He seem to be saying to you?
- How does reflecting on these verses bring life to your spirit and restore hope in your heart? If you have been running on an empty emotional tank, what might happen if you set aside time regularly to revive and refuel your spirit?

Hope renewed brings with it the opportunity for transformation. As your soul gets refreshed, so will the “soul” of the areas where you lead - *hope is infectious.*



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 8

The Local Church is the
Hope of the World
Bill Hybels

“It is one thing to see a vision, it is another thing to be seized by a vision.”

Vision casting - painting a picture of a preferred future - is every leader's task. But, successfully pointing people toward a compelling portrait of what could be and should be is much more challenging than you might think. If your heart has not been gripped, your vision will never grip anyone else either.

It is quite likely that you saw something, or something happened to you, early on in life that spoke into the trajectory of your leadership. In Bill Hybels' terms, it “seized” you and would not let you ignore it.

- What vision has so seized you that you cannot help but allow it to steer your life as a leader? What problem in this world do you most believe needs to be solved? What need would be tragic for you not to address? Who are you moved to help no matter what it may cost?

*When I heard these things, I sat down and wept. For some days
I mourned and fasted and prayed before the God of heaven.*

Nehemiah 1:4 NIV

Getting seized by a vision is much bigger than just getting another great idea. This verse gives you a window into what happened when the prophet Nehemiah allowed his heart to break for something that also broke the heart of God. He knew the wall in Jerusalem needed to be restored; but more so, he knew the people needed the kind of healing and hope only God could bring.

- When have you witnessed something that caused you to weep? If remembering a time is difficult, what impact might entering into someone else's poverty or pain have on the heart behind why, what, and how you lead?
- How has your heart been moved toward compassion to the degree that you are willing to leverage your leadership on behalf of something greater than yourself? Again, if this has not happened for you yet, where are you sensing the need to start leading for the sake of others rather than self-centered pursuits?



Reflections for the Leader's Soul

SESSION 8 (continued)

The Local Church is the
Hope of the World
Bill Hybels

If you open yourself up to change, recalibrating what motivates your heart to action can transform the future for you and everyone God allows your life to touch. While your leadership calling may not specifically be to build the local church, where and who you lead can contribute to God's work in the world. Are you up for Bill Hybels' challenge to pray this prayer each day for the next thirty days?

My Morning Prayer

*God, this is a new day. I freshly commit myself to the role you
have invited me to play, as you are building your church in this world.
I am awestruck again today that you include me in this grand life-giving,
world-transforming endeavor. So today I joyfully offer you:*

**MY LOVE
MY HEART
MY TALENTS
MY ENERGY
MY CREATIVITY
MY FAITHFULNESS
MY RESOURCES
AND MY GRATITUDE**

*I commit all of myself to the role you have assigned me in the building of
Your church so that it may thrive in the world. And I will “bring it” today.
I will bring my best. You deserve it. Your church deserves it.
It is the Hope of the World.*

To commitment yourself to God, to becoming a better leader, to building into people wherever you lead, to serving sacrificially for the sake of a vision that seizes you, and to invest all of yourself so this world can be changed, there is not a more noble call you can answer.

Today, spend time praying the prayer above and waiting before the Lord to hear what His Spirit has to say to you. Wait on God's whispers and when He speaks, let His vision seize you and commit to stepping out by faith.

