**EE Practicum – Session # 10**

**Spiritual Leadership**

**Mark 10:42-44**

1. **Introduction**
* There is an inseparable link between the character of a church and the quality of its leadership. Leaders must set a godly example for the church to follow. Godly leaders have always been the backbone of the church.
* The call to lead the church is so important that only the noblest need to apply. Leadership that centers on the glory of God and the welfare of God’s people is a mighty force for good.
* True greatness, true leadership is found in giving yourself to others. Jesus said in Mark 10:42-44, **“You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you but whoever wishes to be great among you shall be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all.”** Jesus modeled servant leadership at it’s finest!
* Throughout the Bible, God was in search of men and women He could trust with the leadership of His people. When God did find a person who was ready to commit to full-on disciple making and take on responsibility for others, that person was used to the limit.
* Such were Moses, Gideon and David and in the history of Israel, Martin Luther, John Wesley, Adoniram Judson, William Carey and many others, in the history of the church.
* J. Oswald Sanders states that a “true leader must be willing to suffer for the sake of objectives great enough to demand their wholehearted obedience to God” (page # 18 – Spiritual Leadership).
* II Chronicles 16:9 shows that God seeks for a perfect heart, **“For the eyes of the Lord run to and fro throughout the whole earth to show Himself strong on behalf of those whose heart is perfect toward Him.”** God continues to be on the lookout for those whose heart is perfect toward Him. Let God continue to search your heart!
* We read in I Samuel 13:13 that God rejected Saul because **“He had not kept the commandment of the Lord his God”** so in verse 14 Samuel said to Saul, **“But now your kingdom shall not endure. The Lord has sought out for Himself a man after His own heart.”** David was this man. Even though David failed in many ways, his heart always remained true to the Lord his God.
* Spiritual leaders have many wonderful qualities that could be listed. But as we close out this EE practicum, I want us to focus on five things spiritual leaders **are** rather than on what they **do**. These qualities are always present in the man or woman God uses for His glory.
1. **Spiritual Leaders are:**

 **1. Prayerful** – “they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength”

* The most important **spiritual leader** the Church has ever known is Jesus Christ. He is definitely the “head of the church”. Here was the Son of God who took on human flesh and one of the most important features was that He was a man of prayer. Prayer at its core demands an intimate relationship with God.
* Prayer was the dominant feature of His life, a recurring part of His teaching and the most significant pattern in His example. He modeled an intimate relationship with His Heavenly Father.
* Christ spent full nights in prayer (Luke 6:12). He often rose before dawn to have unbroken communion with His Father (Mark 1:35). Great crises in His life and ministry were begun with periods of special prayer as in Luke 5:16, **“But Jesus often withdrew to lonely places and prayed.”** This would indicate that prayer was a regular habit with Him.
* On that fateful night, in the Garden of Gethsemane Luke records for us in 22:44, **“And being in agony, Jesus prayed more earnestly and His sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground.”** I’m sure His disciples never forgot that picture.
* Both Jesus and His bond slave Paul make it clear to us that genuine prayer is hard work and true intercession is sacrifice and a battle. Paul said in Colossians 4:12, **“Epaphras . . . is always wrestling in prayer for you”** (NIV). In Colossians 2:1 Paul said, **“I want you to know how I am struggling for you”** (CEB).

 **2. Humble** – the idea of being “meek and lowly in heart”

* Christ said of Himself, **“Take my yoke upon you and learn of me, for I am meek and lowly in heart and you shall find rest unto your souls.”** Humility is not a natural characteristic of the human soul but must be mined in our hearts as miner seeks for gold out of solid rock.
* Solomon reminds us how **“A man’s pride shall bring him low; but honor shall uphold the humble in spirit.”** It’s impossible for pride to exist where humility is sought after and attained.
* Thousands of humble men and women in church history were used by God to champion some of His noblest causes. The Apostle James reminds us that **“God gives grace to the humble”** (James 4:6).
* John the Baptist humbly served Christ Jesus and said, **“He must increase but I must decrease”** (John 3:30). Yet Jesus said of John the Baptist, **“Among those that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist notwithstanding he that is the least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he”**(Matthew 11; Luke 7:28).
* A Spirit-filled leader is humble and the Lord looks for this quality in those He chooses for service. You may recall the disciples in Acts 6:3 saying, **“Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this ministry,** what ministry, the daily distribution of food, **over to them.”**
* If you want to be great in God’s kingdom, learn to be the servant of all and that requires humility. In Philippians 2:8 Paul says, **And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, even death on the cross.”**

**3. Faithful –** “the Lord calls faithful men and women to His service”

* Paul says in I Corinthians 4:2, **“Moreover it is required in stewards that a man be found faithful.”** In order to be spiritual leaders we must be found faithful to God’s call on our lives. Once again, faithfulness is not a quality that is natural to our fallen natures. Faithfulness must be grown in the daily routines of life.
* It was Solomon who said, **“A faithful man shall abound with blessings” (**Proverbs 28:20). Faithfulness is the hard work of the soul and spiritual leaders demonstrate a faithful heart.
* Faithfulness is one of God’s greatest qualities and Spirit-filled leaders demonstrate it continually however, faithful men and women are a scarce commodity. Solomon said, **“Most men will proclaim every one his own goodness, but a faithful man, who can find?”**
* Stephen was one of seven men who were chosen to serve tables and in Acts 6:8 it was because he was **“full of the Spirit and wisdom.”** Faithful men show up for work every day; faithful husbands serve their wives continuously; faithful fathers care for their children’s personal needs, emotional and spiritual needs throughout their lives.
* In the EE ministry and in every other walk of life God is looking for faithful men and women who will carry the gospel message to people who are lost and lacking a shepherd for their souls. We are stewards of the Gospel!
* Being faithful is taking responsibility for the good we know to do. It’s about treating even the small tasks before us as important and worth our best effort. Faithfulness is God kingdom pathway to great opportunity, responsibility and adventure.
* Jesus tells us that whoever is faithful in small things will be entrusted with more and faithfulness is a response to calling. All of us have been called to be faithful and spiritual leaders model this quality year after year, et al.

**4. Purposeful** – “we are not to just to beat the air but to land a punch”

* Young David in facing Goliath was astonished that the army of God was quaking because of one man. Saul and his soldiers were saying “Goliath is too big to hit; David was thinking, Goliath is to big to miss!” In I Samuel 17:29 David said, **“What have I now done? Is there not a cause?”**
* Every giant becomes small, every battle becomes winnable, every obstacle can be overcome when looked at through the eyes of faith. We have a world to reach with the gospel, “Is there not a cause?”
* Nehemiah was one of God’s great spiritual leaders of the Old Testament who purposefully set out to rebuild the broken down walls of Jerusalem. The sadness over the state of the Holy City began by looking at the ruins and devastation and then coming up with a plan. He share the plan with his boss and then with the people and in 52 days, less than 2 months, the walls were rebuilt and Jerusalem was once again defensible.
* When Nehemiah was tempted to meet together to talk with Sanballat and Tobias he overcame the temptation by focusing on the plan God had given him and he responded, **“I am doing a great work and I cannot come down!”** God had given Nehemiah a plan and that plan became the blueprint for completing the task and protecting the city.
* Spiritual leaders have a plan and cry out to the naysayers, “Is there not a cause?” Christ gave his followers a plan to “**go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.”** Spiritual leaders are purposeful and they have a plan.

**5. Powerful** – “you will receive power . . . and you shall be My witnesses**”**

* Spiritual leadership depends on the mighty power of God to accomplish the task at hand and the realization is nothing is too hard for God. Nehemiah declared to the children of Israel, **“The God of heaven will give us success”** (Nehemiah 2:20). He reminded the people of the source of their power in Nehemiah 4:20 that **“Our God will fight for us!**
* Spiritual leadership in a word is “influence.” The stronger the character of a leader, the greater his or her influence. The influence of a spiritual leader is directly proportionate to his or her moral authority. It is moral authority that gives a leader sustained influence.
* The founder of Evangelism Explosion, Dr. D. James Kennedy was a great example of a modern day spiritual leader. Dr. O.S. Hawkins, President of GuideStone Financial Resources recently spoke at EE’s 51st Anniversary Banquet for Evangelism Explosion International. This is what he said and I quote, “Here are some words that come to my mind when I think of Dr. D. James Kennedy: The first word is **character;** Dr. Kennedy was a man of impeccable character; the second word is **confident;** I’ve never know a man who was more confident; another word is **compassion;** Dr. Kennedy was filled with compassion for people and especially the lost; another word is **consistent;** Dr. Kennedy was always the same regardless of the context in which you saw him; another word is **courageous;** Dr. Kennedy was fearless when facing difficult circumstances; the final word is **commitment;** Dr. Kennedy was committed to the task of preaching the Word of God accurately and fulfilling the Great Commission of the Lord.
* Listen to these words: character, confident, compassion, consistent and courageous. Those are words that should describe a spiritual leader for all of them reflect the character and conduct of our Lord Jesus Christ.
* The reason Jesus had such influence in the lives of people was His pristine character. John 19:4 says that **“Pilate went forward again and said to them, Behold I bring Him forth to you that you may know that I find no fault in Him.”** Repeatedly Pilate makes this claim about Christ.
* In his book entitled, “Visioneering” Andy Stanley states that moral authority gives a person great power. It is the credibility you earn by walking your talk. So a person with moral authority is beyond reproach. One must also realize that moral authority is a fragile commodity. It takes a lifetime to earn but can be lost in a moment and once it’s lost it’s almost impossible to regain.
* The key to Nehemiah’s great power was seen in his example in Nehemiah 5:14-19. In verse 14 we read, **“For twelve years, neither I nor my kinsman have eaten the governor’s food allowance.”** Now Nehemiah had the right to the allowance but he says, **“I did not do so because of the fear of God. I also applied myself to the work on this wall”**
* Nehemiah paid for those who worked for him with his own money. He didn’t dip in to governor’s funds even though his predecessors had done so. In setting this example for himself he could demand absolute honesty from his followers. Nehemiah did what he did in order to maintain a blameless walk before the Lord.
* Moral authority positions a leader to influence people at the deepest level which includes their heart, their mind and their conscience. Nehemiah was on a mission from God. For Nehemiah, gaining and maintaining moral authority was not a leadership ploy but a natural expression of his devotion to the Lord.
* Moral authority is the result of a commitment to do what’s right no matter the cost. Nehemiah wisely chose to forgo his privileges and as a result no one could accuse him of being in this for personal gain.
* Nehemiah was there to obey the commission from the Lord. He was there to restore Jerusalem to a place of honor and influence among the nations. He was there to fulfill God’s vision for his nation.
* Paul was the same kind of spiritual leader who said in Acts 24:16, **“And herein do I exercise myself to have a conscience void of offense toward God and toward men.”**
* A clear conscience gives a spiritual leader incredible power with people. This God honoring power doesn’t come with a position but it comes with the pattern of behavior that is “above reproach.

So the qualities of prayerful, humble, faithful, purposeful & powerful are words that describe a spiritual leader for **who he is**.

**Two Books to Reference:**

1. “Spiritual Leadership” by J. Oswald Sanders; ISBN 0-8024-6799-7

2. “Visioneering” by Andy Stanley; ISBN 1-57673-538-9