

Philippians 2

Sunday 8/4/2013

SEC: The Discerning Nature of Ministry and Accountability Groups

Last time I was here, I had 24 hours to prepare. This time, I had about 11 or 12 weeks, but there was no difference, by the way. Two weeks ago, I thought, "Oh yeah, I better start thinking about it." That is not exactly true. For three months or so, we have had about 150 people in the church, in about 20 to 24 groups—I do not know the exact number—meeting every week and studying the same thing. There is a list of 12 people, six men and six women. I wanted to try this experiment to see what 150 people could do if we all got together and did the same thing for a while.

I tell you, the results were more than I expected. The amount of work that has been put into this group exceeds all the other accountability groups that we have had so far. I think it was because there is something special that happens when you get a group of people together. You could play an instrument alone, and it is good, and that was great. But is it not different when you are playing with other people? There is something different that happens when a group of people get together to do the same thing. They do it differently. They use different talents together, and it becomes—it is a crazy old saying that the sum of the parts is greater than the whole, or the whole is greater than the sum of the parts. Whatever that is, something special happens when people get together. They come together and do the same thing, especially when it comes to the Bible.

There are 150 people or so in this group, maybe a little more, maybe a little less. But I can tell you, about 90% of them got it. This was a high-performing group of people this time. Some people get it, some people do not get it. Some people are going to get it someday, but it is just the nature of the beast. Not everybody always gets it every time. But I have got to say, this was a high-performance group.

I have this philosophy that ministry is a great discerner of people. When you put people through ministry, the real person comes out. It is hard to hide in a ministry. It is difficult because when it comes to "put up or shut up," ministry is a filter that always separates groups of people. There are the hearers of the word, and then there are the doers of the word. There is always a different set of groups every time you break out God's Word because God's Word separates things. It just always does.

Paul uses a strange phrase, and I am not dogmatic about it, but he uses it twice. He says something like this in Ephesians chapter 1, verse 20. He says, "We are at Ephesus under the faithful brethren in Christ Jesus." I am just kind of a crazy guy. I always thought, "Well, maybe that is two different sets of people." What if a saint is someone who is saved? But what if a faithful brother is someone that has been through the filter of ministry and found to be adequate, found to be doing the work? I am not dogmatic, so do not write your letters to Bob when he gets back. I am not saying that. I am just saying it seems to me that if I am right about ministry discerning people and separating us into groups, Paul might be saying the same thing.

The point I am trying to make here is it is easy to blend in in a flock. It is easy to show up and bring your Bible. It is easy to get in a group, and it is easy to sit there and look like you are something that you are not. What I wanted to do was have these groups study 12 men and 12 women and the leadership characteristics that they saw in those people. These groups are not really prayer groups; I mess up and call them prayer groups from time to time. They are really accountability groups. The accountability groups were set up over three years ago to develop people into leaders.

Bob talked about the church stepping up to a new level and growing new men and new women, young men and young women, and maturing those of us who are just a little bit older than the rest of you, and being able to step up to the next level in ministry. This has been a ministry that has absolutely defined people. I have seen it happen. I have seen it happen good. I have seen it happen bad. Some of the people that get through there, they are saints. They are saved. They are going to heaven. That might be all they ever do. If that is all they ever do, well, okay, that is great. You made it. But then there are those faithful brethren. They are the followers in the group. They are the leaders in the group. They are the people that are honestly and sincerely trying to do the next thing that will take them from what we talked about, a level one or a level two or a level three.

I have seen it happen. It is great to watch this. I have learned more watching this ministry than I ever did participating in any other ministry because most of the other times, Tracy knows, I taught Sunday school at the last church. I got to learn whatever I taught myself. I get to learn what 150 people teach me every week. It is pretty cool. You watch it. You see people perform that you never thought would perform. Then you see people not perform that you always thought would. It is just an amazing thing. The good thing is, I get to learn because if I am the smartest guy in this room, you are all in a lot of trouble today because I can dumb down a crowd a lot. But 150 people doing the same thing are way smarter than I will ever be. What this group did, what this round did, was just further define these groups of people for me and who they are. One group completed the mission, and the other group did not. It is just always that way. Although I will say it, this is a high-performing church. People really step up here. It is a really good place to be.

SEC: The Saul Principle Versus True Leadership

The problem with society today, and a lot of Christians today, and churches today, is that we want to take a shortcut. We do not want to do the hard work it takes to be that leader that we want to be. You get married, and you are the leader. The Bible says so. Wives obey your husbands. It says it right there. That is the end of it for them. It is like, "I am in charge." I have to be asked by my wife what it was like. I am not going to go into personal stories, but I did not want to do the hard work at first. I just thought, "I am there because God said so." But there is a work that is involved in being a leader.

We are born into a society and a culture that tells us that we are special because we are born. There was a commencement speech that I read online once. This guy told 250 people in a graduating class, "There is nothing special about you. Nothing special. You will have to work

hard to get ahead in life. Most of you will not get called up to the NFL. You are not going to be the starting pitcher for whatever team it was." He went through this litany of, "You are not going to get a Nobel Prize. You are not going to cure cancer. You are average. You are okay. You are going to have to work at it."

I think as far as biblical leadership is, we need to work at it because we want to apply the Saul principle of leadership. Saul was tall. He was probably good-looking. I hate him. He is everything I am not. He is strong. Here is where it really falls out: he probably had a great personality, and people just loved the guy. They wanted to be around him. That is the Saul principle. He is a man's man. Everybody wanted to hang out with this guy. He was head and shoulders taller than everybody else. He had every quality that a man or woman would want in a leader, in a worldly sense. But the problem is that all that stuff is nothing. It is just a mask for what is going on inside, and it hides who we really are. People like Saul make good first impressions. You have got to give them that. They are tall, good-looking. You have got to hate them. I hate them. Anyway, if the Saul principle applied to me at work, I would be the janitor. The janitor is taller than I am, so it just does not work.

I am not saying the real us comes through after the facade is over. I am not saying we do not make mistakes. I am not saying we do not do things wrong. We do not say things wrong. We fall. We get up. We fall down. But you rub some dirt on it and get on with it, and you move on. I am talking about what is in the heart. That is what is really important: what is in the heart. If the Saul principle is true, then none of this matters, and you can all just go home today. But leaders do not demand respect because they are good-looking or have a good personality. They do not get it because of that. You have to earn it. You show up, and you are who you are, and leaders lead, and others do not. That is all there is to it.

From time to time, over the last—I have been here almost five, is it four or five years? I think it is four years now—we have had pretend leaders come and go. We have seen them. Some of the saints in the church, not necessarily the faithful brethren, will follow these people out. I am not saying that you cannot come here and go out and start a church. What I am saying is I have seen pretend leaders come here and go out and start a church, and I have seen saints follow them out of the church. Why? Well, because they are nice guys. They were good guys. They had good personalities. People got along with them. That is great if you want the Saul principle to prevail in your life, but that is not it.

It is easy to stand here and look like leadership. It is easy. "Well, I am a deacon." So what? If you chose right, great. The point being, "I have been a Christian for 20 years." I have heard this phrase. "I have been with Bob for 30 years." And what? And what? I mean, okay, then you ought to be a little bit better off than you are, in my opinion. But anyhow, leaders do not steal sheep, guys. Leaders do not steal sheep. Leaders do not sit around doing nothing, waiting for an opportunity. Leaders lead. They get out there. They create opportunities. They fill the holes. They stand in that gap that we talk about. They find a niche, and they fill it. Leaders do something about it.

Leadership qualities are like some of them are obvious. Some of them are subtle. How about little boy David? He was not much special, was he? He was just this red little guy out there, I do not know, doing his father's work, tending sheep. He took on the profession of his father. He started to act like his father. He started to serve his father. Little boy David was the last. He was the seventh son. He was nothing. He was not special in any other way. I am sure his dad loved him, but he was like, "Oh yeah, I got one more. He is out there tending sheep." Oh, he is tending sheep. Well, that is probably a pretty good thing to be doing if you are a leader. Leaders tend sheep.

What was special about David was he was willing to take a hard stand when it came to it, too. We will look at him later. He was one of the men that we chose to study this round. The biggest thing for me was he was found doing his father's work. If you find a leader that is not doing his father's work, guess what? You did not find a leader. You just found another guy that wants to plant in with a crowd and be one. David was kind of quiet about it.

1 Thessalonians 4:11

Study to be quiet, and to do your own business, and to work with your own hands, as we commanded you;

He was not out there touting himself, "Hey, look at me. I am somebody. I am the anointed deacon of the church." It is not like that. David was not perfect. We know that. We have studied his life. If you have not come across it, maybe you were not in an accountability group this time. Maybe you ought to. I will tell you, there are more than 150 people in the church, and we are not all in the group. So we cannot all be in these groups. You do not have to sign up for everything. But this was a good group to be in, guys. This was, I think, for me, my favorite group was this one because the work that was put into it was amazing.

Being a leader is a good desire to have, and that desire ought to be cultivated. I think our pastor allows this to happen quite extensively. He gives us opportunities to practice our skills. He gives us opportunities to fall down while we are practicing our skills.

1 Timothy 3:1

This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desireth a good work.

That is a good desire to have. Wanting to be a leader is a great thing. It is a godly thing. It is a noble thing, and we ought to chase after those things. Not just men, but men and women ought to do this. But if you read 1 Timothy after verse 1, there are some requirements that you have got to hold up. If you do not have those qualifications, you are not a leader. You will never be a leader until you meet those qualifications. Yes, you will fall down. Yes, you will fall short. But if you do not have them in a bag somewhere, you are not going to be a leader. So you want to be a leader, grab 1 Timothy. Read that chapter. Read that whole book and figure out where you stand and make an improvement.

I have seen people doing this. It is great. It does not come by memorization. It does not come by just showing up. It comes by observing and digesting the qualities of leadership that come out of

the Bible. It comes by practice. It should be obvious to at least those in the groups today that not everybody is leadership material right now. I believe in equal opportunity. I believe we can all become that. Some people just do not want to. Some people stop short. They just want to look like they are in the crowd. It is easy to stand around and look like a sheep until you have to act like one. Then there is a difference. It is the saddest part of human nature. The book of Revelation talks about that. It says you think you are rich and increased with goods, but you do not know that you are poor, blind, miserable, and naked. We tend to see ourselves differently than other people see us, so we judge ourselves differently than other people judge us. It is just human nature. It is a sad part of human nature, but it is true.

We look at other people, and we have no problem identifying their flaws. I think there is no greater tool in the Christian bucket than identifying and pointing out the flaws in other Christians. The problem is that we ought to be focusing on ourselves and fixing those problems. The bottom line here is that not all who desire leadership will actually be leadership material. They will pretend. They will play. They may lead some sheep astray with them when they come and go, but that is just the nature of the revolving door that is called ministry.

I remember seeing this stuff when I first got into church, and I was complaining. I think I just started serving in ministry, and I told the pastor, "You know, is this going on? That is going on. Why is this? And why is that?" He laughed and he laughed, and he said those famous words, "Welcome to the ministry, Bob." I thought, "These things ought not be," but they are. There are two groups of people: the people who are doers of the word, and then there are people who are hearers of the word only. There is a difference. Some are predisposed to leadership, and some are not, but we can all aspire to it. My favorite ones are the young Christians that you watch trying and stumbling like a kid trying to walk, and they get the big head syndrome where they bump their head into everything, and they are making a mess everywhere. But then they get better at it and better at it, and they grow through it, and they become those men and those women that you want to see lead. I am seeing this happen right now.

I want to talk just a little bit about these accountability groups because I did some research. We started our first group on February 7, 2010. That was a long time ago. Two weeks later, two weeks into the accountability groups, we already had murmuring about, "Well, the accountability groups." Already, two weeks in, what we found was some people did not want to be held accountable. If you remember those first two weeks when I would get the reports from the prayer leaders, I would give the reports to the prayer leaders. I would compile them all, and I would hand them out. "Oh my God, you think I violated the virgin birth? Why are you showing everybody what I am doing?" I thought, "Oh my God, are you kidding? What I am trying to do is what we said: iron sharpeneth iron. Did you not hear that part?" So I do not do that anymore. When I hand out the matrix, I have this matrix. Everybody's report is categorized. It is going to be big, but I am taking your names off, and I am going to put numbers there because we do not really want accountability. If you want to know what your number is, I will tell you individually. I have got to tell you, people, honest to God, a lot of people do not want to be held accountable.

By February 28th, we had the famous message on the board. The hand of God Himself wrote on the whiteboard over there, "Why do we have to go to these stupid meetings?" Remember that?

You remember that. You erased it. So we are three weeks into an accountability group that we all praised Jesus. We cried. It was great. It was a wonderful New Year's Eve, was it not? Within three weeks of starting it, "Why do we have to meet in these stupid groups?" That first round lasted eight weeks, and two families left in a snit with accountability groups. Maybe they said something to Bob, like, "Well, we really feel it is time. We should just move on." That is okay. Ministry is a great discerner of people. When you put people through a ministry, you find out what is really there. I heard it from our pastor a long, long time ago, "What do you get when you squeeze a lemon? You get whatever is in the lemon." Boy, I will tell you what. Welcome to the ministry.

I have seen these young men and these young women, and old men and old women, I guess, with this honest desire and sincere desire to become leaders. There is nothing better than watching that. Again, there are those that just desire to be seen as leaders. It is no fun watching that, but you have got to see it. It is like a train wreck. I give out instructions, and some... This is great. I got a report one week, "I decided not to do a character study this week. I just felt like I was led to share my wisdom with the group." Okay. Check. It is the simplest of instructions given out, and you watch these things. Leaders follow instructions. Abraham did. David did. Moses did. Joshua did. All the men that we studied did. The women sure did. Boy, the women sure did. I will tell you what. It is just bizarre that we all know who we are. We are a very small church, and we know who we are. We know that we know you know. I know who you are, and I know you know who I am, and I know that. It is such a small group that it is incomprehensible to me that you could try to hide in a church this small. You cannot hide. Step up. Step up to the next level. Get those tears of joy that we stood up there on that night when he announced these things, and we were having such a great evening, and we were going to change this church. Then the new car smell wore off, and we kind of, "I do not want to wash my car anymore." This is how it has been three years now, and it is, you know, I see it anyway.

SEC: Foundational Qualities of Biblical Leadership

This message is about biblical leadership. I have taken that work that you all did, and I have compiled it. I have tried as best I can to put that together in a message today about the qualities of a leader, according to the Bible. For those of you not in our accountability groups, we studied six men and six women. For the women, we studied Hannah, Ruth, Esther, the Shunammite woman, Mary Magdalene, and Mary of Bethany. For the men, and the men and the women both did all 12, we studied Moses, Joshua, Abraham, John, and Paul. Just for kicks, I was going to add George and Ringo, but not much is written about them, so I left them off the list. Some of these people had a lot written about them. Some of them had a whole book. Some of them had a couple lines. But they all had characteristics that I thought were important for leadership, if you want to be a leader.

One of the first things we learned over the past few months, or should have learned, is that a man or a woman is either a leader or not a leader. There are different styles of leadership, but you are either a leader or you are not. The opposite of leader is not follower. All leaders are followers, period. It is the number one character trait of leadership: followership. So you are not in two

groups, leaders and followers. I do not know what the other group is, but Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 11:1:

1 Corinthians 11:1

Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ.

So Paul had a leader. Paul was asking you to be a leader. John the Baptist says in John 3:30:

John 3:30

He must increase, but I must decrease.

John the Baptist had a leader. In Luke 2:49, Christ says:

Luke 2:49

And he said unto them, How is it that ye sought me? wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?

Christ had a leader. From Adam to Christ to me and you here today, there has never been a biblical leader ever that did not have a leader. So there has never been a leader that has never been a follower. Not every leader is patient all the time or obedient all the time, but every biblical leader always, ever, 100% had a leader, period.

So the matrix, I have this matrix and these character traits that we discovered. What I discovered the most was, and this is all you reporting to me, and I did it too. I have actually got a line in there. I am line one. I will fess up when you get it. I am line one, so you can dog me if I got it wrong. Faithfulness, obedience, sacrifice, being a servant, courage, humility, patience, willingness, and preparedness came up more than all the others. Some of them more than others. In fact, the number one thing that came up was followership. If we learned nothing else about leadership today, over the last 12 weeks, it is that leaders follow.

I have seen men who refuse to follow a leader start a church. I have seen those churches go and die and ruin lives. I have seen it happen. They were never sent out. They were never selected. They were never told to go do this. Therefore, they were not prepared. They did not have a leader. They were not following, and they implode. But it takes years to implode. In the meantime, you are affecting people's lives. The character trait that was discovered most is that real leaders have a good relationship with their leader and their followers. Leaders are followers. They are not opposite.

SEC: Male Leaders and Their Defining Traits

I am going to try to go through these 12 people, six men and six women here, and outline what I think biblical leadership looks like. We are going to start in Philippians chapter 2. I think that this is the definitive passage on leadership. I think there is no other passage in the Bible that could compare to describe leadership more than this.

Philippians 2:1-11

- 1 *If there be therefore any consolation in Christ, if any comfort of love, if any fellowship of the Spirit, if any bowels and mercies,*
- 2 *Fulfil ye my joy, that ye be likeminded, having the same love, being of one accord, of one mind.*
- 3 *Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves.*
- 4 *Look not every man on his own things, but every man also on the things of others.*
- 5 *Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus:*
- 6 *Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:*
- 7 *But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:*
- 8 *And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross:*
- 9 *Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name:*
- 10 *That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth;*
- 11 *And that every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

Let us pray. Father, we just thank You and praise You so much for giving us this time to meet together and to take a look at Your Word. Lord, thank You for the last 12 weeks or so of time that we have spent as a church, as a large number of people in this church, trying to glean from Your Word what it is to be a biblical leader. I am sure, Lord, that You have given us that which we have needed. I pray that we not only hear the words that we heard over these weeks, Lord, but that we do them as well. We take them in, make them part of our life, and help us all, every single one of us, take a step up to the next level in our relationship with You and in our ministries, in our lives and families and work and everything we do, Lord. I pray for the pastor and his family as they are out on vacation today, and all the other people that were not here today, that they are all safe and well, Lord, and bring them back to us. I ask these things in Jesus' name, amen.

Here we go. We have the six men. We are going to start with Moses.

*****Moses: The Faithful Leader*****

Moses came across as the faithful leader. He had faith. In fact, the book of Hebrews, chapter 3, verse 2 says:

Hebrews 3:2

Who was faithful to him that appointed him, as also Moses was faithful in all his house.

He was a faithful man. Twice in the book of Hebrews it says the same phrase, in chapter 3, verse 2, and in chapter 3, verse 5. You cannot say that Moses always had it right. He did not start all right, and he did not keep it up all the time. But Moses had some pretty heavy mojo laid on him, did he not? He is out there. He kills a man. All right. Strike one. He goes out, and he is gone. He leaves Egypt. Where do we find him next? Next is just chapter 3. He is getting some pretty heavy stuff laid on him. He is out there tending sheep. I like it practical. He is out there, "Okay. I messed up. What am I doing now? Oh, I do not know. I am a shepherd." Kind of important. Maybe it is a coincidence. I do not know. He is tending sheep, and all of a sudden, bam, there is this angel of the Lord speaking to him out of a burning bush. It tells him this, "Hey, look, you know what you need to do. You need to go back to Egypt and give Pharaoh an ultimatum." He is like, "Wait, that is the guy I am running from. He is going to kill me." A lot of us today would have pulled the Jonah. The Jonah principle would have headed to Joppa instead. But Moses goes back and does it. Moses was not perfect. But if you think about it, he probably walked into a situation that most of us would have been running for the hills. We would have just gone the other way. But God calls him faithful in His house. Leaders are faithful men. They are faithful women. They do things even when they are hard. They do not have faith in God; they are faithful to the people that they lead. If any leader was faithful to his people, Moses was. He was not perfect, though. Moses did not get to cross the Jordan. Moses did something that could not get him into the land. But Moses was a faithful leader. If you have a man or a woman that is not a faithful person, you have found yourself not a leader. I do not know what that is, but that is not a leader. It will come up over and over again in these studies. There are more of these characteristics of each one of these people here. You will see them in the matrix, but there is just no way I am going to be able to review them all today.

****Joshua: The Trusted Follower****

Let us look at Exodus 17. I want to look at Joshua. While you are going there, Joshua represented the follower. Most of the reports came back with Joshua as a follower. He followed his leader. He had a good relationship with his leader. If you think about it, Moses went up into that mountain alone. If you look at it closely, Joshua went further than anybody ever went. Moses went to the bottom of that mountain with a bunch of elders. I just picture that. I am a practical guy. I like to see it in my mind. If I cannot see it, it is not real. So all these people are standing there, and Moses starts going, "I am going up the mountain." He goes, "Hey, you know what? Hey, Joshua, why don't you come with me?" Joshua goes up with Moses into that mountain. Maybe he did not go all the way, but maybe he would stand over here. "I cannot take you with me, but I want you to see what is about to happen." That is a relationship that you want with your leader. Maybe you cannot go and do the things that the leader is doing, but he wants you close enough so that you can see it, so that when it comes time for you to actually lead, you will have some information for you. Joshua was a trusted follower. So when it came time to put up or shut up, Joshua was the go-to guy for his leader.

Exodus 17:9-10

9 And Moses said unto Joshua, Choose us out men, and go out, fight with Amalek: to morrow I will stand on the top of the hill with the rod of God in mine hand.

10 So Joshua did as Moses had said to him, and fought with Amalek: and Moses, Aaron, and Hur went up to the top of the hill.

Verse 9 is the phrase I think is all you need to know about Joshua in a nutshell. Moses said, "Choose us out men." He did not say, "Choose me out men." He did not say, "Choose you out men." He said, "Choose us out men." They were a team. Joshua was close enough to his leader, and his leader had enough faith and trust in Joshua as a follower to go out and choose men to do a battle. But he did not just stop there. He says, "Choose us out men, and then go do something. Go out." But not just go out. "Choose out men and go out and just stand there," no, "and fight with Amalek." Go do something with it. We can do all the right things. We can blend in with that flock. Joshua could have gathered up those people and said, "All right, I am done. I chose out people. It is their job to fight." But he took those people out, and he fought. It was not "choose me." It was not "choose you." It was "choose us."

Joshua took hard stands when he needed to also. A couple weeks ago, we saw Moses taking a stand and drawing that line in the sand. I thought, "Well, surely, surely a leader would draw a line in the sand." So where was Joshua's line? My first thought was to go to Joshua 24. "As for me and my house, we will serve the LORD." It is on the refrigerator. It is on our walls. But that is not where Joshua drew his line. Leaders draw their line early. He drew his line, I think, back in Exodus. Sorry. He drew his line back when Caleb and he went out in that land. I think he drew his line before that even. He drew that line, and he left it there. If you do not draw that line early, I think it gets harder to draw that line later on. There is an example of a man who draws that line later on in life, and I do not know that it always happens. If you will not take a stand now, you will not take a stand later.

Leaders clean up messes. Leaders sometimes create messes. Sometimes taking a stand makes a mess. It is like taking medicine. It hurts. It makes you sick, but you do not die. I have seen churches where the leader would not clean up a mess, and the mess just does not go away. It just sits over in the corner doing push-ups, getting strong, waiting to kick your rear end when the time comes. So you have got to deal with it. But leaders draw that line, and the lines do not move.

*****Abraham: The Obedient Leader*****

Here is the man that draws the line later in life. It is Abraham. Abraham came out as representing the obedient leader. Not always. But Hebrews 11:8 says:

Hebrews 11:8

By faith Abraham, when he was called to go out into a place which he should after receive for an inheritance, obeyed; and he went out, not knowing whither he went.

God said, "Get up and go." Abraham got up and went. Did he do it right? No. He took some people with him he should not have taken. He took some trips into Egypt that got him into trouble. He was not always perfect. But when it came to it, Abraham got up and went. But then he drew a line in the sand one day when it came to his son Isaac. That was put up or shut up time.

When it came to it, Abraham put up, did he not? He took his son, and he did what he was supposed to do. It took him a long time to draw that line, but he drew it.

Now, what about this? God is not going to ask you to give up your only child. But what if, just what if God said, "Take your job, your only job, the job which thou lovest, the job which taketh thee away from church on Sundays and Thursdays and leaves your wife or your husband sitting there alone. Give up your job and do what is right for forsaking not the assembling of ourselves together, as is the manner of some." What are you going to do with that? Smoke it for a while. How about this? Parents, parents, start raising your kids. Beat them. What if God told you to beat your child? What if He did? Well, He did. He said it.

Proverbs 23:13-14

13 Withhold not correction from the child: for if thou beatest him with the rod, he shall not die.

14 Thou shalt beat him with the rod, and shalt deliver his soul from hell.

I do not know. What are you going to do with that? Hey, guys, you want to be a leader? Go home. Get a hold of your kids. Get them right. Come back and figure it out, but not until after that. "One who ruleth his house well." Sorry. Sorry, you are not qualified. Next. I am sorry. I am so tired of seeing it. I have been seeing it for 20 years. This is one of the reasons why the pastor looked at me that day and said, "Welcome to ministry, Bob." I thought, "But the kids are a mess." "Welcome to ministry, Bob." So before we go off and try to pretend like we are leaders, take a moment, get your own house right first. Do not come to me and say you want to work with kids, and you cannot even get your own kids. Man, do not even try. Really? Is not that embarrassing? It should be embarrassing. I see people whose kids are a mess, and they want to teach kids how to live their lives. It is a noble calling, guys. It is a noble calling. It is a godly calling. It is a godly desire. You should cultivate it. But think about the consequences of what you are doing. Think about it. Get your own house right first, and then come and help me run my house. I need help. I am asking for help.

David: The Servant Who Takes a Stand for God

David represents the leader servant who takes a stand for God. If anyone ever took a stand for God, David sure did. He came across as a servant more often than not, though. The first three people in the Bible who are called servants are Abraham, then Moses, and then David. If you look through the Bible, you will see these people called servants, the first three people. If you look over there in 1 Samuel chapter 17, you have this great little story where David draws his line. Maybe he drew it before then, but this is the first time I could really see him drawing that line.

1 Samuel 17:20-29, 32

20 And David rose up early in the morning, and left the sheep with a keeper, and took, and went, as Jesse had commanded him; and he came to the trench, as the host was going forth to the fight, and shouted for the battle.

21 For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army.

22 And David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren.

23 And as he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion, the Philistine of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words: and David heard them.

24 And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid.

25 And the men of Israel said, Have ye seen this man that is come up? surely to defy Israel is he come up: and it shall be, that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel.

26 And David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? for who is this uncircumcised Philistine, that he should defy the armies of the living God?

27 And the people answered him after this manner, saying, So shall it be done to the man that killeth him.

28 And Eliab his eldest brother heard when he spake unto the men; and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, and he said, Why camest thou down hither? and with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle.

29 And David said, What have I now done? Is there not a cause?

32 And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine.

They were making a noise like they wanted to fight. They did not fight. That is great. They are all standing there looking stupid. Goliath, oh, they are mocking them and stuff. God's people are over here going, "Oh, what are we going to do? What are we going to do?" This little kid shows up. For Israel and the Philistines had put the battle in array, army against army, and David left his carriage in the hand of the keeper of the carriage, and ran into the army, and came and saluted his brethren. As he talked with them, behold, there came up the champion of the Philistines of Gath, Goliath by name, out of the armies of the Philistines, and spake according to the same words, and David heard them. He was saying, "Hey, guys, what do you got? Send a guy out here. We will fight. If I win, you are mine. If you win, we are yours." There was not a man in the entire army of Israel that would step forth. So it says in verse 24, "And all the men of Israel, when they saw the man, fled from him, and were sore afraid." The men of Israel said, "Have you seen this man that has come up? Surely to defy Israel is he come up, and it shall be that the man who killeth him, the king will enrich him with great riches, and will give him his daughter, and make his father's house free in Israel." David spake to the men that stood by him, saying, "What shall be done to the man that killeth this Philistine, and taketh away the reproach from Israel? For who is this uncircumcised Philistine that he should defy the armies of the living God?" The people answered him after this manner, saying, "So shall it be done to the man that killed him." Eliab,

the eldest brother, heard when he spake unto the men, and Eliab's anger was kindled against David, saying, "Why camest thou down hither? And with whom hast thou left those few sheep in the wilderness? I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle." Here it is, here is the line. David said, "What have I now done? Is there not a cause?"

There was a mess that needed to be cleaned up, but there was no leader to clean up the mess. David shows that. God, we know his life. I hope you studied his life. But he epitomizes to me service and leadership when he shows up there and he draws that line in verse 29. They are just standing there, and this guy is blaspheming. What would you do if a guy was back there? Well, not today, like next week when Bob is back, standing back there mocking Bob, what would you do? Would you stand there and go, "Oh, we are afraid. We are afraid." I mean, half of you are armed anyway, so that would be crazy to do that. I love walking in this church. But David draws his line here. David had a leader. His leader is God, the God of Israel. No one can stand before Him, yet the whole army is just standing there being mocked by this uncircumcised Philistine. He walks on the scene in this chapter, and things start happening. We talk about being a thermostat rather than a thermometer. David set the temperature of that place. They are in a valley between them. They are on the hills, and nobody is coming down to meet the battle. This little kid comes up. He says, "Is there not a cause?" For taking that stand, his brothers go, "Man, thank God. Praise God. David is here. Oh, that is great." No, they mock him. They mock him. They give him a hard time. They ridicule him for taking a stand for God. Welcome to the ministry. You take a stand for God, you are going to get mocked. You are going to get mocked. "Oh, that was a crappy message." Yeah, maybe it was. But hey, where are you? Where were you? I am not saying nothing, but where were you? Where were David's brothers? They wanted to be the man. Why were they not down there fighting that Philistine? Was God not their God too?

So here comes little boy David drawing his line. "Is there not a cause?" But look in verse 32. This is it. This is great. "And David said to Saul, Let no man's heart fail because of him; thy servant will go and fight with this Philistine." Now, the whole army, this is a young kid taking a stand like, "You cannot do that." Maybe later on in the story, Saul tries to give him his armor, like, "Here, wear this. Take this sword." David goes, "Man, you are not willing to use it. Why would I?" Here are some notes for the next time you do a devotion in the Iron Man groups. Really? You do not even go to Iron Man groups. Why would I take your armor with me into a battle? He did not care about the ridicule. He did not care about any of that. His God was God. This uncircumcised Philistine was mocking God's people. He just would not stand it. He took a stand. He drew that line in the sand. He stood up. He will fight. If you are like him, you will take those unpopular stands when it comes time to you. You will not go, "Oh, yeah, yeah." You will take a stand. You will say, "You know what? That was wrong. You should not say that. That was wrong. You should not do that." If you have not had it happen to you, you are not talking. You are not living. I have had people come to me, "Bob, what you said was wrong." "You are right. I hate you, but you are right." That is iron sharpeneth iron. So doth a man sharpen the countenance of his friend. We believe it or not. Believe it or do not believe it. We either are in these things for a reason, or we are not. We either believe that God is the God of Israel. He is the God of us, or not. You either claim God, or you do not claim God. You are either a leader, or you are not a

leader. We all talk a lot, but when the rubber meets the road, are you willing to take a stand and take the ridicule and mocking and gossip and garbage that comes out of people's mouths when you take a stand for God? Even if it is a wrong stand, take one. You will figure it out. Everybody makes mistakes. Not everybody is right all the time. He certainly was not right. He took a stand with Bathsheba. It was a wrong stand, but he took a stand. Took a penalty for it too, did he not?

John: The Loyal Follower

Now John. John, just like Joshua. I think John, more than everything else, shows a relationship with his leader. You can find that in John chapter 13.

John 13:23-25

23 Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.

24 Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him, that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake.

25 He then lying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, Lord, who is it?

It is that famous scene, right? "Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom, one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved." Simon Peter therefore beckoned to him that he should ask who it should be of whom he spake. He is saying, "I am going to be betrayed." He then laying on Jesus' breast saith unto him, "Lord, who is it?" You know the story. They all said, "Is it me? Is it me? Is it me?" John said, "I know it is not me. Who is it?" This is that famous passage. This is my first goosebump experience in Bible study. When I heard this, I did not come across this, you know, "You heard the very heartbeat of God." Yep. That is one of my, that is a goosebump moment for me, but you miss something if you do not think about this. How close is that personal relationship for that to happen? Let me tell you, let me make it personal. Do you know how close I would have to be to you to lean on your bosom? That is very close. Think about it. It is not like, it is not like your typical manly thing to do, right? I mean, they are kind of sitting there at the Last Supper. That is a close relationship. He did not even have to ask him if it was okay. "Mind if I lean on you, Jesus?" No, he just did it. He knew his leader. He knew his leader so well that it was an okay thing to do. I will bet you it was not the only time he did it. There was a special relationship. John had a special, Jesus had a special love for John because John had a special love for Jesus, and it was a close relationship with his leader. Closer than any other relationship that I found in this study was the relationship between John and Jesus Christ.

So where are you at today with your relationship, with your leader? Are you close enough to get in a room alone? Get on your knees and pray out loud. Are you? That is kind of a close relationship. I know He is watching you. He can hear you do it. He can see you do it. John was a loyal man. He was loyal to the end. Not everybody was. He got exiled. The story is to Patmos for his loyalty. How loyal are you on days that do not start with Thursday or Sunday? Are you a Christian on those days too? Are you just a Christian on Thursdays and Sundays? That is or Christmas and Easter, right? How close is your relationship with your leader? If you do not have a close relationship with your leader, you are not a leader. I am not a leader. I am not putting this on you. This is me too. John was a loyal man, and he epitomizes the kind of relationship we

ought to have with our heavenly Leader, but he also epitomizes the relationship we ought to have with our leader here. How close are you to the pastor? I think you can call him anytime you want. He has answered that phone every time I have called him. He will spend an hour a week with you. That is so unheard of. You have no idea. He says it. Maybe you do not believe it. I could not get my last pastor to come over for dinner, for God's sake. He was a busy man.

*****Paul: The Sacrificial and Humble Leader*****

The next one is Paul. In 1 Corinthians chapter 15, we will see, I think, the key verse for Paul and his character traits. I found that if there is anyone who represents sacrifice in taking a stand, it is Paul. I do not think there is anyone else. He was humble. He was definitely a humble man.

1 Corinthians 15:9

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

Seriously, the least of the apostles, the greatest Christian evangelist that ever lived, is the least of the apostles. That is the kind of attitude that Paul had about his position in life. He did not play up his position. In fact, he walked away from position if I read it right. He is a man's man. He was a Pharisee's Pharisee. He was the top dog in his little sect of religion or whatever he was. Then he becomes a Christian. He is like Mary Magdalene. He gets lit up by Christ, and he never looked back. It changed him forever. That is what a leader does. He meets his Savior. He meets his leader, and he never turns back. Paul never turned back. He had troubles in his life. He was a jail guy. That guy is... If anybody could have walked away from Christianity, it would be Paul. Four times? Three times? Four times? Whipped? Stoned? Thrown in jail? Starved? Freezing? I mean, the poor guy... I have seen people leave over toilet paper. I have said this before. Over toilet paper at the church. They have left. They have left churches over the toilet paper being used. They have left over accountability groups. They left over one line in a sermon that a pastor will preach. The strangest things will get us to say, "Well, that is it. Maybe it is just time that I should move on. We just really feel like we are being led over here now." If anybody should have left, it is Paul. I think he is the greatest willing evangelist in the history of the world. Yet he calls himself the least of all apostles. He was a humble guy. He sacrificed everything he had. If anybody has any reason to believe that Paul did not take a hard stand, speak now or forever hold your peace. I think he took some hard stands.

SEC: Female Leaders and Their Defining Traits

Now the women. This was great. These men showed all these character traits, and the women in the study absolutely showed all the same things. We started out with Hannah.

*****Hannah: The Patient Leader*****

Hannah, you find her in 1 Samuel. She is one of my favorite characters, and she represented patience. She represented patience more than every other patient leader I have ever studied in the Bible. She was patient. If you want to be a leader, you better get some patience. It only takes one leader to change the light bulb. It takes a long time, and the light bulb has to want to

change. This woman was patient. She had this adversary called Peninnah, just kind of yucking in her ear, yucking in her ear. "Hey, hey, you do not have any babies. I got babies. You do not. You do not." Every day, her adversary worked constantly to provoke her. Ours barely breaks a sweat. We are out, man. Ours goes, "Hey, you got a flat tire on the way to work." That is it. "I am out. I am out. I am out, deacon in church, man. I ain't going back there." Some of us throw in the towel for the easiest of reasons, but Hannah stuck in there. She got bitter. So what? Never caused her to use that as an excuse to not do what is right. She had it hard, but she never used that as an excuse. Ever. You see it. She never gave up. She never, ever, ever gave up. She went up year by year. In 1 Samuel chapter 1, around verse 4, it tells us, she went up to the house of the LORD, and that she did so year by year. This was a continuous thing. Finally, she gets her child. She runs into leader Eli. There was a problem with that guy. She did not have a lot of great leadership in her life, but she sure showed some great leadership qualities of being patient. Women seem to have patience. Ask any of our wives about patience. We are not lovely creatures to live with. Hannah did not have a good husband. He was okay. But I mean, you see a problem there? You had a couple wives there. That has always worked out good in the Bible. So you cannot go wrong. I mean, more is better, right?

Here is the rub with Hannah, though. Being discouraged is not being defeated. Giving up and giving into the temptation while you are discouraged is being defeated. Hannah was a leader. She was patient through that whole thing. She never gave up. Leaders lead, whether it is easy or whether it is hard, whether their life is good or whether it is bad, leaders lead. Leaders are patient.

*****Ruth: The Obedient and Courageous Leader*****

Then you have Ruth. I do not even know where to start with Ruth. She got the most response. Ruth had the most response from the groups, the men and the women. Ruth, across the board, she filled up every one of them about equally. So I did not know what to do with her. But the things that I guess that stood out the most is she stepped up when it came time to step up, did she not? She was obedient when it came time to be obedient. She certainly had to have courage there.

Ruth 1:16-17

16 And Ruth said, Intreat me not to leave thee, or to return from following after thee: for whither thou goest, I will go; and where thou lodgest, I will lodge: thy people shall be my people, and thy God my God:

17 Where thou diest, will I die, and there will I be buried: the LORD do so to me, and more also, if ought but death part thee and me.

Ruth is someone that when the rubber meets the road, she steps up, and she makes a hard choice. If you think about it, the story is that her and Orpah are Moabites. They are not supposed to be mixing with God's people, but they do. So suddenly the bad leaders are out of the scene. The men are gone. So the women start doing what is right. Go figure. Naomi is saying, "Look, I am going back to Bethlehem. I heard there is bread there. I have got to get out of here. You guys go back to your family and your gods." They both said no. They both lifted up their voice and wept.

Orpah looked just like Ruth at that moment in time. But here is the filter, the ministry filter. When pressed, one of them went one way, and you never hear from her again. One of them went the other way. She took a stand. She took a stand, and she gave up her life with her family and her gods and said, "I do not know what I know about this God, but I know that it is the God, and I want Your God to be my God, Your people to be my people, where You go, I will go." That is pretty hard. Stand for a young woman in Moab that has just been widowed. This is her and Naomi going back there to Bethlehem. She put her whole life into the hands of a God she barely knew. She got lit up, and it never changed her. She is obedient unto Naomi. Naomi is not the greatest leader in the history of the world, but she got a couple things right. As soon as her deadbeat husband got off the scene, she got up, and she went back to Bethlehem where they should have been in the first place. She takes Ruth with her. She is obedient. Her courage, I mean, the courage of this is amazing because here I am, I am practical again. I am trying to picture this in my head. Naomi, who is not all together there, but she is starting to wake up around chapter 3 and tells Ruth, "Hey, look, here is what you need to do. You need to wake up early. You need to go down in that threshing floor. You need to lay down at his feet, and then spread his skirt over you." Okay. I do not know, man. That takes some guts if you ask me. That takes some courage. Somehow she realized that this was the right thing to do, and not just this wild crazy thing to do. She did the right thing. She had courage, courage to leave her country, courage to leave her family, courage to leave her gods. Do not think you do not have gods. Courage to leave those behind and take a stand and go do what is right and lay there next to Boaz, kind of like, I do not know, John laying next to Jesus. She just knew that it was the right thing to do, and she did it. That is Ruth. She did not have a hard time going down in that threshing floor. Some of us have a hard time going next door to our neighbors, inviting them to church. Mine will not come. They hate me, so it does not matter. Some of us have a hard time doing memory verses when we are being disciplined. Some of us have a hard time turning in accountability reports.

Esther: The Thoughtful and Faithful Leader

Esther is the next one. Esther comes out as the thoughtful leader who is faithful. She is faithful. She is faithful to rely on what she has and what God has given her. Esther comes on the scene a lot like the church did, right? Vashti the queen has rejected her Lord, much like the Jews rejected theirs. We get in. She is the virgin, and she comes along, and in chapter 2, you see this.

Esther 2:12-17

12 Now when every maid's turn was come to go in to king Ahasuerus, after that she had been twelve months, according to the manner of the women, (for so were the days of their purifications accomplished, to wit, six months with oil of myrrh, and six months with sweet odours, and with other things for the purifying of the women;)

13 Then thus came every maiden unto the king; whatsoever she desired was given her to go with her out of the house of the women unto the king's house.

14 In the evening she went, and on the morrow she returned into the second house of the women, to the custody of Shaashgaz, the king's chamberlain, which kept the concubines: she came in unto the king no more, except the king delighted in her, and that she were called by name.

15 Now when the turn of Esther, the daughter of Abihail the uncle of Mordecai, who had taken her for his daughter, was come to go in unto the king, she required nothing save what Hegai the king's chamberlain, the keeper of the women, appointed. And Esther obtained favour in the sight of all them that looked upon her.

16 So Esther was taken unto king Ahasuerus into his house royal in the tenth month, which is the month Tebeth, in the seventh year of his reign.

17 And the king loved Esther above all the women, and she obtained grace and favour in his sight more than all the virgins; so that she set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen instead of Vashti.

Proverbs 16:33 tells us:

Proverbs 16:33

The lot is cast into the lap; but the whole disposing thereof is of the LORD.

Esther knew that the lot was being cast into her lap, and she knows when God is trying to throw something her way and when God is not. She had enough. She had enough. She got in there and said, "What do you want? Take anything." She goes, "I am cool. I got it. I got enough. Grace is sufficient for thee, for whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." That is Esther. She was faithful. She knew that God would supply for her what she needed, but she was not only just faithful to God. She was faithful to her people, right? Who read the whole book of Esther? I read the whole book of Esther. I have never read, well, I cannot say I never, but it has been years since I read the whole book of Esther for this study. She comes off as a leader that is not just content to enhance her own position. She is not content until she enhances the position of all her people. She has faith in God, and she is faithful to her people. Leaders are like shepherds, right? They lead their flock. They feed their flock. They protect their flock. If that is not Esther, I do not know what is. Maybe I missed the whole book. My guess is that she did not see eye to eye with the Saul principle of leadership. She did not see eye to eye with the fact that if she had more stuff, she would be better off. She saw eye to eye with the fact like David did, or like Joshua did, or like these other women did, that "My grace is sufficient for thee." She had obtained grace and favor in the sight of God, and that was just enough for her. A leader who is not faithful is not a leader. I do not know what that person is, but definitely not a leader.

The Shunammite Woman: The Leader Who Fills Voids

Next one, this is a good one, the Shunammite woman, the great woman over there in 1 or 2 Kings. I will not read anything to you, but she steps up when no one would step up for her. She has this husband that is kind of a dork. He sets up a little room for this man of God. She is the one that greets the man of God when he comes by. She is the one that constrains the man to come in and eat a little bread, right? When you read the story, you notice anything missing? Where is

the man? Should not the man be doing this? Should not the man have prepared a room? Should not the man have greeted the man of God? Should not the husband have been the one that constrained him to come in and eat bread? Why is the woman doing this? You know why? Because her leader would not do it. That is why. There has never been a biblical woman leader in the history of the world that did not step up because a man was always stepping up to do it. There are a lot of implications, guys. We mock churches where women lead the church, but could it be because there is no man to step up and do it? Women step up, guys. These women in this Bible, these people, these women in this study really stepped up. She represents the leaderless wife. She represents the wife that is here alone. She represents the wife that reads her Bible without her husband, the wife that prays for her family without her husband. She represents the leaderless person, and she steps up and fills that void. Leaders fill leadership voids. They just do. You see them, you know them. They are not pushy. They are not prideful. Just men and women. They are just people that see a need, and they fill the need. That is what is going on here. Leaders step up. Even when her child got sick, the dad goes, "Send it to the mom." He did not know what to do. I am not perfect, but I do not want to be that guy. I do not want to be that guy.

*****Mary Magdalene: The Desperate Follower*****

This one was great for me. Mary Magdalene, she represents the leader follower, and you find her in John chapter 20 at least once. She had this encounter with Christ. He tosses out seven spirits from her, and she got changed. Maybe she put a Jesus fish on her ox cart. Maybe she got a bunch of Ruckman notes, put them in her King James Bible, and walked around. It was not really what it was like. There was a phrase, and I got this from one of the women's groups. I cannot remember which one, but it was from a report, and I had never thought about it this way before. You look in John chapter 20, verse 13. It says:

John 20:13

And they say unto her, Woman, why weepest thou? She saith unto them, Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him.

This guy is asking her a question. "Whom seekest thou?" She says, "Because they have taken away my Lord, and I know not where they have laid him." She is crying because she does not know where her Savior is. Have you ever broken fellowship with Christ? That is what it is talking about. "Where is my Lord and Savior? I do not know. I have not talked to Him since what? Is it Thursday? Yeah, since Thursday. I have not talked to Him since Sunday, and we are not crying about it." She is crying about it. A leader knows where her leader is. A leader knows where his leader is. A leader is always a follower. If you have no one to follow, you are in trouble. She was in trouble. She thought. She did not know the whole story yet. Maybe she did. Maybe she did not. But I do not know. When I saw this, I was stunned because, "Oh yeah, she is crying. Yeah, Jesus is dead. Yeah. He is going to, we know the rest of the story because we read it." She was upset because she did not know where her leader was. She could not stand the thought of being out of fellowship with her Savior. Most of us do not really want to know where He is because we want to go do whatever we want to do. That is crazy too, because we cannot

get away from it. I just try to make this real practical to myself, and I decided that her sadness was more of a desperation, like a parent that lost a child in a grocery store. You ever remember that moment? You ever lost your child in a grocery store for that brief moment in time? It is panic. I think that is what she was feeling. He was not coming back right away, and she was crying. "Why are you crying? I know not where He is." That is a horrible thing to think about, even though the Holy Spirit will never leave us, but we lose our fellowship with Christ. That is a bad thing. It should be a desperation when we realize that we are not in fellowship with our leader. We need to get like Mary. Leaders might have bad days. They can get better. They can lose patience sometimes. They are not perfect in obedience. But leaders always, always, always follow their leader, and they never do it by themselves.

Mary of Bethany: The Minister to Christ

Then we have the last woman here, Mary of Bethany in John chapter 12. Mary was one of those catch-alls. She kind of came across the board with about every characteristic that I recorded. It is still to this day one of my favorite passages in the Bible. I think we all know why.

John 12:1-8

1 Then Jesus six days before the passover came to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, whom he raised from the dead.

2 There they made him a supper; and Martha served: but Lazarus was one of them that sat at the table with him.

3 Then took Mary a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odour of the ointment.

4 Then saith one of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's son, which should betray him,

5 Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred pence, and given to the poor?

6 This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein.

7 Then said Jesus, Let her alone: against the day of my burying hath she kept this.

8 For the poor always ye have with you; but me ye have not always.

The first thing is someone made a tie between this and Mary Magdalene. I am not dogmatic about it either way. There is a good case to be made that that might be her. I do not think it is because every time we see Mary Magdalene, we see Mary Magdalene. But you think about this, she is doing what Mary Magdalene does in real life in part because He says, "She does this against the day of my burying, she has kept this." So I am not against it. But anyway, the thing that really came forward to me was that she epitomizes everything we need to know about ministry. Everything you ever needed to know about ministry is encapsulated in one young woman who meets God, meets Christ, and gets lit up. If that is Mary Magdalene, so be it. If it is not, so be it too. I wanted them as separate studies.

You have all these other characters in the study, and they all represent ministry. They all represent someone in our church in some way, shape, or form. You have Martha, right? She is always busy. She is doing things. Her hard attitude is not always perfect, but she is good. Martha is not bad. Without Martha, we fall apart as a church. We need Marthas. She is someone that brings forth fruit. There is no doubt about it. Then you have Lazarus. He represents the new Christian, the young woman or the young man that just gets saved. They do not know much about the Bible. Maybe they are getting disciplined. He is sitting at the table of Jesus, just listening to what is being said. There is a time to sit and do nothing, folks. Then there is a time to do something. That is different for everybody. But Lazarus is exactly where he is supposed to be, doing exactly what he is supposed to be doing. I would say he is a picture of a man that brings forth more fruit. Then there is Mary who brings forth much fruit. She defines the entire ministry for him. She takes this pound of ointment, a spikenard, very costly, and anoints Jesus' feet with her hair. I am sorry. She took a year's pay to make the Lord smell sweet for a moment in time. I got goosebumps when I heard it too. It is true. But you ever think about this? That was not her ointment. That was not hers. She reached into the bag that Judas had and did the right thing. You know why? Because she stepped up and did it because the men were not doing it. She stepped up and did what was supposed to be done. Why is that happening? Why is it happening that women are stepping up and doing what men are supposed to do? Because men like to be seen as leaders. They do not want to do the hard work to be leaders. That is the problem. This young woman takes this ointment, very costly, a year's pay to make them smell sweet for a moment in time. It was not hers. She took it out of the bag. Judas is mad. He is mad about it. He is like, "Hey, I was supposed to be sold for the poor." So he wanted to be seen as a compassionate leader. But he was not. We know the story. She stepped up.

Like I said before, we love to mock churches where women lead. I do. But it is only because the men in the church will not lead. Time to step up. These women are teaching us a lesson, guys. They step up because men cannot, or men will not, or men do not. No matter what the reason is, a woman in the Bible never steps up unless there is a man not stepping up. It is the way it is supposed to be. It is just not the way it is. Let me say something about the accountability groups. The women in the accountability groups take this thing, and they anoint it with their hair, guys. They do. I read their reports. They read like sonnets. I get reports from some guys, "Yeah, we met and talked about Abraham." Really? That is the report? It will show up. It will be number five or something. I do not know what number you are going to be. I cannot tell you. They get down on their knees, and they anoint this church with their hair, and the odor filled the room. We kind of show up with our King James Bible and a lot of notes. I get to talk sometimes, and other men get to talk sometimes. We get to take the pulpits, and we get to take all the credit. But the women are down on their knees anointing these ministries with their hair. That should be you. It should be me. It should be us, guys. They do that. They would continue to do that. Even if we stepped up, they would still do it. But it really leaves a hole. When we do not step up and do it, and they do, I think it is embarrassing. These women pray for their men to lead. They pray for their children to grow. They pray for their families to get saved and for strength over their adversaries. We pray for our truck. We pray for our jobs. Not that you should not, but there is a difference. Some of these things are just so great. Some of these women, they step up. It is funny. When there is a husband and a wife who are a leader, and you compare the two, you are like, "Man, how did you

hook up with him?" I do not know. I am reading. I do not know. But at least, hey, you know what? She is stepping up because he cannot, will not, or just does not.

Mary defines what ministry ought to be for us. She takes that ointment, and she ministers it directly to the feet of the Lord Jesus Christ. If you get your head down at Jesus' feet, you are positionally in a place where you need to be. Now, men do not want to do that because we are men. We are not getting down at anybody's feet. I am just saying she does it because I will not. She gets that stuff all over her hair, and then it fills the room. Mary's ministry goes to God first. It does not go to me and you. It does not go out into the room. It does not go on a tape. It does not go on Skype. It goes right to Jesus Christ. It is a very personal thing. Then that odor gets all over her hair. It goes inward. Then that odor fills the room. It goes outward. That odor becomes her testimony. If you want to be thought of as a leader, do what Mary did. Get down at the feet of Jesus Christ and minister to Him. That smell is going to get all over you. She leaves the room. It is really cool. She leaves the room that day. Maybe Jesus, okay, practical. Jesus leaves the room. His feet are clean, and they smell good. He is walking down the road, and that is Jesus. He smells good. Then comes this woman that looks like a homeless woman down at the mission, walking down the street with her hair all wild and crazy because there is oil in it now. But she smells just like Jesus Christ. It did not matter what she looked like. It did not matter if people looked at her. Even one accountant is like, "You know, why is He letting her do this? She is a sinner." They are mocking her like they mocked David for taking a stand and doing the right thing. The only object of Mary's ministry was Jesus Christ. It had nothing to do with what she looked like. It had nothing. This is the difference, I think, between men and women. It does not matter what they look like. They are just interested in the object of their faith rather than the circumstances of their lives. It does not matter if their husbands are not leaders. They will still lead. It does not matter if they have an adversary in their life. They will still pray for their families. They will pray for their children. They will pray for their marriages. They will do all the right things. This Mary, she did a good thing there. That three-part ministry there, Godward, inward, outward. If your ministry is not that way, if you are leading people in a different way than that, you are not a leader. Leaders are not self-proclaimed. They are just obvious because they smell like Him. They have a testimony like Him. Their families are right. Their ministries are right. Their lives are right. They are not always right, but they are generally right. They are generally a cut above the rest. They are not perfect, but you watch the fruit of a minister who focuses on the object of his or her faith. You are going to find a leader. Leaders focus on the object of their faith rather than the circumstances of their life.

SEC: Jesus Christ: The Ultimate Leader

How do you get through a whole study without talking about the greatest Leader that ever lived? Well, you do not. That is Jesus Christ. We found that in Philippians chapter 2. It says, "Look not every man on his own things." It says things like, "But he made himself of no reputation." He was humble. "And took on the form of a servant." He was made in the likeness of men. "He humbled himself, became obedient unto death." Christ is certainly the obedient Leader. You look at verse 8 there in Philippians 2. You know what? I heard this at your dad's church. He did not have to do it. The music minister was talking during his song. It was pretty cool, right? He says

He did not have to do it. You like that? He did not have to do it. He could have called 12 legions of angels down and ended the thing right there. I like to see He is certainly a servant Leader. You look at verse 7. It says He took upon Himself the form of a servant. Courageous? Yeah, okay. Sins of the world on the cross. Okay, I take that as courage. Humble. He humbled Himself. He certainly is a patient Leader since none of us are rotting in hell today. I do not know about you. I was not a good boy before I got saved. I was not even a good boy after I got saved. I do not deserve to be standing here in a pulpit today talking to anybody. I am supposed to be rotting in hell. If He is not patient, I do not know who is. He is certainly willing.

1 John 3:16

Hereby perceive we the love of God, because he laid down his life for us: and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.

That is a leader. A leader will lay his life down for his brethren. I am not taking a hard stand. How about that woman taken in adultery? Is it John 8? She takes a hard stand and goes, "Okay, cool. You are right. She is in sin. You go ahead and cast the first stone." Oh yeah, maybe not. How about when He tosses the tables in the temple? He made a mess. Come on, we are Gentile folks here. We are not going to create a mess like that. Well, I do not know. Jesus did. How about this one on the cross? "Forgive them." I think He is taking a stand, "for they know not what they do." I would have said, "Take them out, Dad. Take them out." He did not have to do it. He did not have to do this. He could have done it any other way.

Here is the practical application. I am thinking there He is on the cross, and I know at some point God turned His back on Him, and He says, "Why hast Thou forsaken me?" Okay. How about before that? Maybe they are having a conversation. "That is My Son down there. Hey, hey Son. Hey, Jesus. Let Me kill them. Oh, I see them out there crying, but I know they are hard. They are black as night. They are black as sin. It is dark as anything. They just want this over with. They want You gone so they can go about their lives again. Let Me kill them." He says, "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." That is the great thing we tell ourselves when we go and do whatever we want to do. But you know what? Those people did not have the Holy Spirit of God in them, and you do. You know what you do. You know, every time you do it, every time you do those things that you know you are not supposed to do, it is a slap in His face, and God is sitting there going, "Just let Me kill them." I know He is not. It is a good thing I am not God. He could have done it any other way. He could have said, "I have changed My mind," and God repented. "Let Me just wipe them out." He says, "Forgive them. They know not what they do," but we know what we do.

How about this? I always say, you know, the Holy Spirit goes with you wherever you go. Yep. Even into the bar. Yep. Try taking your spouse to a bar with you the next time you go and have him or her just kind of listen to your conversation. Try that. That is what you do to the Holy Spirit. Take your spouse to work with you. Put him or her over in a corner, forget they are there, and let them observe your conversation with people of the opposite sex. Try that. That is what you do with the Holy Spirit. You think He is just going, "Oh, that is cool. It is all right. They know not what they do." The Holy Spirit guides me in all truth. I know exactly what I am doing

when I do it. I do not know. Maybe I am just special. Maybe I am special, and I know when you do not. Maybe I have the Holy Spirit, and you do not. Do you have the Holy Spirit of God in you today? "Forgive them; for they know not what they do." That is not you guys. That is them. They did not have the Holy Spirit of God in them. You do. If you just think He is sitting there going, "Oh, no big deal." Well, I do not know, man. Mel Sabaki used to talk about the judgment seat of Christ, and it even scared me when I was a young Christian, and it scares me a little more now than it did then, but I do not know. Somehow that has got to come back on you. Maybe if we took a stand against sin, we might get it. Do not worry, you will because you will stand before the judgment seat of Christ, and you will give an account for the things that you have done in your body, whether they be good or bad, and you are going to take an account for that. If you do not understand it now, you will understand it then. Jesus Christ epitomizes that for us. He did all this. He did not have to do it. He did it so we could take a stand now.

Leaders take stands. They look at something, and they handle it. They do not send someone to handle it. They handle it. They just handle problems. Leaders make messes from time to time. Leaders make people mad at them from time to time. Leadership is more than a spreadsheet. It is more than a Bible memorization. It is more than a ministry. It is more than all those things. It is everything that you studied for the last 10 or 12 weeks. Sometimes taking a stand causes a scene. It did not bother Jesus. It did not bother Mary. It did not bother Joshua. It did not bother any of the people we studied, but it seems to bother us because we are worried about what people will think about us. Leaders do not care about scenes. They care about the object of their faith. They are like David. They just cannot stand to see that uncircumcised Philistine stand there blaspheming God's people. That is it. That is it.

SEC: Conclusion and Call to Action

This has been a great round for me. I have learned more from this round than all the other rounds put together. It is because you people really took it seriously. This is like a 90% church. Most churches are upside down. 10% of the people do 90% of the work. I think this church is about a 90-10. I really do. It is a special place. That is why I came here from another church. I never went anywhere else. I stayed here from the first moment I got here. I love this church because we have a leader who will lead. We have a leader who is not afraid to make a scene. I was going to scream the announcements today just to go loud, but I do not have it in me.

I learned a lot during this. I read the entire book of Esther again. I read the entire book of Ruth again. I read a lot. I did this too with you. I did not turn in my reports to you. I turned them into Bob. I read every report, every line, every week, every time. I pray for every prayer, every week, every time, every single week, all the time. I have seen them all. I compile them all, and then Bob sees them all. It is not a secret. If you are doing great, he knows where you are sleeping. Bob knows. I know. All I wanted to do is see what 150 people could do if they stood together and did the same thing. Boy, I was over-impressed. I thought it would be cool, but it was better than that.

What I hope now is that we all sit and think for a while, "Am I following a leader? Then you might be a leader. Am I being a leader, or am I just looking like one?" It is real easy to look like one. We can all dress up. We can all carry a Bible. We all have a King James Bible in our hand.

We all stand and sing. We all show up for Restart. We all show up for the mission. We all show up for every time. Well, there is food, all show up. We all show up every time we are supposed to show up, and we can look like what we are supposed to be, because that is easy. But being what we are supposed to be is different.

What kind of a relationship do I have with Christ? I would like us all to think about that. Am I closer to my friends than I am with Christ? If I lost John Wood, would I be more upset if I lost fellowship with Christ? Who would give me tennis shoe advice? I do not know. What kind of a relationship do I have with Christ? Am I obedient, not only when it is easy to obey, but when it is hard? Am I obedient then? Not just on Sundays and Thursdays, guys, but when no one is watching, when I am on the way to work on a Monday, Christ is always watching. That Holy Spirit is going with you. He goes on dates with your girlfriend while your wife is at home. He is with you when you are talking to the men at work. He is with you when you are talking to the women at lunch. He is with you when you are talking about your boss. He is with you when you are talking about the pastor. He is there. What kind of a panic would you be in if you found that you had lost fellowship with God? Would you cry? Mary did.

This was not any great Philadelphia church age message or anything like that. It was more of a Bible study than anything else, but it was great to watch this thing become greater than the sum of all the little parts in it. If you could see it from where I saw it, and I will show you, I think at the end of next week, I will have all of your reports compiled as a reference with each person down the left-hand side, the character traits across the top, and you will get to see what 150 people came up with, and maybe you will learn something, maybe you will not.

There is one last thing I would like to see out of these groups, and out of the whole philosophy behind the groups. They are not prayer groups. They are not even really Iron Man groups. There are women in them. They are accountability groups. Iron sharpeneth iron. We are supposed to be sharpening each other. We are supposed to be bouncing things off each other. You are supposed to want the accountability. You are supposed to want to know what the other leaders are doing, but they do not want you to know what they are doing, so you will not. But I want to see men step up and lead. I want to see men step up and take these ministries seriously, more than they are. Not all of the men, not all of the women. It is not 100%. It is a 90% thing. I would like to see the women step up and let men lead, but never stop stepping up where they will not lead, because without that, they would be wrong. It would be wrong for a woman to not step up and lead if her husband or the men in her life will not lead. It would be wrong. I would like to see the young men and women continue to become the leaders that they want to be and not stop short and just look like one, because that is the easy way out. It is easy to do that. I would like to see people stop trying to apply the Saul principle of leadership, and make it about how much Bible they know, how much notes they have in their Bible, or how good of a message they could put together, or a devotion, or whatever. I would like to see them just follow the Ruth model, or the Mary model, or the David model, or any one of those men that we studied today. I have no idea what the next accountability group is going to do. I hope to find something. Anybody have ideas? Let me know. We are going to change in a couple weeks after Bob gets back from vacation. But while you are out there, figure out this: Are you a saint, or are you a faithful brother? I believe

there is a difference. I think you can see the difference. If it is not a biblical doctrinal difference, it is at least a difference.