

TRAVELER AND THE CHAPLAIN

kurt bennett



Traveler and the Chaplain

**Leadership Essentials for
Ordinary People**



kurt bennett

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Preface

I have come to the place in life where I realize that there are not too many things that are important beyond influencing people for Jesus Christ. I have also realized that one of the most important ways to influence people for Christ is to lead in the most Godly and biblical manner that we can. When we lead well, we influence those around us for Christ! When we lead well, we attract potential believers! When we lead well, we bear more fruit for God's kingdom!

When we lead poorly, we quench enthusiasm in the believers around us at best. At worst, we repel potential believers. At worst, we influence people away from our dear Lord. Experts will tell you that many who are passionately opposed to the Christian faith feel that way because they have been hurt by a Christian leader at some time in their past. By the word leader I mean anyone who may have been in a position of influence over another. Even those who's leadership consists of simply attempting to lead someone into a saved relationship with Jesus. In fact any Christian who is obedient, at any level, to Christ's great commission to share the gospel must recognize himself or herself as a leader. Leaders have great

power to influence for good, and equally great power to influence for bad.

That is why this book is so important, not just for the CEO, Pastor, Priest, and School Principal, but also for you, a father, mother, older sibling, teacher, coach, and, perhaps most importantly, for you who desire to lead others to Christ.

I make no claim to have any special ability to live out the principles discussed in this book. What I do claim, however, is to have been blessed to work with some of the greatest leaders on the planet during my 28 years in the fire service as a Firefighter, Captain, Battalion Chief, and Deputy Fire Chief. I am also privileged to have sat under the teaching of one of the premiere Christian leaders of our generation. He has chosen to follow the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the Spirit has led him to remain teaching in a church, tucked away in a beautiful and remote valley in the mountains of Southern Oregon. Even in this remote location, thousands travel to hear him teach God's Word every week.

In the following pages, I humbly attempt to convey what I have learned from my family and friends; from my heroes in the fire service; from my Pastor and mentor; and most important of all, from my Savior, Jesus Christ, the greatest leader of all time, the leader without limits.

The Chaplain

In the beginning...

John 1:1

Once upon a time there was an ordinary young man who joined the army. He made mistakes, but he learned from his mistakes, and though he had no extraordinary qualities he somehow managed to become a successful Special Forces leader. After many successful years in the army, progressing through the ranks, he retired from the military. A devout Christian, he moved to an average-sized town where he studied to become a pastor. After completing his studies, he started a church. His idea was to pastor a small church but, somehow, the church grew to 7,000 members. When the military base in his average-sized town learned that he had a background in the army, they asked him, and he agreed, to become their Chaplain.

But the story is not about the army or the Special Forces. It's not about the Chaplain's church.

It's not even about the Chaplain, really. This story is about a young man named Traveler who happened to live in the same average-sized town.

Me, a Leader?

When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.”

I Samuel 16:6

Traveler was an ordinary man with an ordinary family and an ordinary job. Like you, he found himself in leadership positions or on the verge of leadership positions both at home and at work. Lately he had begun to doubt his ability to lead. His confidence hit bottom somewhere around the time he had a disagreement with his daughter concerning a spring break trip to an out-of-town resort.

“Daddy, but why?” Daughter said, near tears.

“I just don’t think it’s a good idea for you and your friend, two fourteen-year-old girls, to go

to the resort over spring break. Not without an adult,” Traveler said firmly.

“Her older sister will be with us and she’s nineteen. She’s an adult dad!” Daughter said with great conviction.

“Nineteen is not old enough,” Traveler said.

“You’re ridiculous! You can’t treat me like a little girl forever, you know!” The tears were starting to flow now.

“She does have a point,” Wife said. “You can’t treat her like a little girl forever.”

“You can’t be serious!” Traveler said. “You don’t actually agree with her, do you?”

“I just think that the girls come from a nice family,” Wife said. “The resort is a nice place. Maybe we should let her go.”

“Unbelievable,” Traveler exclaimed. “There is no way. She is not going to the resort over spring break.”

Daughter sobbed and cried out, “You’re pathetic!” as she ran from the room.

Wife turned her back, and walked away. She began cleaning with an excess of enthusiasm in noisy fashion, just to be sure that Traveler knew how frustrated she was with the situation.

The next day at work, Traveler found out that he didn’t get the promotion to a supervisor

position he had been seeking. In fact, a less experienced candidate who was below him on the eligibility list was promoted in his place. This was the second time he had been passed over in this manner. He sensed that most of his coworkers agreed with the boss's decision. And to add insult to injury, the new supervisor was assigned to Traveler's department. He was to be supervised by his rival! Traveler's stomach was churning with emotion. He felt frustrated, embarrassed, and inadequate. Traveler would remain at the top of the candidate list and be used to fill in for other supervisors when they took days off. If another position opened up he might be promoted, but no vacancies were expected any time soon.

Still feeling down and desperate after work that evening, Traveler phoned a friend to talk things over. His friend, who was a soldier, recommended that he speak with the army Chaplain. Traveler was not a soldier – he had an ordinary job. Not being a soldier he felt awkward about talking with the army Chaplain.

“It won't matter that you're not a soldier. He is a great man. Everyone in my unit loves him. My Lieutenant raves about him. Just talk to him, you'll see,” Traveler's friend implored.

“I don't know...”

“Listen, this man is not your typical

Chaplain. When he was young he led a Special Forces unit.”

“Really?”

“Yes, and then he promoted up through the ranks...” Traveler’s friend went on to describe the Chaplain’s background. He sounded interesting. Traveler decided to give him a try. He made an appointment, and a few days later he found himself in the Chaplain’s office.

The Chaplain was a very ordinary looking man. Traveler didn’t know what a Special Forces leader was supposed to look like, but he was sure that this man certainly did not look like one.

“Traveler, hello, I hear you have some questions about leadership,” the Chaplain said warmly. “How can I help you?”

“You can help me find a way out of this supervisor thing. I haven’t been promoted yet, but I’m still a candidate for a leadership position at work, and I just need a graceful way out. I want to withdraw my name from the candidate list.”

“Why do you say that?”

“Because my daughter doubts me, my wife doubts me, my coworkers doubt me, my boss doubts me. I just need a way out. You know... an exit strategy. I’m just not cut out for it.”

“H’mmm, I see,” the Chaplain paused for a long moment, lost in thought. Then he said,

“Traveler, close your eyes, and tell me what you see when you hear the word ‘leader’.”

“Huh?”

“Please, indulge me.”

“Alright,” Traveler closed his eyes, and took a deep breath. “I see a man around 50 years old or so. He is tall and handsome. He carries himself well. He has a certain grace about him. He is charismatic and well spoken. He has a baritone voice. He’s intelligent but without being a geek. He has a certain dignity about him. And he’s dressed for success.”

“Wow, that’s a lot of detail,” the Chaplain said.

“Well, yes but you must understand, that’s the problem, I’m none of those things!” Traveler said.

“Traveler, a number of years ago two friends of mine, Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus, set out to find what a successful leader looks like. They decided to study 90 of the most successful leaders of our time. The list included the CEO of ARCO; Ray Kroc, the man responsible for the success of McDonalds; Donald Seibert, chairman of JC Penney; John Robinson, former coach of the USC Trojans and the LA Rams football teams; and Neil Armstrong, the first man on the moon. Are you getting the picture?”

“Yes, I get it. They studied 90 prominent leaders of our time.”

“Right! All 90 of the leaders that were studied were surveyed. Some of the leaders were shadowed, that is they were allowed access to follow them through their work days. Two of the leaders actually allowed Warren and Burt to live with them for a period of time. Psalm 75 says,

...promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.¹

“In other words, God chooses who will lead. It follows then that the research done by my friends will show us just what type of person God chooses to put into leadership. Wouldn't you agree?”

“Yes, I think I see,” Traveler answered. “If God decides who will be a leader, and if Warren Bennis and Burt Nanus studied 90 of our most prominent leaders, then it follows that we'll find out what type of person God chooses to lead.”

“Exactly!” the Chaplain responded. “What we can learn from their research is that when it

comes to who will lead, God has narrowed it down to the following types of people. ‘Right-brained and left-brained, tall and short, fat and thin, articulate and inarticulate, assertive and retiring, dressed for success and dressed for failure...’² In other words, outwardly, leaders come in all shapes and sizes! Just because you do not match up well with the charismatic good looking hypothetical leader you described earlier in no way implies that you are not cut out for leadership.”

Traveler leaned forward slightly in his chair.

“I Samuel chapter 16 describes when Samuel came to Jesse’s family to anoint the next king of Israel,” the Chaplain continued. “It says,

When they arrived, Samuel saw Eliab and thought, “Surely the LORD’s anointed stands here before the LORD.” But the LORD said to Samuel, “Do not consider his appearance or his height, for I have rejected him. The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.” ...Jesse had seven of his sons pass before Samuel, but Samuel said to him, “The

LORD has not chosen these.” So he asked Jesse, “Are these all the sons you have?”³

The Chaplain said, “As a leader, David wasn’t on anyone’s radar, except the Lord’s! Not even his own father thought of him as a potential leader. Apparently David did not look like a leader; he didn’t fit man’s idea of what a leader should be.”

“Yes but that’s only one scripture,” Traveler said.

The Chaplain answered, “Other scriptures also point toward those who doubted David. When David was inquiring about Goliath, Eliab, David’s oldest brother, scoffed at David,

*Why have you come down here?
And with whom did you leave those
few sheep in the desert? I know how
conceited you are and how wicked
your heart is; you came down only to
watch the battle.⁴*

“His own brother! Later we see that King Saul also doubts David...

*You are not able to go out against this Philistine and fight him; you are only a boy, and he has been a fighting man from his youth.*⁵

“And David is doubted again by Goliath...

He looked David over and saw that he was only a boy, ruddy and handsome, and he despised him.”⁶

Still not convinced, Traveler said, “OK, but that’s just David, just one person from the Bible...”

The Chaplain responded, “Throughout the scriptures we find many who were chosen by God to lead but did not fit man’s image of a leader. Some would say that Abraham lacked courage. He told people Sarah was his sister out of fear for his life.⁷ Moses was a murderer, and he had a fear of public speaking!⁸ Elisha lacked the look of a leader. Young men mocked his appearance.⁹ Isaiah had unclean lips.¹⁰ At Job’s low point, everyone, including Job himself, perceived Job to be a has-been, washed up.¹¹ Several verses in the book of Joshua indicate to us that Joshua lacked courage...”¹²

“Alright, I think I...”

Ignoring Traveler, the Chaplain continued in an almost rapid-fire fashion, “Paul lacked political capital after persecuting Christians.¹³ Peter was too impulsive: he rebuked Jesus when Jesus was talking to Peter about what the Messiah must suffer.¹⁴ And of course many of Peter’s contemporaries would probably have said that he lacked commitment because Peter denied Christ.¹⁵ Solomon was the son of an adulteress.¹⁶ Timothy was too young...”¹⁷

“OK, I get it!” Traveler interrupted.

The Chaplain paused for a moment, and then he said, “Being doubted is a normal part of life for those who are chosen to lead by God. Humanity’s idea of what a leader is, even your own idea of what a leader is, is not the same as God’s idea.”

“Alright, then what are the keys to leadership?” Traveler asked.

“Well the first and most important key is influence.”

“What do you mean influence? You mean as a leader I need to influence people? How can I be more influential?”

“Let me pray about that. Come back next week, and I’ll give you an answer.”

Traveler agreed to come back the next week.

Now that he knew that experiencing doubts from followers is a normal part of life for God's leaders, Traveler felt a sense of relief. As he drove home he pondered I Samuel 16:7...

The LORD does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart.

Influence

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.

Acts 4:13

The next week Traveler met with the Chaplain for the second time.

“Traveler, how good to see you again,” the Chaplain said, smiling broadly.

Traveler mumbled, “Good to see you too.”

“Shall we get right to it?” the Chaplain said enthusiastically.

“I suppose.”

“Tell me Traveler: What is leadership? How would you define it?”

“I don’t know. To tell you the truth, I haven’t given it much thought.”

“H’mmm,” the Chaplain thought for a moment.

“Well, are you going to tell me?”

“Oh yes, of course. Leadership is influence.”

“Leadership is influence – that’s it? You said that today you were going to tell me the most important key to leadership. Is that all?” Traveler asked.

“Let me explain,” the Chaplain answered. “Let’s suppose for a minute that you’re interested in becoming skilled at making money.”

Traveler, obviously interested, straightened slightly in his seat, “Who isn’t?”

The Chaplain looked mildly surprised at Traveler’s response as he continued, “What would you say if I told you that I could provide you with access to one of the richest men in the world?”

“Where do I sign up?” Traveler asked with a toothy smile.

“The man I’m talking about is Warren Buffett. Warren Buffett’s net worth is estimated at 418,000 times the average person’s in the United States. He is widely regarded as one of the greatest financial minds in the world today. What if I could arrange for you to have dinner with him, go for a long walk, have a cup of coffee – you could spend time with him any way you choose. All the while

asking any questions of him that you wished. If I could arrange that what would you do?"

"I'd jump at the chance! One or two stock picks from Warren Buffett and you might be financially set for life!"

"That may well be true. If you spent enough time with this man it's likely that your ability to steward the Lord's blessings would improve radically. Now, what if I told you that I could provide you access to a leader that is far greater than Warren Buffett. As wise and talented as Warren Buffett is in the arena of finances, his wisdom and leadership abilities pale in comparison to this person's."

Traveler was excited, "Yes, yes, I mean, can you? Could you?"

"Yes, I can."

"Who is it?"

"Jesus Christ."

"Jesus? I don't understand."

"Listen carefully. I define leadership with one word – influence.¹ And Jesus is by far the most influential person in history."

Traveler looked bewildered.

"What's the matter?" the Chaplain asked.

"Well, I'm embarrassed to say it to a pastor, or, I mean, a chaplain..."

"I suppose I'm both."

“Right, you’re both. Well, it’s just that I never really thought of Jesus in that way. Do you know what I mean?”

“Yes, I understand. Let me see if I can make myself more clear. During Jesus’ time on earth His influence on His immediate followers is obvious. Just look at how they died. Matthew was run through with the sword. Mark was killed when he was drug behind horses. Luke was hanged. Peter was crucified upside down. Bartholomew was beaten to death. Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross. Thomas was stabbed to death. All of these men were influenced to the point of giving their lives for Jesus’ sake.”²

The Chaplain was becoming more and more animated as he continued, “And thousands of years later Jesus is still by far the most influential person who ever lived. The Bible is by far the best selling book in the history of the world. Every college established in colonial America, except for one, was created by a denomination of Christianity. Many of our hospitals are named after Christian saints: Saint John’s, Saint Jude’s, Saint Peter’s, etc. The Red Cross and the YMCA are just a few of our institutions that were established by Christians. During the time of the Roman Empire it was common for people to kill their female babies. It was Christ’s influence through His followers that

changed the Roman culture to eliminate infanticide. It was Christian abolitionists that influenced the United States to eliminate slavery. The door of time itself is hinged on the life of Jesus Christ. Our dating system is divided by B.C., Before Christ, and Anno Domini, after Christ's birth."²

Traveler sat listening, wide eyed.

The Chaplain said, "The great historian Will Durant wrote that, 'Caesar hoped to reform men by changing institutions and laws; Christ wished to remake institutions, and lessen laws by changing men.'³ Some leaders, managers, teachers, coaches, or parents focus their efforts on changing organizational structure, or developing rules and regulations. Jesus' leadership style was to influence people. And no one in history has influenced the world more."

"I never thought of Jesus in that way," Traveler said.

The Chaplain continued, "And unlike Warren Buffett, you, as a Christian, have access to Him! You can spend time with Jesus when you read the Bible; when you pray; when you take communion; when you spend time in church; when you fellowship with other Christians; when you sing praise songs or hymns; when you fast unto the Lord; and when you meditate on the Bible. By far the most important key to leadership, the most

important thing you can do to become a better leader, a better father, a better brother, a better boss, a better coach, a better friend, a better Christian is to be changed like Peter and John were changed, through the influence of Jesus Christ. And the best way to be influenced by Jesus Christ is to invest your time in Him.”

“Huh. You said, ‘...changed like Peter and John.’ What do you mean?”

“Shortly after Jesus went up to heaven, Peter and John had to appear before the rulers, elders, and teachers of the law. The Bible says,

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.⁴

“Peter and John were changed because they had been with Jesus. They were unschooled, ordinary men, yet they demonstrated such courage, and represented Jesus so impressively that they astonished the authorities in Israel. They went on to become great leaders in the early church. You can have a very similar life changing experience.”

“Me?”

“Yes, you. Simply recognize that leadership is influence, and that the most important key to leadership is to live by this principle: Before we influence others, we must first be influenced by Jesus ourselves.”

“Wow,” Traveler sat back in his chair, taking it all in.

The two were quiet for a long time. Then Traveler asked, “So that’s the most important key to leadership – is there more? Are there more keys, or principles?”

“If you never learned another thing about leadership beyond what I’ve told you today you would be in good stead. But let me pray about your question over the next month. After that come back, and I’ll give you an answer.”

“OK then, I’ll see you in a month.”

On the way home that evening Traveler pondered what the Chaplain had said, “Before we influence others, we must first be influenced by Jesus ourselves.” And he considered the meaning of the scripture...

When they saw the courage of Peter and John and realized that they were unschooled, ordinary men, they were astonished and they took note that these men had been with Jesus.⁴

And the Greatest of These is Love

*If I speak in the tongues of men
and of angels, but have not
love, I am only a resounding
gong or a clanging cymbal.*

I Corinthians 13:1

During the next month Traveler received some unexpected news. A supervisor was retiring on short notice.

“Back problems – he’s going out on disability,” the Human Resources Director had said. “Traveler, we’d like you to take his position.”

Traveler was ecstatic. He immediately called home and shared the news with his wife. However, later in the day his enthusiasm was dampened when he saw the memo outlining transfers that would occur as a result of the retirement and promotion.

An assistant manager named Abrasive (Ab for short) was assigned to work for Traveler. Ab had quite a reputation as a difficult person.

After just a few weeks, Ab was living up to that reputation. He was butting heads with Traveler, challenging him on everything from scheduling decisions to supply orders. Traveler tried to keep in mind that all of God's leaders deal with doubt, and that definitely made him feel better. Still he sensed that there were things he should be doing to help the situation, but he didn't know what.

About a month after his promotion something happened to further complicate things. The ringing telephone woke him late in the night.

"Hello?" Traveler croaked.

"Traveler, it's Ab."

"Oh, Ab, what's going on?" The words came sluggishly as Traveler struggled to clear his sleepy mind.

"My daughter had an accident."

"I'm sorry, is she OK?"

"No, she's gone, she's dead." Strangely, Ab didn't sound sorrowful but had the same familiar abrasive edge to his voice that Traveler heard every day at work.

He didn't know what to say. He vaguely recalled that in a situation such as this you should try to listen. So for the next twenty minutes or

so Traveler did his best to be a good listener. He heard all of the details concerning the accident and how much time off Ab would require.

At the end of the conversation he asked Ab if there was anything he could do for him, but Ab replied with, “I have everything under control.”

After Traveler hung up he felt that Ab had not responded to him well. Traveler had a nagging feeling that he hadn’t done enough. He felt inadequate.

The next morning he met with the Chaplain for the third time. Traveler looked distraught.

“Everything OK?” The Chaplain asked earnestly.

“No. I have problems. During the last month a lot has happened. I was finally promoted to the supervisor’s position that I wanted.”

“Well congratulations! I’m not surprised. Traveler, I believe that the Lord is going to accomplish great things through you in leadership,” the Chaplain said with a smile.

“We’ll see. The thing is, there’s this guy at work named Ab, and he’s got a reputation. He’s abrasive, and rebellious, and... just difficult to handle. He’s an assistant supervisor, and right after I was promoted he was transferred to my department! It wasn’t long before he wanted to butt heads with me on some issues...”

The Chaplain interrupted, “What are Ab’s good qualities?”

Traveler thought for a moment, “Well, I have to admit that he is very passionate about making our company the best we can be.” He thought a moment more, “And he’s an extremely hard worker. And it seems like he genuinely cares about the people he’s responsible for. Yeah, I have to admit, he has some good qualities.”

The Chaplain, with a look of satisfaction on his face, said, “I’m sorry. I interrupted. Please go on.”

“Well, late last night he called me and told me some horrible news. His teen-age daughter died in a car accident. She was a passenger. They think that the driver may have been drinking. It happened on the curve about three miles up Hillcrest Road.”

“That’s a bad spot,” the Chaplain commented. He thought back to the many times he had dealt with death during his army days.

“Yes, well... since we last talked I’ve been spending a lot of time with Jesus like you said. Somehow doing that has made me feel like I should do something for Ab, but I don’t know what I should do! I asked him if he needed anything, but in typical Ab fashion he said he had everything taken care of.”

Traveler felt compassion for Ab, but at the same time it was evident that he was frustrated with his own uncertainty about what to do.

“How tragic,” the Chaplain said, a look of compassion on his face. He paused, then said, “This makes sense. While I was in prayer over the last month I felt led by the Holy Spirit to share with you today about love.”

The Chaplain paused, waiting for Traveler to comment. Traveler, somewhat overwhelmed with emotion, replied with a blank stare.

“Traveler, I want you to look at this as an opportunity.”

“An opportunity for what?”

“An opportunity to show Ab the Lord’s love. When I was studying to lead my unit in the war, we were required to read an ancient story about a Chinese general named Wu Chi. One of Wu Chi’s soldiers was suffering from an abscess – Wu Chi himself cared for the wound even sucking out the infection. The soldier’s mother, hearing this, wailed and lamented. Somebody asked her, ‘Why do you cry? Your son is only a common soldier, and yet the commander-in-chief himself has sucked the poison from his sore.’ The woman responded, ‘Many years ago Lord Wu performed a similar service for my husband, who never left him afterwards... And now that he has done the

same for my son, he too will follow Wu I know not where.¹ Traveler, it's God's kindness that leads people.² I want you to take food over to Ab's house. A lot of food."

"But he said he has everything taken care of."

"That's what people usually say at a time like this. Just do it. Trust me. It's an opportunity to show Ab and his family the Lord's love. Please, do this, and come back in another month and tell me what happened."

Traveler agreed to do as the Chaplain said. A month later he met with him for the fourth time.

"Traveler, how are you?" The Chaplain greeted him with a big smile and a hearty bear hug.

"I'm good, thanks. And thanks for the advice."

"What happened?"

"Well, my wife and I took over a few days worth of groceries. Ab was very appreciative. Later he said that the food really came in handy. I found out that he had a large group of family and friends staying with him around the time of the funeral, and they used every bit of the food that we left them. They also needed someone to watch the house during the funeral service. I didn't realize it, but it's a common practice of thieves to check the

obituaries and then rob the house of the deceased during the funeral. Anyway, I remembered what you said about showing the Lord's love, so I offered to do that for Ab as well."

"So how have things been going with Ab since the funeral?"

"It's kind of amazing. Ab has been one of my strongest supporters. He's still kind of crusty around the edges, but I have to say that on the whole he's been, well, an advocate of almost everything that I'm trying to accomplish at work. I sort of guess that it's because of what my wife and I did for him with the food and watching the house, but to tell you the truth, I don't totally understand it."

"Traveler, the difference is that after these events, Ab knows that you care about him, that you're committed to him, that you love him. There's an extremely important leadership principle at work here. The greater your ability to convince your people that you genuinely care about them; that you are committed to them; that you love them; the higher you can set your expectations for those same people."

The Chaplain continued, "Let the people you lead know that you love them. If one of your people has suffered an injury, show up at his house and mow the lawn. If one of your people lands in the hospital, pay him a visit. If one of your

people is going through a divorce, take him to lunch and lend him an ear. Part of the answer to the age old question ‘why do bad things happen in the world?’ is that when something bad happens to someone, it creates an opportunity for us to show that person God’s love. As leaders we need to live I Corinthians 13. We need to love people.”

“I Corinthians 13, ...*and the greatest of these is love.*³ I think I get it.” Traveler said.

“Ah, you have been spending time with Jesus,” the Chaplain said with a smile. “Remember, too, that while difficult times do present unique opportunities to show people Jesus’ love, we want to express our commitment and love for people all of the time, not just when they are walking in the valley. During your normal day-to-day existence remember to respect people; to provide a secure environment for people; to provide recognition for people when appropriate; and remember to encourage people. Find ways to express God’s love to people who are not necessarily experiencing challenges in life.”

The Chaplain continued, “Of course the ultimate leader, Jesus, provides the ultimate example for us. People are so willing to follow Him because He paid the ultimate price for us. He died for us. He took away our sins. There is no question about His love for us, and that is one of

the reasons that Jesus is the greatest leader who ever lived. That is why we are so eager to follow Him.”

“I see,” Traveler said, nodding as he soaked it all in. “So what’s next?”

“Let me pray about that,” said the Chaplain. “Come back in another month, and I’ll have an answer for you.”

That night Traveler drove home thinking about how his support for Ab made such a dramatic change in their relationship. He thought about the principle that the Chaplain shared, “The greater your ability to convince your people that you genuinely care about them; that you are committed to them; that you love them; the higher you can set your expectations for those same people.” And he pondered I Corinthians 13...

...the greatest of these is love.⁴

Humility

*For we do not preach ourselves, but
Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves
as your servants for Jesus' sake.*

2 Corinthians 4:5

Over the next month or so, things at work went pretty well. As Traveler spent time with Jesus he grew both as the leader of his department and as a man. While it had only been a few months since he was promoted to his new position he could sense that he was gradually earning the respect of his people. Things at home were better too. There were still occasional disagreements, but as he demonstrated more love and support for his wife and family they were slowly becoming more responsive to his leadership. Traveler was feeling so confident that he canceled his next meeting with the Chaplain. It was around that time that trouble began.

Envy was a high-energy, high-profile supervisor from a different department. A few weeks ago he began to complain about Traveler. Before Traveler was promoted he had admired Envy. But lately it seemed as though the better Traveler performed the more trouble Envy caused.

Traveler's supervisor approached him, "Traveler, can I talk to you a minute?"

"Sure."

Traveler followed his supervisor into his office and sat down as his boss shut the door behind them. "Traveler, lately I've been receiving complaints about you from a supervisor from another department."

"OK, what seems to be the problem?"

"Well it seems that your department isn't pulling its weight when it comes to cleaning up the conference room. All departments have to share this area, and it's up to each department leader to make sure that the area is cleaned up after their business is finished."

"Alright, if we need to tighten that up we will, but I understood that it's maintenance engineering who is responsible for that."

"Yes, that's somewhat true, but they're short of personnel right now, and according to the supervisor who made the complaint, his department

goes the extra mile and cleans the area thoroughly after each time they conduct business there. He seemed pretty unhappy with you. He actually said that your people ‘leave it looking like a pig sty.’”

Traveler could feel his neck and face getting warm as hot anger rose up from his core. “I’ve never seen us leave it looking like a pig sty,” he said with obvious tension in his voice.

“Uh huh,” his boss said in a disinterested tone. “Anyway, I just don’t want to hear any more complaints about your department, OK?”

“Yes sir, no problem.” Traveler was excused. On his way out he murmured to himself under his breath, “...I can not believe the boss’s reaction – he could care less that Envy is exaggerating!”

This wasn’t the first complaint that had come his way from “a supervisor in another department.” It was common knowledge that Envy was the source. As a new supervisor, Traveler was concerned that this might put him and his department in a bad light with upper management. While Traveler was struggling to deal with these complaints, Envy seemed to be everywhere at once, delivering high energy presentations and trainings to all levels of the organization. It seemed as if wherever there was a spotlight Envy would run underneath it. He obviously enjoyed being at the center of attention.

Traveler was becoming increasingly frustrated. He decided to adopt a “what works for Envy can work for me,” approach. What was best for his customers, his people, and the company became secondary. “Winning” the battle with Envy became his priority. If there was a high profile assignment, Traveler did his best to acquire it. He started to dress in more expensive clothes. He became more demanding of his people. He even tried to walk with a bit of a swagger. Over a short period of time he began to look and act less like Traveler and more like Envy. These changes were not well received by the personnel in Traveler’s department, and Traveler knew it. But he felt that if he was going to compete with Envy the changes were necessary.

After a few weeks of trying to imitate Envy, he began to feel a bit awkward and uneasy. Traveler decided it was time to visit the Chaplain. Within a few days he met with him for the fifth time.

“Traveler, how very good to see you. How have you been?” The Chaplain greeted Traveler with a big hug.

“Pretty good, mostly. Well, at least until recently,” Traveler conceded.

“What’s been going on?”

“Well, at work there’s this guy in another department, he’s a manager. And he has a knack

for landing the best assignments. He's one of our organization's big contributors."

"H'mm," was all the Chaplain said.

"Let me finish. He's kind of flashy, very high profile. I heard one of the other department heads call him 'a mover and a shaker.' I don't understand. We used to get along great until recently. Lately he's been complaining about me to my boss."

"Sounds like he has some good qualities, what else does he do well?"

Traveler involuntarily rolled his eyes then recovered himself and said, "OK, well, he's a great communicator, an outstanding salesman, but sometimes he treats me like he's my boss even though we have the same level of au..."

"Good qualities," the Chaplain interrupted him.

"Right," Traveler thought for a moment. "Well he gives a lot of thought to what's best for the organization. He's also highly motivated."

"I see," said the Chaplain. "Are his complaints legitimate?"

"I have to say that once in a while they're legitimate. Most of the time they're not. But he's a master at including just enough truth in them so that my supervisor buys his story."

"When did it all start?"

“Just a few weeks ago.”

“How were things going up until a few weeks ago?”

“Oh, they were going really well!” Traveler’s face lit up. “My people were really starting to warm up to me. And my department’s performance has been on the increase. We’re starting to get noticed. Recently my boss’s boss even complimented our performance.”

“Biggest dog syndrome,”¹ the Chaplain muttered to himself.

“What?” Traveler asked laughing at the term.

“Biggest dog syndrome. The other supervisor, he has a case of biggest dog syndrome. When you were a smaller dog, as it were, everything was fine between you, but now that you’ve achieved some measure of success he has become uncomfortable. He doesn’t mind other dogs in the kennel as long as he is the biggest.¹ Not that it matters. Answer this: to what do you attribute your recent success?”

“All I’m trying to do is spend time with Jesus, and show my people and my customers the Lord’s love. Oh, and I also try to keep in mind that all of God’s leaders are doubted. It was really working.”

“Was?”

“Well, since this guy has gotten under my skin, I suppose I haven’t been doing what I should.”

“It’s a life long process, Traveler. Spending time with Jesus, loving Him, and loving people never ends... ever.”

“Yes, I guess I know that. I’ll need to get back to doing those things. Lately I’ve been trying to adopt some of Envy’s tactics.”

“Really? What kind of tactics?”

“Oh, just trying to dress a little better. Trying to get the high visibility assignments. I guess I’m also pushing my people to work harder.” Traveler sounded a little embarrassed.

“Were they not working hard enough before?”

“They were working plenty hard I suppose, but now I’m trying to outperform his department. Do you have any ideas about what to do with this other supervisor? How can I beat this guy?”

“Who said it is a competition?”

“Well, I’m pretty sure that both of us would like to be promoted some day. He will probably be one of my rivals.”

“Have you forgotten the verse from Psalm 75 that we talked about before?”

“You mean the part of Psalm 75 that says that promotion comes from the Lord?” Traveler

recited the verse...

promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. But God is the judge: he putteth down one, and setteth up another.²

The Chaplain said, “So you haven’t forgotten. Traveler, you don’t have to worry about the other supervisor. You only have to do your best, and trust that God will help you through. It’s up to Him,” the Chaplain pointed a finger heavenward, “who will get promoted. Before you came over and shared all this with me do you know what I felt led to talk with you about today?”

“No.”

“Humility.”

“Humility? You mean in me? It’s the other supervisor that has the problem, not me.”

The Chaplain chuckled.

“What’s so funny?”

“Well it’s just that... the other supervisor, does he have a problem with humility?”

“Yes. A big problem. His problem is that he doesn’t have any.”

“And didn’t you tell me that you’ve been

emulating his ‘tactics’ lately?”

Traveler paused, then he suddenly looked deflated. “Yes, I guess I did tell you that. When you put it that way... I suppose I haven’t been the most humble person lately. I am such an idiot.”

The Chaplain responded quickly and firmly, “Traveler, you are not an idiot!” He paused, took a breath, collected himself, and continued, “You’re not an idiot, you’re a sinner. Let’s talk a little bit about what humility is not. Humility is not self-denigration, that is, it’s not bashing yourself internally. As leaders we need to set high standards for ourselves, and as much as we can, show grace and mercy to those around us. However, when we set high standards for ourselves we need to avoid self-denigration.

When David, his men, and their families were camped at Ziklag they were raided while the men were gone. They lost all that they had including their wives and children – things were so bad that David’s men began to talk about stoning him.³ But the Bible says that during this time...

*David encouraged himself in the
LORD his God.”⁴*

“You need to know that it’s OK to encourage yourself in the Lord. David did it. You know that voice in your head? The dialog that you have with yourself all the time?”

Traveler said, “I think so.”

The Chaplain continued, “The voice that called you an idiot the time you spilled your soda on the carpet? The voice that called you stupid the time you backed the car into the fence post? The voice that called you a moron the time you overspent the budget?”

“OK, now I know exactly what you’re talking about,” Traveler said laughing.

“That internal dialog must be moving you toward excellence but in a positive way,” the Chaplain said. “In the same way that David encouraged himself in the Lord, encourage yourself in the Lord to set high standards.”

“I suppose I’m guilty of internally bashing myself sometimes,” Traveler said.

“Many people mistake self-denigration for humility.”

“So what is it then? What is humility?” Traveler asked.

“Humility is an absence of pride that comes from a keen awareness of who I am in comparison to God.”

Traveler sat with a blank look.

“Let me try to explain,” said the Chaplain. “Name one of the most famous athletes in the history of our planet.”

“Uhhh... Michael Jordan?”

“OK, he played basketball right?”

“Yes. You have to ask?”

The Chaplain ignored the question. “Suppose you and a friend were playing basketball together on the same team as Michael Jordan. And at the end of the game the three of you combined for 50 points: you scored 1; your friend scored 2; and Michael Jordan scored 47.”

“That sounds about right.”

“How ridiculous would it be for your friend to then deride you for not scoring as many points as he? It was Michael Jordan who scored all the points!”

“I guess it would be pretty silly,” Traveler said.

“How much greater is the difference between man and God than the difference between your friend and Michael Jordan?”

“The difference is infinite?” Traveler answered half asking.

“Yes, that’s right!” the Chaplain said excitedly. “The difference is infinite! Remember the story that Jesus told of the Pharisee and the tax collector?”

“Yes”

The Chaplain continued, “Two men went into the temple. The first, a Pharisee, thanked God for making him superior to the other who was a tax collector. The tax collector, recognizing that he was a sinner, simply asked God for mercy.⁵ Jesus said...

I tell you that this man, rather than the other, went home justified before God. For everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted.⁶

“One of these men, the tax collector, recognized that in comparison to God he was but dust, he was a sinner, he was in need of God’s mercy. Pride manifested itself in the other, in the Pharisee, as he compared himself to another human. Comparing yourself to another human is ridiculous in the context of God’s majesty, and God’s majesty is ever present. Therefore it is always ridiculous to compare yourself to another human.”

“But didn’t the tax collector denigrate himself?” Traveler asked.

“Great question. What the tax collector did

was completely appropriate. He humbled himself in the sight of the Lord. I believe that that's different than self denigration."

"Be humble, Traveler," the Chaplain continued. "Your purpose as a husband, a father, a leader at work is to serve."

"Aren't I the head? The authority?" Traveler asked.

"Yes and your role is to serve your wife, your children, your team at work, your customers. Provide them with what they need to succeed. You're working for them."

Traveler said, "I never thought of it that way."

The Chaplain said, "Paul said to those at Corinth...

...we do not preach ourselves, but Jesus Christ as Lord, and ourselves as your servants for Jesus' sake.⁷

"Remember, Jesus Himself washed the disciples feet."⁸

Traveler and the Chaplain were silent for a long moment. Then Traveler asked, "OK, but what about the complaints?"

"Take them one at a time," the Chaplain

answered. “Just keep doing your job as unto the Lord, and He’ll help you through this – you’ll see.”

“I can do that I guess, but somehow it doesn’t feel like it’s enough. What about ambition? That other supervisor has an abundance of it, and he seems to get all of the success and attention.”

“Well, you are on to something. That you’re ambitious is essential. The greater your ambition, the greater your passion, the greater your resolve – the greater your success. The question is what will you be ambitious about?”

“What do you mean?”

“Let me pray about that. Come back in another two months, and I’ll have an answer.” The Chaplain smiled.

That night on the way home Traveler thought about what the Chaplain had said about humility: “Humility is an absence of pride that comes from a keen awareness of who I am in comparison to God.” He pondered his own foolish pride. “I have some work to do,” he thought to himself.

Passion

Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

Philippians 3:13, 14 (NKJV)

For the next two months, Traveler renewed his efforts to spend time with Jesus. In addition to attending Sunday service and a mid-week Bible study, he started participating in a morning men's group. At home he became more disciplined in his personal devotional life and in leading family devotions as well. He did his best to show the Lord's love to his family, his coworkers, and his customers. Traveler made it his prayer project to petition the Lord to remove all pride and to make

him precisely as humble as the Lord desired him to be. Some might say that it was a daring prayer, but as he spent more and more time with Jesus, his desire to become the man God wanted him to be increased. He tried to focus on serving the people he was responsible for. Other than his family and his team at work appearing more comfortable with him, Traveler didn't notice any outward results from the changes he was trying to make. However, inwardly, he did notice that Envy's complaints had lost most of their sting. This was remarkable in light of the fact that Envy continued his high-energy ascent to stardom. The latest rumor was that Envy was being considered for a promotion to a vice president position.

At the end of two months, Traveler met with the Chaplain for the sixth time. "Great to see you, Traveler!" The Chaplain greeted him with a big bear hug.

"Great to see you," Traveler replied smiling.

"Tell me how things have been going?"

"Things have been fairly calm actually," Traveler said. "I've been spending more time with the Lord and asking Him for humility."

"And how has that been working for you?"

"Well, I haven't seen much of a change in anybody, except that my family and my team seem

to be a little more relaxed around me. There is one interesting thing though.”

“What’s that?”

“Well, Envy continues to complain to the bosses about me and my department, but it just doesn’t seem to bother me as much anymore.”

“That’s because your prayers are being answered.”

“How so?” Traveler asked.

“Have you ever seen someone take an embarrassing fall, then you asked if they’re injured, and he or she answered, ‘only my pride?’”

“Yes, I suppose I have.”

“Well if there’s no pride inside of you then there’s no pride to be injured. Humility is a release from pride, and release from pride is a very freeing experience.”

Traveler said, “So as God answers my prayers and helps me to become more humble, He removes pride, so that I’m not offended by the other supervisor’s antics.”

“Exactly.”

“I was a little apprehensive about praying that way – I thought the answer might be... painful. I didn’t really expect to enjoy more peace as a result of humility.”

“Most people don’t recognize humility as a blessing,” the Chaplain said.

Traveler said, “I still have a few things on my mind though.”

“Shoot.”

“His complaints don’t really bother me anymore, but I still see this other guy, the other supervisor, doing a great job at work. He is so high energy and so loaded with ambition. I’d like to have more passion for the Lord and for what I do at work.”

“As I said last time we talked, you are on to something. Ambition is essential to success as a leader. The greater your ambition, the greater your passion, the greater your resolve – the greater your success. The question is what will you be ambitious about?”

“And... what should you be ambitious about in order to be a great leader?” Traveler asked somewhat impatiently. He had been wondering about the answer to this question since his last visit with the Chaplain.

The Chaplain answered, “You see, the other supervisor devotes much of himself to selfish ambition. To be a truly great leader you must be full of ambition for the Lord and for the organizations that he has placed you in: your family, your church, your company, but not yourself. It’s a paradox that one of the great keys to success in leadership is having at your core both passion and humility.”¹

“I thought you told me that in God’s sight there is no set mold for what a leader should be like?” Traveler asked.

“That’s true when you’re talking about external things like appearance and charisma. Today we’re talking about internal things. God is very interested in the internal, in your core. And at your core you must have both great passion and great humility.”

“I’m not sure I get it. What about the people I see every day that seek out the limelight? They’re the ones who seem to have success. How can you have both passion and humility?” Traveler asked.

“What a great question! Traveler, have you ever heard of Darwin E. Smith?”

“No.”

The Chaplain continued, “How about Colman Mockler, George Cain, Alan Wurtzel, David Maxwell, Jim Herring, Lyle Everingham, Joe Cullman, Fred Allen, Cork Walgreen, or Carl Reichardt?”

“I haven’t heard of any of them. Should I have?”

“No, not necessarily, most people haven’t,” the Chaplain said. “A friend of mine, Jim Collins, he... well I guess you could say that he sort of discovered them. Jim wanted to find out what set apart truly great companies from the rest of the

pack. So he and his team of researchers identified all of the Fortune 500 companies that went from performing below the general stock market average, to outperforming the general market by three or more times, for fifteen or more years in a row.”¹

“Wow, that sounds like some tough criteria,” Traveler said.

“It is,” said the Chaplain. “Of the eleven hundred or so companies that had been in and out of the Fortune 500 during the time period under study, only eleven met the criteria. The eleven names I gave you were the CEOs of those eleven companies.”¹

“Wait a minute, you’re telling me that these people that I never even heard of before are the CEOs of the best of the best?” Traveler asked, amazed.

“Yes, in fact they are eleven of the most successful CEOs in the richest country in the world during some of its most prosperous time in history. The reason you’ve never heard of them is because none of them concerned themselves with the limelight. Some were even described as shy. They were humble. Yet they all had great resolve. They all had that paradoxical combination of passion and humility.”¹

“As an example,” the Chaplain continued,

“the first CEO I mentioned, Darwin E. Smith, was a soft spoken, shy, retiring personality who was promoted to the position of CEO at the Kimberly-Clark corporation. Shortly after his promotion a director told him, in no uncertain terms, that he lacked the necessary qualifications. Darwin E. Smith pressed on. Just a few months later he was diagnosed with cancer. Still he pressed on. He remained the CEO of Kimberly-Clark for the next twenty years. During that twenty years, under his leadership, the company made one of the greatest leaps to greatness in the history of the business world. Every year for twenty years Kimberly-Clark outperformed the general stock market by more than four times! That kind of success prompted the Wall Street Journal to do an interview. When the Journal reporter asked Smith to describe his leadership style he answered in his characteristic shy and awkward manner with one word: ‘eccentric.’ Needless to say, the Wall Street Journal didn’t do a fancy article on Darwin E. Smith.¹ The Wall Street Journal was looking for a larger than life personality, but what they found was humility.”

“I don’t even know what Kimberly-Clark is? What do they do?” Traveler asked.

“Ever hear of Kleenex?” the Chaplain responded.

“Yes.”

“That’s just one of their products. You’ve probably been using things they make your whole life without even realizing it. The great leaders of the Bible all had this unusual combination of passion and humility. Moses confronted Pharaoh over and over and over; he risked annihilation of his people by the Egyptians; and he endured the disobedience and rebellion of his followers. Yet he never lost passion for God’s directive for him to lead his people into the promised land.² Moses had great passion, Moses had tremendous resolve! And Moses had humility, the Bible says that he was...

*a very humble man, more humble
than anyone else on the face of the
earth.³*

“David slayed Goliath; slayed many of Israel’s enemies; persevered through his years as a fugitive; united Israel and Judah into one nation; and endured a government coup lead by his own son. And through it all he never lost his passion for the Lord and for his country.⁴ Yet David said,

*Who am I, O Sovereign LORD,
and what is my family, that you have
brought me this far?⁵*

“David had both great passion and great humility.”

“Paul endured plots to kill him, beatings, imprisonment, stonings, riots, and shipwrecks but did not waver in his passion to spread the gospel. He said,

*...one thing I do, forgetting those
things which are behind and reaching
forward to those things which are
ahead, I press toward the goal for
the prize of the upward call of God in
Christ Jesus.⁶*

“Obviously Paul was a passionate man! Yet he also said,

*For we do not preach ourselves,
but Jesus Christ as Lord, and
ourselves as your servants for Jesus’
sake.⁷*

“Paul also thought of himself as a servant – he was humble!”

The Chaplain took a breath, “Many have passion without humility. And some have humility without a great deal of passion. But great leaders have both.”

“Passion and humility,” Traveler said to himself. “It seems like Moses, David, and Paul were naturally passionate. I have some interest for what I do, but I don’t feel like I have passion in the same way as the great leaders in the Bible. How can I have more passion?”

“Great question!” The Chaplain said. “There are several things that you can do, the first of which is to ask for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. This is the most important.”

“How is asking for the Holy Spirit going to increase my level of enthusiasm?” Traveler asked.

“The Bible says that when the Philistines came against Samson...

...the Spirit of the Lord came mightily upon him, and the cords that were upon his arms became as flax that was burnt with fire, and his bands loosed from off his hands.⁸

“Through the empowerment of the Holy Spirit Samson then went on to defeat 1,000 of the enemy by himself! When you receive the empowerment of the Holy Spirit your passion increases, among other things. You said that you wanted more enthusiasm?”

“Yes.”

“Interesting word. We get our word enthusiasm from the Greek word *en-theos* which means *full of God's spirit*.”⁹

“Hmm,” Traveler said. He was beginning to understand. “So how do I get it, or Him? The Holy Spirit?”

“You ask God,” the Chaplain replied.

“I just ask God?”

“Jesus said,

*If you then, though you are evil,
know how to give good gifts to your
children, how much more will your
Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit
to those who ask him!*¹⁰

“So, pray,” the Chaplain said. “Just ask God. Ask Him for the Holy Spirit, every day.”

“What else can I do to make myself more passionate?”

The Chaplain said, “Besides asking for the

Holy Spirit, it's important to spend as much time as you can with passionate people. Do you realize that you become like those who you spend time with? That is so true, so choose who you spend your time with carefully. Choose people who are not only more passionate but also more Godly and wise than you are. You will become more passionate, because you will become more like them, because you become like those who you spend time with."

"OK, what else?"

"Leave room for what you desire to be passionate about."

"Huh?"

"Do you remember the last time you stopped for fast food and ate a couple of burgers, some fries, maybe a shake on your way home, and then, when you walk in the door you smell the aroma of a home cooked meal? A home cooked meal, the kind with your favorite meat, and gravy, and vegetables, and potatoes, and salad, and dessert, and everything that a great home cooked meal is. It's so completely superior to the fast food you just ate, but where is your appetite? You can't eat much of the home cooked meal because you're already full. What little you do eat you don't find enjoyable. It's the same with life. Don't fill up on the unimportant things in life. Leave room for

what you decide is important: God, family, work, friends, in priority order.”

“Is that it?” Traveler asked.

“One more very important thing,” the Chaplain continued. “Recognize that you may be face to face with Jesus at any moment.”

“Are you talking about the rapture?” Traveler asked.

“Could be, but regardless of your theological beliefs concerning the rapture, recognize that you could die at any moment. I have experienced the death of many who were close to me – at a variety of ages. I pray that the Lord will spare you from a similar fate, but do recognize this great truth, you or I could pass at any moment.”

Traveler sat quietly, thinking. The Chaplain thought to himself that he could almost see Traveler growing as a leader right before his eyes.

As the Chaplain walked Traveler to the door he said, “You must have passion and humility – as a leader it is essential that you have both. And to gain passion, pray for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. Make that request daily! Leave room in your heart, soul, and spirit for the Lord and whatever else you desire to be passionate about. Spend time with people more passionate, more wise, and more Godly than yourself. And finally, realize that you could be face to face with Christ

at any moment.”

Without a word Traveler walked out the door, lost in thought.

Fruit and the Finer Points

*This is to my Father's glory, that
you bear much fruit, showing
yourselves to be my disciples.*

John 15:8

Over the next several months, Traveler began praying daily for the empowerment of the Holy Spirit. At times it seemed as though he could feel the presence of God's Spirit upon him. Most of the time though, he didn't feel any different. He tried to fill up his life with what was most important, and he tried to avoid spending time on those things that don't have value in God's economy. Traveler started a journal and began to write down what he believed God had in mind for him to accomplish. He also began to pray for God to bring people into his life who were more passionate, more Godly,

and more wise than himself. Around this time he was approached by one of the Elders at his church and asked to join the leadership. At his first church leadership meeting early one Saturday morning, he realized that he was surrounded by men of God who were more passionate, more Godly, and more wise than himself. He was elated! It was an answer to prayer. He began to cultivate relationships with some of the group.

One year passed. Traveler's children were blossoming. Traveler and his wife were more together in parenting styles and were enjoying their best relationship ever. At work Traveler found himself on the receiving end of many requests to lead various projects and programs. As a result of his growing passion he tackled these assignments...

...heartily, as to the Lord...¹

Traveler's department flourished even more than before.

One Saturday some of the men at the church leadership group recommended a few books on leadership. After reading the first of these books Traveler had some questions. He thought it might be a good idea to pay a visit to the Chaplain.

“Traveler, how good to see you. It’s been more than a year.” The Chaplain greeted Traveler with his customary bear hug.

“Good to see you too,” Traveler said smiling.

“How is your family? How are things at work?” the Chaplain asked.

“Not without challenges at times, but both family and work are going very well.”

“That’s wonderful to hear. What would you like to talk about today?”

“I have a few questions, actually. I was invited to join the leadership team at church and...”

“That’s great! That’s an honor, to serve your congregation and your community in that way.”

“Yes, it is. I’m enjoying it more than I ever thought I would. I have a question though.”

“Fire away,” the Chaplain said with a smile.

“Some of my new friends are recommending books on leadership, and I was wondering what you thought of their recommendations.”

“I’d be happy to share any thoughts I have on them, but before we go there let me ask, are you spending time in God’s word?”

“Oh yes, every day. I’m plugged into a men’s Bible study on Monday mornings; my wife

and I read a devotional and pray together every night; I attend our church's midweek Bible study; and of course I go on Sundays; oh, and I also spend a little time in God's word by myself every morning."

"Very good," the Chaplain said. "Let me ask you something else, do you realize that by reading the Bible you are already reading the greatest book on leadership ever written?"

"Well, I hadn't thought about it before in those terms, but now I see what you mean. Yes, I see, the Bible is about the greatest leader the earth has ever seen – even the greatest leader in the universe. Yes, I get it."

"Excellent," the Chaplain said. "Just wanted to make sure you understood that fact before we continued. Now where were we?"

"The books they recommended," Traveler replied.

"Right, what books?"

Traveler went on to describe a short list of books on leadership recommended to him by his new friends from church. The Chaplain had read most of them and offered his opinion on each. The Chaplain finished with, "Just be absolutely sure to check anything you read with the scriptures to confirm that their ideas or principles are consistent with God's will."

Traveler asked, “So then leadership goes beyond what you and I have talked about here, doesn’t it? I mean some of these books talk about being honest, building trust, being competent, earning respect...”

“Traveler, these are qualities that any Bible believing Christian should have – wouldn’t you agree?”

“Yes, I suppose I do,” Traveler answered. “But then what about the finer points? Things like timing, momentum, delegation...”

“There are several good books on the finer points of leadership. What you and I have been talking about over the last few years are what I have found to be the essentials. Sometimes it can become difficult to know what to focus on because there is such a great amount of information available to us today. The essentials of leadership distill down to spending plenty of time with Jesus; showing people God’s love; cultivating those dynamic qualities of humility and passion; all the while keeping in mind that all of God’s leaders deal with doubt. Oh, and there are two other things that I haven’t shared yet. If you follow these Biblical principles the finer points generally take care of themselves.”

“So should I not read books on leadership other than the Bible?”

“Oh no, to stop learning is to stop leading.² You must become a life-long learner. Never stop. Just be sure to qualify whatever you encounter by checking it for consistency with God’s word.”

Traveler nodded his understanding and asked, “May I change the subject a bit? I have a question about communicating ideas or vision that I’m passionate about.”

“Ask away,” the Chaplain said.

“As my passion increases, I have ideas or vision from the Lord that I’m very enthusiastic about.”

“Wonderful!”

“Yes, it is exciting. But sometimes I find it difficult to communicate the vision to my people.”

The Chaplain leaned back and said, “Ahhh, casting God’s vision and communicating ideas – a very important part of leadership. The most effective leaders I’ve ever known start by talking to as many key people as possible one on one. Jesus did this when He asked the twelve to become His disciples. Then they meet with their leadership team as a group and collaborate on the vision or idea. This enables the leader and his leadership team to finally present his or her vision or idea to the general group with one heart.”³

“Leadership team?”

“It has to do with fruit. I’m sure we’ll get to it shortly,” the Chaplain said patiently.

“All those meetings sound like a lot of time and talking...”

“And listening too. Remember that you’re not Jesus,” the Chaplain said smiling. “God will use the people you talk with and listen to, to communicate His will to you and to expand your vision. Just like reading leadership books it’s important to filter everything you hear through the scriptures, but start by patiently listening to what people have to say, and then share the vision God’s given you.”

“That sounds like a lot of work!” Traveler said.

“True, but that’s what it takes to communicate ideas or vision effectively. A leader with a calendar full of one on one appointments is usually one who is an effective communicator of vision.”³

“OK, so what about the two other things – your last two principles? What are they?” Traveler asked.

“Fruit,” the Chaplain answered.

“That’s only one.”

“I can only talk about one at a time.”

“OK, I’m interested.”

“Take a look at 2 Kings chapters 2, 3, and 4.” The Chaplain opened his Bible and read the

three chapters aloud then said, “Elijah is about to be taken up into heaven. His student Elisha is following him around all day, and in their travels they run into two groups of prophets – one group at Bethel and another group at Jericho. Here’s my question for you, what’s going on here with all of these prophets popping up all over Israel?”⁴

“I’m sure you’re going to tell me.”

The Chaplain became animated and excited, “The prophets are fruit from Elijah’s work on earth! They are the result of Elijah’s abiding in the Lord and the Lord’s abiding in Elijah and God’s words abiding in Elijah.⁵ Sometime ago I read a study about elderly people who were about to die. When asked what they would do differently if they could live life over again they replied that they would do more things that would last beyond their own passing. Elijah was a great man of God to be sure, but the fruit he left behind accomplished more after his death than Elijah did during his life. Elisha alone performed twice as many miracles as Elijah, not to mention what the other prophets who were mentored by Elijah may have accomplished for the Lord.”⁶

“So how does that relate to me?” Traveler asked.

“Mentor your children! Identify the future leaders at work, and do everything you can to

help them grow. Identify leaders at church, and do everything you can to help them grow. Leave behind fruit!”

Traveler said, “So my mission for God here on earth doesn’t end then after I die. I’m supposed to grow future leaders to carry on what I’ve been doing while I’m alive.”

“Not just carry on but even exceed!” the Chaplain said with great enthusiasm. “Look at what Jesus’ followers have accomplished since His death. There are 2.1 billion Christians in the world today.⁷ 2.1 billion. That’s a lot of fruit! If you started counting Jesus’ followers out loud, one per second, after 31 years and 8 months, you would still be less than half way to finishing! And of course during that 31 years and 8 months, more people would be accepting Christ at an exponentially expanding rate. So really, it would be impossible to keep up with the pace at which Jesus is bearing fruit for God’s kingdom.”

Traveler said, “And Elisha did twice as many miracles as Elijah. I see. The people you lead and influence, who you leave behind after you die, bear more fruit than you did yourself while you were alive.”

“Precisely,” the Chaplain said. “And that group of leaders that you grow, they are your leadership team. This is John Chapter 15 being

fulfilled. Bear fruit.”

“So how do I mentor? How do I grow leaders?”

The Chaplain answered, “Let’s take a look at Jesus’ life and see how He grew leaders. Jesus trained His disciples for leadership by teaching them. And He also prepared His disciples for leadership by giving them responsibility. Who passed out the loaves and fish? Who managed the money? Who put together dinner the day Mary and Martha had their disagreement? Who baptized? Jesus delegated these tasks rather than doing them Himself. It’s important to remember to delegate. Look for opportunities to give out responsibility to your people that will stretch them a bit and help them to grow. Obviously Jesus did not physically address every one of the 2.1 billion Christians who are alive today. He started with His disciples in Mark chapter 6...

Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two...⁸

“And those leaders reproduced other leaders who reproduced others and so forth...

Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the

*name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit.*⁹

“Jesus, our Master and Lord, bore the ultimate fruit for God’s kingdom and provides the ultimate example of leadership.”

Traveler said, “I understand. I’m to teach them and give them responsibility that will help them to grow as leaders.”

The Chaplain said, “Yes, and when you teach, start with their strengths, always.”

“And correct weaknesses,” Traveler said knowingly.

The Chaplain’s expression turned to one of consternation.

“Yes, but only when necessary. By training people in their talents and by assigning people to work in their areas of strength you are helping them to grow and perform in the way that God designed them. There is no better way to motivate people.”

Traveler nodded, a mild look of surprise on his face. He realized that he had been trying to “fix” people rather than encouraging them in their strengths.

The Chaplain continued, “As much as you can, create an environment where they’re free to take risks. And expose them to people who are

successful in their field.”¹⁰

“That’s exciting! Growing leaders. Encouraging people in their strengths. Leaving behind people who will bear more fruit than I have. This is huge!” Traveler said.

“Yes, it is,” the Chaplain said.

Example

*In everything set them an example
by doing what is good.*

Titus 2:7

The next year was one of the most exciting and rewarding times in Traveler's professional life. He was identifying future leaders and teaching them, training them in their areas of strength, mentoring them, delegating assignments to them that were stretching. He was exposing them to other people who were successful in their respective fields. Sometimes he even grew a leader by assigning that person to grow another leader. Traveler's department had been doing well up to this point, but now it began to soar. Envy was beside himself with professional jealousy and pointed out to Traveler's supervisor the one area he could find a problem with. For all of Traveler's department's success, most of the people he was responsible for

had the bad habit of taking extra long lunches and breaks. Traveler knew it was a problem. After he heard of Envy's complaint from his boss, he spoke with his people about it individually, but there was no change. He addressed his department as a group but still no improvement. He cajoled. He persuaded. He even berated a few times. Nothing seemed to work. He began to realize that he was becoming distracted by the issue to the point where it threatened to undermine his relationships with his people. He decided to see the Chaplain.

"Traveler! It's been awhile." The Chaplain greeted Traveler with a hearty hug.

"How have you been?" Traveler asked.

"I'm blessed," the Chaplain replied. "What are we going to talk about today?"

"Lunches and breaks," Traveler said.

"Interesting topic. How's work going for you in general?"

"Well, I have to thank you for teaching me about the whole fruit thing. I can't believe the difference it's made. I mean, really, I never would have believed it had I not experienced it."

"It's huge," the Chaplain said.

"Yes, it is," Traveler replied. "But there's something going on that is bothering me."

"Yes...?" the Chaplain asked.

"Since our last visit we have been doing

incredibly well,” Traveler said. “It’s just this one thing.”

“Lunches and breaks?”

“No, not just lunches and breaks. Well, yes, lunches and breaks, but it’s how my people are taking them. They’re just sort of leisurely about the whole issue. They tend to take long lunches and long breaks. And no matter what I do or say about it, it doesn’t seem to change.”

“Are they doing well otherwise?” the Chaplain asked.

“Yes. They’re doing great!”

“Huh. Let me ask you something. How are you about taking lunches and breaks?”

Traveler swallowed, “My lunches and breaks are perhaps a bit longer than they should be but...”

“But what?”

“Well, I put in a lot of extra time. To handle all of the responsibility that I have, I come in early, I leave a little late, I usually work a half a day or so on Saturday. So, if I take a longer break or a longer lunch, I mean, what does that matter?”

The Chaplain smiled patiently and graciously. “Traveler, everyone remembers the story of David and Goliath right?”

“Yes.”

“Are you aware of David’s men who are

credited in the Bible with killing giants?” the Chaplain asked.

“No.”

The Chaplain said, “Abishai the son of Zeruiah, Sibbechai the Hushathite, Elhanan the son of Jaareoregim, and Jonathan the son of Shimeah: they were all David’s men. They all spent time with David. Having spent time with David they were influenced by David. They became like David, and eventually, like David, they too became giant killers. Their life paths led them to the same place as the life path of the leader who they followed. You’re example to your people is one of the most powerful dimensions of your leadership.”¹

The Chaplain paused then said, “You, are the future of the people who you lead. Your wife, your children, your employees, the kids you coach in the soccer league – their life path will almost certainly be in the same neighborhood as yours. The principle of example is a daunting one because we’re sinners with all of the flaws and frailties that come with being human. Nevertheless Titus 2:7 says,

*In everything set them an example
by doing what is good.*²

“Nobel Peace Prize winner Albert Schweitzer said, ‘Example is not the main thing in influencing others. It is the only thing.’ As a leader it is essential that we set a great example for those who follow us. Their lives depend on it.”

Traveler said, “I really try to set a great example, but what about the times when my son hits his sister; or the time when my daughter lied about watching the TV program that she wasn’t supposed to; or my employee who called in sick when I knew he was at the lake. Sometimes it feels like even when I am knocking myself out to set a great example nobody’s really changing.”

“Great question. Would you agree that Jesus, the ultimate leader, set the ultimate example?” the Chaplain asked.

“Yes.”

“Then let’s take a look at some of His results in the relative short term. The disciples argued about who would be the greatest in the kingdom.³ Most of Jesus’ disciples abandoned Him after the teaching on communion.⁴ One of Jesus’ disciples, Judas, betrayed Him.⁵ The disciples fell asleep twice in the garden of Gethsemane after Jesus asked them to keep watch.⁶ And Peter, when asked if he was associated with Jesus, cursed, swore, and denied that he even knew Him.⁷ So did Jesus, after experiencing these reactions to His

leadership, to His perfect example, say, ‘What’s the point? Forget it. I quit?’ Of course not. Jesus persevered. You see, Jesus recognized that He was bearing fruit, and bearing fruit takes time. Bearing fruit often involves setbacks. There will be frosts, insect infestations, droughts, the irrigation system will break. But in its season, fruit will be born.”

“So what should I do?” Traveler asked.

“How’s your example in other areas?” the Chaplain asked.

“Pretty good, I think. It’s just that one habit mostly. At least that’s my perception.”

“And you said your department is performing well, right?”

“Their performance has been outstanding.”

“Well, if you really want them to shorten their breaks and their lunches then...”

“Shorten mine,” Traveler interrupted.

“Yes, shorten yours. For good or for bad your example is extremely powerful. And when your good example doesn’t produce results don’t give up. Remember that bearing fruit takes time. Even Jesus faced setbacks when it came to His followers following His example. Set a great example for those you lead because you are their future.”

“It’s so simple.”

“And so powerful.” The Chaplain looked

at Traveler for a few moments, smiling. Traveler sensed that there was nothing more to talk about for today – maybe even for a long while. They exchanged their good-byes, and the Chaplain left Traveler with, “I’ll be praying for you, Traveler.”

The Last Visit

*Greater love has no one
than this, that he lay down
his life for his friends.*

John 15:13

It had been seven years since he'd seen his old friend the Chaplain. Traveler happened to be driving by his office one day and decided to stop in. For the first time he wanted to pay a visit not because he was desperately seeking the Chaplain's advice but rather, just to say hello.

"Chaplain!" Traveler greeted the Chaplain with a big smile and a hug.

"Traveler, great to see you," the Chaplain returned the greeting. "How have you been?"

"I am a blessed man," Traveler said simply and sincerely.

"In all areas? Your relationship with Him? Family?"

“Everything,” Traveler answered.

“How’s work been going?”

“A vice president position opened up. That supervisor from the other department was one of the candidates.”

“‘Was,’ you said, ‘was,’ did he get promoted?”

“No, they offered it to someone else. Said it came down to loyalty, trust, and attitude.”

“What are you telling me? Did they offer it to you?”

“Yes.”

“And...?”

“I accepted.”

“Congratulations! I’m not surprised by your success.”

“There’s something else that happened recently that I won’t share with anyone else,” Traveler said.

“Oh?”

Traveler handed the Chaplain a handwritten note.

Traveler,

Thank you for the time that you spent here leading our department. I know that you always look for the best in everyone. You have helped me to temper my sometimes judgmental nature by watching you deal with difficult situations. I also know that you seek to be more like Jesus, and I have to say that I can see Him in you by your honesty and integrity. Those under your leadership as a vice president are truly lucky to be receiving a person such as yourself as their new VP. I hope that they appreciate you as much as I do.

Sincerely,

Follower

“I’d take that note over a vice president’s position,” the Chaplain said.

“Me too,” Traveler said.

Traveler paused for a moment then asked, “Well, how are you? You look like you haven’t cha...” Traveler started to say, then caught himself as he realized that something had changed. Traveler suddenly noticed how much older the Chaplain looked since his last visit. “His years as a soldier have taken their toll,” he thought. But it was more than that. Traveler couldn’t put his finger on it, but the Chaplain looked as though he was hiding something. “Something isn’t right, but what is it?” Traveler thought to himself. Then it struck him... pain. The Chaplain was in physical pain.

The Chaplain recognized that Traveler had seen through his efforts to mask it. “I haven’t much time left,” the Chaplain said. “I’ll be going home soon. I have cancer. Those of us who served overseas are more prone.”

For a brief moment Traveler felt cheated and abandoned. “Your time is cut short then,” he said, protesting mildly.

“I don’t regret it. It was a great privilege to serve as a soldier.”

He paused then said affectionately, “It’s been a great privilege to serve you, Traveler.”

In spite of himself Traveler could feel tears beginning to well.

“I’ve lived a life that was sometimes difficult but very, very blessed. Now is when I reap the benefits of success,” the Chaplain said.

“What do you mean by that? Going to heaven?”

“Yes, of course going home is the ultimate reward. And there’s something else. Do you know what success is Traveler?”

“I think you’re going to tell me,” Traveler said chuckling.

“Success is the peace of mind you gain from knowing you did the best you could with the talents that God gave you.¹ That’s the other reward that I’m reaping now. I have a few regrets, but I did my best.”

They sat together in silence for a long time – comfortable with each other.

Finally Traveler stood up and said, “Is there anything I can do?”

“I know your heart, Traveler,” the Chaplain said. “I know you want to help. But my family is taking very good care of me.”

The Chaplain stood. They looked at each other for a long moment. Then Traveler gave him a bear hug and, choked with emotion, said in a voice that was barely audible, “I’ll miss you... I’ll

miss you very much,” as he walked out the door.

The funeral service was humble, like the Chaplain, and yet many attended. There were about one hundred soldiers in uniform from the local military base and thousands from his church. A young pastor spoke about the inscription on the Chaplain’s headstone...

*Greater love has no one than
this, that he lay down his life for his
friends.²*

Many in attendance nodded and commented to each other, “That says it. That was him.”

“He lived for Christ. And he lived for others,” they said.

The Master

*...for I came from God and now
am here. I have not come on
my own; but He sent me.*

John 8:42

Traveler had just returned home from the Chaplain's widow where he had helped with some yard work and painting. It was late spring. Outside the sun was bright and high in the sky. An ordinary looking young man walked up to Traveler's house and knocked on the front door.

Traveler greeted the young man heartily, "Trekker, how good to see you. I understand you have a few questions." The young man Trekker was somewhat taken aback by the bear hug he received from Traveler.

"Come in, come in. Sit down. Can I get you anything?" Traveler asked, shutting the door behind them.

“No I’m fine,” Trekker said as he sat down.

“How can I help you?”

Trekker looked at the floor and answered, “Well, my wife and I have a new baby, he’s six months old, and I, well some friends told me that I should come talk with you.”

“What would you like to talk about?”

“I guess I just want to be the best dad I can be, but I don’t really know how.”

“Trekker, God bless you for your desire to be a good father. Where would you like to start?”

“I want to know everything!” Trekker exclaimed, his face suddenly coming to life. “Everything I need to know to become the best dad. I want to know today.”

“You want to know everything? Today?”

“Yes, right now.”

“I’m sure I don’t know everything there is to know about fatherhood. And I don’t know if I can cover everything that I do know in one meeting, but I’ll do what I can. What do you say we open with prayer?” Traveler led the young man Trekker in prayer, asking for the Holy Spirit to move mightily in their midst during the meeting.

After praying he began to share, “Trekker, most people don’t recognize that when they become a husband, when they become a father, they become a leader. The day you were married

you became the leader of your family. From now on I want you to think of yourself as the leader of your family. Can you do that?"

"Yes. I can do that."

"Good!" Traveler said grinning. "To become the very best father that you can be, and I believe that that is what God intends for you, you must become the best leader that you can become. And Jesus is the key to becoming a great leader. Sometimes your wife, sometimes your children will cause you to feel that you're inadequate as a husband or father. I suspect that this has happened a time or two, and that's one of the reasons you're here."

Trekker nodded.

For the next hour Traveler shared about Jesus.

How Jesus overcame the doubts and opposition of the established religious authority of His day.¹

How Jesus was first influenced by the Father before He ministered to people here on earth.²

How Jesus loved us so much that He gave His life for us.³ And how His love and commitment to us is precisely what allows Him to set the bar high for us.

How Jesus came to serve us humbly as was demonstrated when He washed the disciple's feet

at the last supper.⁴

How Jesus had great passion born of the Holy Spirit.⁵

How Jesus possessed that unique and dynamic combination of great passion and great humility that all truly great leaders exhibit.⁶

Traveler shared how Jesus bore abundant fruit by growing leaders.⁷

And finally he shared about how Jesus set for us the ultimate example of what a great leader should be.⁸

Traveler finished with, “Jesus, our Master and Lord, provides the ultimate example of leadership. Trekker, if you forget everything else I teach you, remember this, spend time with Jesus. Learn about Jesus. Study the person of Jesus. Be influenced by Jesus.”

“Wow, that’s a lot of information,” Trekker said looking wide eyed and a bit overwhelmed. “What’s next?”

“Let me pray about that,” Traveler said smiling. “Come back next week, and I’ll give you an answer.”

*If you forget everything else,
remember this, spend time with Jesus.
Learn about Jesus. Study the person
of Jesus. Be influenced by Jesus.*

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