

Influence
MAGAZINE

MAKE IT COUNT

An eight-week study
for leadership teams

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader:



**8 Habits
That Make
a Difference**

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DISCUSSION GUIDE

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Prayer: The Habit of Connection

Assess: What difference has prayer made in your life as a leader?

Insights and Ideas

Rodney “Gipsy” Smith became a follower of Jesus at age 16, and a year later began preaching after William Booth invited him to become an evangelist with The Salvation Army. Although this British evangelist had no formal education, he proclaimed the gospel for 70 years. He made dozens of trips across the Atlantic to preach in the United States, and two presidents invited him to the White House.

Someone once asked Smith the secret of his ministry. He said, “Go home. Lock yourself in your room. Kneel down in the middle of the floor, and with a piece of chalk draw a circle around yourself. There, on your knees, pray fervently and brokenly that God would start a revival within that chalk circle.”

Like Smith, we need the habit of connection found in the place of prayer. And here’s the good news: Jesus provided a great template to guide our prayers when He said, “This, then, is how you should pray” (Matthew 6:9).

1. **Worship.** Jesus began with, “Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name” (verse 9). Rather than starting with a list of needs, Jesus challenged us to acknowledge and worship our Heavenly Father. This approach begins from a place of relationship rather than a place of requests.
2. **God’s will.** Next, Jesus said, “Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (verse 10). We live in a fallen world, but Jesus makes it clear God can still accomplish His will on earth. As leaders, it’s our job to pray and welcome God’s will in whatever place He has entrusted to us to lead.
3. **Provision.** Jesus said, “Give us today our daily bread” (verse 11). When we seek God to meet our daily needs, we exhibit an ongoing reliance on Him. The moment we become self-reliant, we abandon the provision made available through prayer.
4. **Forgiveness.** Next, Jesus says, “And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (verse 12). Extending forgiveness keeps our hearts soft toward God and the people we lead. Sometimes leaders have to give extra time to this part of prayer because of the hardships and disappointments experienced in leadership.
5. **Temptation.** Finally, Jesus instructed us to pray, “And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (verse 13). A regular habit of prayer gives us the spiritual strength to overcome the temptations and win the battles often associated with leadership.

Love for the people we care for, the ministry we lead, and the God we serve should drive us to a place of prayer.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What part of the Lord’s Prayer is most meaningful or challenging to you?
2. What are your biggest struggles in making prayer a consistent priority?
3. In what areas do you need God to provide right now?

Apply

Set aside time to pray together as a team. Rather than focusing on a laundry list of items that are “safe,” open up and share the burden you are currently carrying in leadership, and pray for one another.

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference**Prayer: The Habit of Connection**

Assess: What difference has prayer made in your life as a leader?

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Someone once asked Smith the secret of his ministry. He said, “Go home. Lock yourself in your room. Kneel down in the middle of the floor, and with a piece of chalk draw a circle around yourself. There, on your knees, pray fervently and brokenly that God would start a revival within that chalk circle.”

How you should pray (Matthew 6:9–13):

1. _____.

“Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name” (verse 9).

2. *God’s* _____.

“Your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven” (verse 10).

3. _____.

“Give us today our daily bread” (verse 11).

4. _____.

“And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors” (verse 12).

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“And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one” (verse 13).

Apply

Set aside time to pray together as a team. Rather than focusing on a laundry list of items that are “safe,” open up and share the burden you are currently carrying in leadership, and pray for one another.

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Bible Engagement: The Habit of Growth

Team Review: What difference did praying together make as a team?

Assess: What approach to personal Bible study do you most enjoy?

Insights and Ideas

As leaders, particularly preachers, it's easy to fall into the trap of Bible study solely for the purpose of sermon preparation. After all, "Sunday's coming." When that happens, Scripture becomes nothing more than head knowledge and doesn't work its way into the depths of your spirit, heart and soul.

To cultivate a healthy habit of regular spiritual growth, we need to be strategic and intentional about how we engage God's Word. These four strategies are a good place to start:

1. *Find a practice.* Each personality type has a different approach to studying Scripture. Some prefer a systematic reading of the entire Bible in one year. Others like to take a deep dive into a few verses each day. Some favor listening to God's Word, while others prefer the SOAP method where they write down a Scripture, Observation, Application and Prayer. The best practice for you is the one you'll actually do, and the one from which you'll draw the most refreshing.
2. *Select a place.* It helps to have a place to study God's Word. It might be in your church office, at home in your favorite chair, out in nature, or on your back patio. Life-giving environments often enhance the practice of life-giving study.
3. *Enlist a person.* Inviting someone else into the discussion may enhance your personal devotional life. With whom could you connect every week or two to pray together and share what God has shown you through His Word?
4. *Vary your plan.* To keep your Bible reading fresh, vary your approach as needed. "As needed" may be a couple of times per year, or even a couple of times per month. You might decide to read a different version of Scripture, include a devotional, do a Greek study on a particular passage, or study a topic or biblical character in detail.

The apostle Paul said, "For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives" (Colossians 1:9).

The word for "knowledge" is *epignōsis*. Author and professor William Yount described *epignōsis* as "a knowledge that reaches out and grasps its object and is in turn grasped by its object." In other words, you grasp the knowledge, and the knowledge grasps you. It moves from "head knowledge" to "heart transformation." That's the power this habit of growth can produce in your life.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Have you ever found yourself replacing personal devotions with sermon preparation? What caused this slow drift?
2. What is God currently speaking to you through His Word?
3. Which of the four strategies do you need to implement to foster a richer practice of Bible engagement?

Apply

Reflect on the four strategies offered to keep your Bible engagement fresh and inspiring. Which strategy do you need to embrace to elevate your daily interaction with God's Word? What would it look like to implement the strategy this week?

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference**Bible Engagement: The Habit of Growth**

Assess: What approach to personal Bible study do you most enjoy?

To cultivate a healthy habit of regular spiritual growth, we need to be strategic and intentional about how we engage God's Word.

Four strategies for engaging God's Word:

1. *Find a* _____. Each personality type has a different approach to studying Scripture. The best practice for you is the one you'll actually do, and the one from which you'll draw the most refreshing.
2. *Select a* _____. Life-giving environments often enhance the practice of life-giving study.
3. *Enlist a* _____. Inviting someone else into the discussion may enhance your personal devotional life. With whom could you connect every week or two to pray together and share what God has shown you through His Word?
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Apply

Reflect on the four strategies offered to keep your Bible engagement fresh and inspiring. Which strategy do you need to embrace to elevate your daily interaction with God's Word? What would it look like to implement this strategy the week?

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Worship: The Habit of Perspective

Team Review: What changes have you made to how you engage in God's Word?

Assess: What difference does worship make in the life of a leader?

Insights and Ideas

Leaders face enormous pressure. There are plenty of curveballs and crises that come with leadership, and the ever-changing landscape makes it easy to lose your peace. The apostle Paul certainly understood this reality.

In 2 Corinthians, Paul acknowledged his lack of peace (2:12–13) and fear-inducing conflicts from every direction (7:5). And in 2 Corinthians 11:24–28, Paul provided a long list of his hardships: beatings, shipwrecks, danger, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst and more. He concluded this list by saying, “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches” (verse 28).

Despite all this, Paul wrote these words from a prison cell: “Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!” (Philippians 4:4). How did this leader rejoice in the midst of his hardship? We can see two ways:

1. *Rejoice with your will.* For Paul to rejoice, it had to be a deliberate choice. As author and pastor Max Lucado said, “This verse is a call, not to a feeling, but to a decision and a deeply rooted confidence that God exists, that He is in control, and that He is good.” In leadership, you will face hardships. The question is, can you still make the hard choice to rejoice in the Lord?
2. *Rejoice with your worship.* When Paul wrote to the Christians in Philippi, they were anxious and worried about suffering, persecution, divisions in the church, and their physical needs. Yet Paul said, “Do not be anxious about anything” (Philippians 4:6).

Paul understood that when we worry, we adopt a high view of our problems and a low view of our God. In other words, worry becomes a form of worship. Simply put, when our mind is distracted by the size of our worry, our heart diminishes the size of our God.

Choosing to rejoice with your worship helps you enlarge your view of God. God and anxiety both cast a shadow. Worship is how you walk out of the shadow of anxiety and into the shadow of God. That's why worship is the habit of perspective; it changes your focus and your view.

What's the result of rejoicing with your will and your worship? Philippians 4:7 says, “And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.” That word “guard” is a military term that means “standing on guard.” In other words, your heart and mind will be guarded by a peace so great your mind cannot fully comprehend it or skillfully reproduce it.

Reflect and Discuss

1. How has worship helped you during a particularly stressful time as a leader?
2. When was a time you “rejoiced with your will,” even though you didn't feel like it?
3. How has worship shifted your perspective when you've been dealing with a leadership challenge?

Apply

Set aside some time to worship together as a team. Don't rush this moment. Instead, lean into the presence of the Lord, worship His name, and allow Him to speak and minister to you.

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference**Worship: The Habit of Perspective**

Assess: What difference does worship make in the life of a leader?

In 2 Corinthians, Paul acknowledged his lack of peace (2:12–13) and fear-inducing conflicts from every direction (7:5). And in 2 Corinthians 11:24–28, Paul provided a long list of his hardships: beatings, shipwrecks, danger, sleeplessness, hunger, thirst and more. He concluded this list by saying, “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches” (verse 28).

Two ways to rejoice:

1. *Rejoice with your* _____.

“This verse is a call, not to a feeling, but to a decision and a deeply rooted confidence that God exists, that He is in control, and that He is good.” — Max Lucado

2. *Rejoice with your* _____.

“Do not be anxious about anything” (Philippians 4:6).

Choosing to rejoice with your worship helps you enlarge your view of God. God and anxiety both cast a shadow. Worship is how you walk out of the shadow of anxiety and into the shadow of God. That’s why worship is the habit of perspective; it changes your focus and your view.

“And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:7).

Apply

Set aside some time to worship together as a team. Don’t rush this moment. Instead, lean into the presence of the Lord, worship His name, and allow Him to speak and minister to you.

Study 4

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Gratitude: The Habit of Thankfulness

Team Review: What difference has worship made in your life recently?

Assess: On a scale from 1 to 10, how regularly do you express gratitude to God and others?

Insights and Ideas

In Philippians 4:6, the apostle Paul said, “Do not be anxious about anything ...” The verb translated “be anxious” means “to be pulled in different directions.” That’s what anxiety does. It pulls your mind and emotions in different directions so you feel like you’re coming apart.

That’s a perfect description of the hardships of leadership. There are days when you feel like you’re being pulled apart as you face demands from people, problems and possibilities. Sometimes you may even feel like throwing in the towel.

Instead, Paul challenges us to give thanks. He writes, “Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, *with thanksgiving*, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6, *emphasis added*).

What does the spiritual discipline of giving thanks do for leaders? Here are two benefits:

1. *Giving thanks makes you a more positive leader.* How you think shapes the kind of person you become. Proverbs 4:23 gives us a clear warning: “Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life” (NCV).

Complaining and thanksgiving are polar opposites. One is negative and the other is positive. In fact, complaining doesn’t eliminate your problems; it only extends them. It turns your problems into bigger problems. But as you speak with gratitude, give thanks to God, and foster a thankful heart, you’ll lean more frequently in the direction of positivity. Plus, people will enjoy being around you more.

2. *Giving thanks provides better perspective as a leader.* Paul couldn’t solve his problem of being in jail, so do you know what he did? Paul changed his perspective. He focused on the positive.

In fact, Paul started his letter from prison with these words: “I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:3–6).

You may not be able to change your circumstance, but you can change how you view it.

In 1 Thessalonians 5:18, Paul said, “Give thanks in all circumstances; for this is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus.” When you live out of a spirit of thanksgiving, it enables you to find the good, even in the most difficult situations.

Thanksgiving always makes the future look bigger and brighter, and it helps you become a better leader.

Reflect and Discuss

1. When are you most tempted to be least grateful?
2. How has thanksgiving made you more positive and helped you gain greater perspective?
3. What’s one thing you can do to become a more grateful leader?

Apply

Commit to keeping a gratitude journal for the next 30 days. Each day, list three things for which you are thankful. You might even challenge a friend to join you, agreeing to meet for coffee each week to share some highlights from your journals.

Study
4
TEAM GUIDE

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Gratitude: The Habit of Thankfulness

Assess: On a scale from 1 to 10, how regularly do you express gratitude to God and others?

“Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, *with thanksgiving*, present your requests to God” (Philippians 4:6, *emphasis added*).

How the spiritual discipline of gratitude helps leaders:

1. *Giving thanks makes you a more _____ leader.*

“Be careful what you think, because your thoughts run your life” (Proverbs 4:23, NCV).

As you speak with gratitude, give thanks to God, and foster a thankful heart, you’ll lean more frequently in the direction of positivity. Plus, people will enjoy being around you more.

2. *Giving thanks provides better _____ as a leader.*

“I thank my God every time I remember you. In all my prayers for all of you, I always pray with joy because of your partnership in the gospel from the first day until now, being confident of this, that he who began a good work in you will carry it on to completion until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:3–6).

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Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Confession: The Habit of Humility

Team Review: How is gratitude changing your attitude as a leader?

Assess: What comes to mind when you hear the word “confession”?

Insights and Ideas

Author Richard Foster said, “Confession is the spiritual discipline that allows us to enter into the grace and mercy of God in such a way that we experience forgiveness and healing for the sins and sorrows of the past.”

When we confess our sin to God, we cultivate an openness to God’s gentle work in and through us. In the life of a leader, confession helps guard against the abuse of power and the seeds of bitterness. In fact, confession helps leaders in three practical ways:

1. *Confession fosters a spirit of humility.* The temptation of pride is constant in leadership, but confessing our sin to God reminds us of our humanity, and our need for God.

John said, “If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:8–10). Through the regular practice of confession, we keep our feet planted humbly on the ground and cultivate a daily dependence on God’s grace and mercy.

2. *Confession keeps the heart soft.* There’s so much pain and hardship in leadership that the heart can grow cold rather quickly — cold toward God and cold toward the people who have hurt us. When we confess our sins to God, we invite God to regularly search our hearts, show us any unclean way, and keep us soft and open to God and the people He has called us to serve.

3. *Confession brings spiritual, emotional and relational healing.* When we confess our sin to God and others, we open our soul to the healing work of the Spirit. James 5:16 says, “Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other so that you may be healed. The prayer of a righteous person is powerful and effective.”

It has often been said, “When you confess your sin to God, you experience forgiveness. When you confess your sin to others, you experience healing.”

Confession is uncomfortable, but it’s good for the heart. In leadership, it’s the spiritual habit of humility that softens the heart and keeps us pure before the Lord.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What difference has confession made in your life?
2. How might confessing sins or faults to a family member or close friend help facilitate healing?
3. How could confession become a more meaningful part of your spiritual disciplines?

Apply

Invite the Holy Spirit to search your heart and show you anything that needs to be confessed and repented of. Don’t rush this process, but allow God to convict and restore you. Then, if there’s somebody you need to meet with personally to confess your faults, schedule a time to do so.

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference**Confession: The Habit of Humility**

Assess: What comes to mind when you hear the word “confession”?

“Confession is the spiritual discipline that allows us to enter into the grace and mercy of God in such a way that we experience forgiveness and healing for the sins and sorrows of the past.” — Richard Foster

Three ways confession helps leaders:

1. *Confession fosters a spirit of* _____.

“If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word is not in us” (1 John 1:8–10).

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Apply

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Study 6

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Fasting: The Habit of Breakthrough

Team Review: How do you feel as you've practiced confession in recent days?

Assess: Why are we so negligent of fasting and prayer in the Church today?

Insights and Ideas

Have you ever felt like you needed a breakthrough, and no matter what you did, nothing seemed to work? Guess what? You're not alone. We all have those moments when we desperately need God to open a door, make the path straight, deliver or heal, or bring a breakthrough in our lives or in the church.

The entire chapter of Isaiah 58 talks about fasting. God describes the kind of fasting that is not honorable to Him. Then, beginning in verse 6, God describes the kind of fasting He has chosen: fasting that reflects justice, freedom and helping the poor.

Isaiah identifies three clear benefits of God-honoring fasting. Isaiah 58:8–9 says, “Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I.” What three benefits do we find in this passage?

1. *Healing.* The first benefit of fasting is healing. Verse 8 says, “Your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear.” There are times when we need a miracle breakthrough in the form of healing, whether for us, a loved one, or a member of our church. Fasting can pave the way for that healing to come.
2. *Righteousness.* Isaiah goes on to say, “Your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard.” When we fast, we draw closer to God, and He will often begin working in the deepest part of our hearts. He will reveal sins, purify our hearts, and do a deeper work of sanctification within us.
3. *Help.* Finally, Isaiah says, “You will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I” (verse 9). When we fast, God often provides help with the needs we are dealing with at that time. In leadership, those needs can be deep and wide. We can be comforted by the fact that God hears our cries, and out of His grace and love, He responds with the help we need.

There will be times as a leader when God will elevate your vision or call you to deeper intimacy with Him. In those moments, God may call you to fast and pray. It's the habit that can open the right doors, release freedom, and break strongholds.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What difference has fasting made in your life?
2. What would it look like to make fasting a regular part of your personal life?
3. How could we make fasting a part of our church life?

Apply

Schedule a fast in the next 30 days. Pinpoint an area where your life, your church, or your community is in need of a breakthrough, and then determine when and how you will fast. Finally, consider when you can schedule a churchwide fast.

Study
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TEAM GUIDE

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Fasting: The Habit of Breakthrough

Assess: Why are we so negligent of fasting and prayer in the Church today?

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“Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the LORD will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the LORD will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I” (Isaiah 58:8–9).

Three benefits of fasting:

1. _____.

“Your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear” (verse 8).

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Apply

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Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Community: The Habit of Relationship

Team Review: What plans did you come up with for personal or corporate fasting and prayer?

Assess: When you hear the word “community,” what comes to mind?

Insights and Ideas

In Genesis 2:18, God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Since the beginning of time, men and women were made for community.

Author John Ortberg put it this way: “No substitute will fill this need in your life for human relationship. Not money. Not achievement. Not busyness. Not books. Not even God himself. Even though this man was in a state of sinless perfection, he was ‘alone.’ And it was ‘not good.’”

Like prayer, worship, gratitude, and fasting, community is an important discipline that fosters spiritual health. What difference does community make in the life of a leader?

1. *Community lightens the leader's load.* Galatians 6:2 says, “Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ.” A lightened load can only happen in the context of community.
2. *Community gives the leader friends.* When we live in community, we find friends to help us stay connected and encouraged.

Author Wayne Cordeiro said, “Friends are rare these days, but it is not because they have diminished in importance. It is because we have increased in speed. Friendships are not made in the blur of life. They are made in the margins.”

Intentional community creates the margin for friendships to form.

3. *Community deepens the leader's growth.* Hebrews 10:24–25 says, “Let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds, not giving up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but encouraging one another — and all the more as you see the Day approaching.” When we connect in community, it becomes a source for spurring growth in love and good deeds.
4. *Community expands the leader's prayer support.* The enemy would like to isolate you and leave you to fight your spiritual battles alone. But as authors Andy Stanley and Bill Willits observe, “Our enemy's most successful strategy is to isolate us so he can attack and destroy us. Sheep are never attacked in herds. Sheep are attacked when they become isolated from the rest of the flock.”

Community removes the isolation and broadens the prayer base every leader needs.

5. *Community sharpens the leader's effectiveness.* Proverbs 27:17 says, “As iron sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another.” Community provides the context for sharing insights, gleaning wisdom, sharpening knowledge, and improving skills. We get better when we take the leadership journey with others by our side.

Rob Ketterling has observed, “Our relational circle has an effect on the direction and speed of our lives.”

If you want to go faster in the right direction, it requires the spiritual discipline of community.

Reflect and Discuss

1. Who are your closest friends?
2. What difference has community made in your life?
3. How can you cultivate deeper community in your life?

Apply

Do a community audit of your life. Do you need more time with friends, family, mentors or coaches? What would it look like to increase your investment in community, and how can you begin this week?

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Community: The Habit of Relationship

Assess: When you hear the word “community,” what comes to mind?

“It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him” (Genesis 2:18).

How community makes a difference for a leader:

1. *Community lightens the leader’s* _____.

“Carry each other’s burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ” (Galatians 6:2).

2. *Community gives the leader* _____.

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Apply

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Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Stewardship: The Habit of Faithfulness

Team Review: What were the results of your community audit?

Assess: How is stewardship a spiritual discipline?

Insights and Idea

We are called to be stewards of all God entrusts to us. Whether money, time, talent, energy, health or influence, we should manage our resources with the interests of our Master — Jesus — in mind.

Perhaps no passage drives this point home more than the Parable of the Bags of Gold. A master calls his servants together and entrusts each of them with his gold — one bag, two bags, and five bags. But when the master returns from his trip, he discovers the two-bag and five-bag servants had doubled the gold, while the single-bag servant had buried it in the ground. To the first two servants, the master said, “Well done, good and faithful servant! You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things. Come and share your master’s happiness!” (Matthew 25:21,23).

But to the third servant, he said, “You wicked, lazy servant! So you knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed? Well then, you should have put my money on deposit with the bankers, so that when I returned I would have received it back with interest” (Matthew 25:26–27).

From this important passage, we discover three key insights about the spiritual discipline of stewardship, and how it relates to leaders:

1. *Stewardship is a trust, not a possession.* A trust is anything God has placed under your care. A possession, on the other hand, is something that belongs to you. Nothing we have as leaders belongs to us; it is simply entrusted to our care. We don’t own it. Instead, we’re called to steward it wisely.
2. *Stewardship is management, not ownership.* In the parable, the master was the owner, and the servants were the stewards. And what do stewards do? Stewards manage the resources of their owner, with the owner’s best interests in mind. Similarly, God entrusts us with resources, not to own for our pleasure, but to manage for His purposes.
3. *Stewardship is faithfulness, not recklessness.* In God’s economy, the way you receive more of anything — money, opportunity, open doors — is to faithfully steward what He has already entrusted to you. If God can’t trust you to steward \$1,000 with His interests in mind, what makes you think He would trust you with more?

Each principle shows us how to practice the spiritual discipline of stewardship in leadership. When we manage resources wisely, we are exercising the habit of faithfulness.

Reflect and Discuss

1. What resources has God entrusted to you? To your department? To our church?
2. Which of the three stewardship principles above most challenge you?
3. If God graded your faithfulness as a steward with each resource He’s entrusted to you, in what areas do you think you would score the highest and lowest?

Apply

Consider all the resources God has entrusted to you. Put together a management plan to handle each resource with the interests of your Heavenly Father in mind. Then begin making adjustments to become the steward God has called you to be.

Spiritual Disciplines for the Leader: 8 Habits That Make a Difference

Stewardship: The Habit of Faithfulness**Assess:** How is stewardship a spiritual discipline?

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How stewardship impacts leadership:

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