



Character of a Leader

LEADERS & STAFF



Character of a Leader

Contents	PAGE
Leader's Guide	2
Interview:	
HOW PURE MUST A CHURCH LEADER BE? <i>interview with Chuck Swindoll</i>	3-4
Assessments:	
WHAT IS MY CHARACTER AS A LEADER? <i>by Dave Goetz</i>	5
AM I AN ETHICAL LEADER? <i>by Archibald Hart</i>	6
CONDUCTING A SPIRITUAL AUDIT <i>by Fred Smith</i>	7
AM I PREPARED FOR DIFFICULTY? <i>by James D. Berkley</i>	8
Case Studies:	
HOPE FOR THE DRY TIMES	9
THE AWKWARD NOMINEE <i>by Larry Osborne</i>	10
EVERYONE NEEDS ACCOUNTABILITY <i>by Bill Hybels</i>	11
Devotionals:	
WHAT MAKES A TRUE LEADER <i>by Warren Wiersbe</i>	12
WHEN NO ONE IS LOOKING <i>by Warren Wiersbe</i>	13
THE DANGER OF SPIRITUAL "VITALITY" <i>by Bill Hybels</i>	14
How To Articles:	
CHARACTER THE OLD-FASHIONED WAY <i>by Fred Smith</i>	15

CHARACTER OF A LEADER

Leader's Guide

How to use "Character of a Leader" by BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS in your regularly scheduled meetings.

BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS is not another program. You don't have to build a program from scratch or take another night to be out. BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS works when you want it to, where you want it to, the way you want it to. It's completely flexible and designed to be easy to use.

You probably already have regularly scheduled meetings with board members or with other committees or groups of leaders. BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS fits easily into what you're already doing. Here's how to use BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS at the beginning of a board meeting or committee meeting:

1. Select a learning tool. In this theme of "Character of a Leader," you'll find multiple types of handouts from which to choose:

- ◆ an interview
- ◆ case studies
- ◆ how-to articles
- ◆ assessment tools
- ◆ devotionals

2. Select a handout. You could select one of the four assessments in this theme: "What Is My Character as a Leader?" (p. 5), "Am I an Ethical Leader?" (p. 6), "Conducting a Spiritual Audit" (p.7), or "Am I Prepared for Difficulty?" (p. 8). From these options, select the one that best fits what you want to accomplish.

3. Photocopy the handout. Let's say you selected "What Is My Character as a Leader?" Photocopy as many copies as you need—you do not need to ask for permission to photocopy any material from BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS (as long as you are using the material in a church or educational setting and are not charging for it).

4. Prepare for the discussion. We recommend you read the Scripture passages and identify key discussion questions. How will you apply the principles to specific decisions your church is making?

5. Lead the discussion. Most handouts can be read within 5 minutes. After you have allowed time for reading, begin the discussion by asking one of the provided questions. Be ready to move the discussion to specific issues your church is facing.

Most BUILDING CHURCH LEADERS handouts can be discussed in 15 or 20 minutes. Your board, committee, or team will still have plenty of time to discuss its agenda.

Need more material, or something on a specific topic? See our website at www.BuildingChurchLeaders.com.

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CHARACTER OF A LEADER

How Pure Must a Leader Be?

Becoming a person of integrity.

Titus 1:5-9

Popular author and educator Chuck Swindoll, who also pastored for many years, discusses the importance of integrity in the life of a church leader:

Is integrity visible? Can you recognize a leader who has it?

Chuck Swindoll: With a person of integrity, you feel something solid. That's the idea in the Hebrew root word—there's something solid, of substance. It isn't a veneer.

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul tells Titus that overseers are to be "blameless," and yet we're all sinners. How pure does a leader need to be?

The words "without reproach" and "blameless" are a sweeping way to start that list. I don't think we can take "blameless" to mean simply "without blame, without sin"; in that sense, I've never met anyone blameless. I'm certainly not. The point is that when we do fail, we say it. Integrity means we don't hide our stumble; we don't act like we didn't.

Of course, there's some point on the spectrum of sin where disqualification for church leadership occurs. When you can sin and live with it, you're in trouble.

To what extent does the person's attitude toward the sin figure in disqualification?

Paul says, "Lest, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified..." I'm convinced certain sins reveal such a breakdown in integrity, the fallen one is disqualified from returning again to high-profile leadership.

I don't think repeated acts, such as sexual immorality or extensive cover-up, are only a matter of sin. I think they reveal a character flaw. People say, "Well, aren't sins forgiven?" Absolutely. I don't think it's a matter of forgiveness anymore; the person lacks the substance required of that office.

The only reason I am able to sit in this room clothed and in my right mind is that I have been absolutely forgiven by Jesus Christ. But for people in high-profile leadership, there are stricter requirements. As James says, we will be judged "more strictly."

But what about King David in the Old Testament?

That incident is the only case in Scripture where a leader guilty of moral misconduct was left in the same high-profile role of leadership. But after Bathsheba, his life turned sour. He was confronted, and he came clean, but he lost on the battlefield, and his family went crazy. He never reached the pinnacle he once had reached. I'm haunted by that.

I'm also haunted by the fact that not another person in Scripture had a high-profile leadership position, sinned sexually, and was put back into that position.

To whom should a leader be accountable?

I have carefully selected a group of three men with whom I meet. There's confidentiality, objectivity, and freedom for all of us. The purpose in meeting is not to dwell only on sin, but also to be friends. It's not for my benefit only, but also for the others. ➤



Chuck Swindoll

"Integrity means we don't hide our stumble; we don't act like we didn't."

How Pure Must a Leader Be? *continued*

I am regularly accountable to my staff and officially to our elder board, though the larger that gets, the more unwieldy it gets. With some board members, there isn't anything I wouldn't tell, and to others I'm not as close.

I'm certainly also accountable to my wife and our grown children. All the Swindolls feel the freedom to address any area or offer any warning. I admit it is occasionally painful to hear, but being in ministry doesn't shield me from straight talk at home; it *requires* it.

In selecting people to hold you accountable, isn't it a temptation to choose people who see things your way?

Absolutely. I love yeses. But I need people like the man who leaned over my desk several years ago. A raw-boned construction guy, he looked right into my eyes and said, "Swindoll, do you have anybody to lean across this desk, look you right in the eye, and say, 'B.S.!'? (only he didn't say 'B.S.')." "

"Yeah," I said, "I've got several."

"Good," he said. "I see our rapid growth, and I get real scared that you can get alone in this office and start believing your own stuff."

I have a very small group of people to whom I voluntarily expose my inner being. With them, a trust has been built over the years.

To Discuss:

1. How can someone determine whether you are a person of integrity?
2. What sins disqualify a person for leadership in our church?
3. How can we as a team of church leaders grow in accountability with each other?
4. Often spiritual sins such as pride and sloth go unchecked in church leaders. What are some ways we can challenge each other in these areas?

CHARACTER OF A LEADER

What Is My Character as a Leader?

8 questions to answer.

1 Timothy 3

In 1 Timothy 3, the apostle Paul gives us the irreducible minimums, the must-have character qualifications for church leadership. But there are other, often-overlooked characteristics that effective church leaders share. Here are eight by which to evaluate your service in the church:

1. **Can I handle information correctly?** Information is power; someone fit for leadership will handle information as if he or she were driving a van of explosives. Jack Hayford, pastor of Church on the Way in Van Nuys, California, writes, "Controlling information is a process fraught with dangers, but it is vitally important to a ministry characterized by wisdom and integrity." Can you be trusted with inside information?
2. **Can I defer judgment?** People who make hair-trigger judgments do not make effective church leaders. Can you stifle your first reactions and make decisions based on solid argument and evidence?
3. **Am I willing to be directed by God?** Leaders need to listen to each other, but more important, they need to be able to hear God's voice. What is God saying through the board's discussion? Are you willing to obey it?
4. **Can I confront appropriately?** Nobody likes conflict. But to lead with integrity, board members must be willing to confront—even one of their own. Unbridled anger, blatant deception, hurtful words—some things demand a loving challenge. The two extremes are either to avoid conflict or to act like the Terminator. Where on the continuum do you fall?
5. **Am I forward-looking?** Church tradition is life-giving; church traditionalism is life-threatening. The comfort of the familiar can also strangle church progress. Do you believe your church's best days are behind it? Or are you bullish on your church's future?
6. **Do I have a "can-do" temperament?** Some people seem to be "blessed" with pessimism. People with a can-do attitude are different. Instead of "Why should we?" as their first response, theirs is "Why not?" How do you respond to new ideas?
7. **Am I willing to own up?** Godly leaders take responsibility for their sins. They are human, and they know it. They're not like the person who said, "The only time I've been wrong is when I once thought I was wrong." When was the last time you said to a colleague, "I blew it; I was wrong"?
8. **Do I have the patience of Job?** In the church, getting things done always takes longer than you think. There's always one more committee or congregational meeting to run your proposal by. Can you handle the "hurry-up-and-wait" process of church life?

—DAVE GOETZ

CHARACTER OF A LEADER

Am I an Ethical Leader?

How to set up safeguards.

1 Corinthians 10:12-13

According to Christian psychologist and author Archibald Hart, leaders must guard themselves against flaws that undermine their ability to lead:

- 1. Accountability.** Those who fall have usually chosen to go it alone. Accountability demands that every leader have a regular meeting with a board or group of peers—to share feelings, reveal temptations, and identify problem areas in personal and spiritual growth.
- 2. Responsibility.** The healthy leader must learn to balance the demands of church leadership with the demands of family and personal life.
- 3. Integrity.** Foremost is the issue of how we use our power. Do we share the power? Do we use it with compassion? Is our use of power merely ego-motivated? Second to power is the issue of honesty. True integrity requires not just uprightness with regard to finances, but also justice in the application of authority, graciousness in what we take credit for, and compassion in how we gain and use privileged information.

Ethics in action

Here is a Leader's Safeguard Checklist that can help any church leader do a daily ethics evaluation.

- ◆ Have I been totally honest in my dealings with people today?
- ◆ Have I acted appropriately toward members of the opposite sex?
- ◆ Have I indulged unsavory thoughts or sexual images, or fostered uncharitable feelings toward others?
- ◆ Have I been above reproach in my financial dealings?
- ◆ Have I fulfilled my obligations without compromise and with a willing spirit?
- ◆ Have I worked too long or too hard without evaluating my true motives?
- ◆ Have I spent sufficient time with my family or friends?
- ◆ Have I taken care of my family's spiritual needs?
- ◆ Have I attended to my emotional and spiritual needs, and integrated them into my daily walk with God?
- ◆ Have I harbored unconfessed sin or unforgiven hurts?

—ARCHIBALD HART

Steps toward change

If your answers to Dr. Hart's questions suggest a need for change, here are five steps to get you started:

1. Confess your sin to God.
2. If appropriate, ask forgiveness from those you've wronged.
3. Determine to avoid that pitfall next time out; take evasive action.
4. Ask God for spiritual strength to overcome your weakness.
5. Share your need with a trusted friend and become accountable to him or her.

CHARACTER OF A LEADER

Conducting a Spiritual Audit

12 questions to keep your personal accounts in order.

2 Corinthians 13:5; Psalm 26:2

The CEO of a major firm once confessed to me, "I have a banker to keep me solvent, a lawyer to keep me legal, and a doctor to keep me healthy, but I have no one to help assess my spiritual condition." I had never thought about such a thing: a "spiritual audit." Since that time, I have accumulated twelve questions that I regularly ask myself:

- 1. Am I content with who I am becoming?** Every day I get one day closer to who I will ultimately be. Am I satisfied with who I will be?
- 2. Am I becoming less religious and more spiritual?** The Pharisees were religious; Christ is spiritual. After years of involvement in organized religion, I often feel the shallowness of the experience, the restriction of the rules, and hunger for something truly spiritual in a relation with Christ.
- 3. Does my family recognize the authenticity of my spirituality?** They see me whole. I must believe that if I am growing spiritually, my family will recognize it.
- 4. Do I have a "flow-through" philosophy?** Scripture says, "He that believeth in me, out of his innermost parts will flow rivers of living water." The freshness is in the flow. If I have been blessed with leadership, that blessing should flow out of my life.
- 5. Do I have a quiet center to my life?** Every Christian should have a quiet center that nothing can disturb. François Fenelon said, "Peace is what God wants for you no matter what is happening."
- 6. Have I defined my unique ministry?** Do I know what I can do effectively? The need is always bigger than any person can satisfy, and so my call is simply to handle the part of the need that is mine to do.
- 7. Is my prayer life improving?** I cannot evaluate when I am a "man of prayer," but I can perceive progress if I am making it. One test is: Do my decisions have prayer as an integral part?
- 8. Have I maintained genuine awe of God?** Awe overwhelms; it inspires worship.
- 9. Is my humility genuine?** Nothing is so arrogant as false humility. Two definitions of humility I like: "Humility is accepting your strength with gratitude," and "Humility is not denying the power that you have but admitting the power comes through you, not from you."
- 10. Is my spiritual feeding the right diet for me?** I've stopped calling my reading time "a devotion." I call it "a feeding time," for it is when my soul gets fed.
- 11. Is obedience in small matters built into my reflexes?** Do I try to bargain with God or rationalize with him? Obedience largely determines my relation with Christ following new birth.
- 12. Do I have joy?** Joy is promised to me. If the relation to Christ is right, I will have it.

—FRED SMITH

CHARACTER OF A LEADER

Am I Prepared for Difficulty?

4 character traits for tough times.

Ephesians 5:11-14

Few people can summon character in crisis that wasn't added layer upon layer throughout the rest of life. What makes up the character, built during the fat years, that will carry through the lean years?

1. Openness. The ability to take criticism or absorb negative opinions not only helps avoid touchy situations but helps mend the breach caused by mistakes.

Only the person with something to hide is discovered; only one with a secret is exposed. Those who bury their mistakes often find they are dug up later—dirty, musty, and lie-encrusted. Paul wrote the Ephesians, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. . . . Everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible" (5:11, 13-14). That character trait, practiced in good times, becomes even more valuable in times of trouble.

2. Discernment. The wisdom to know when to battle and when to give way, the discernment to know what is truly important and what can slide, can help leaders avoid mistakes or get through the ones they make.

Following a ministry mistake, various courses of action present themselves, often at a dizzying pace. *Do I tell Martha and gain her backing, or might she blackball me? What I did wasn't all that dumb, and I might be able to convince people to see my side; should I defend it? Or should I just take the rap?* The wisdom to know the right choices—even to know whom to ask to help decide them—cannot be purchased; it must be developed over years of practice.

3. Honesty. Rationalizing is one of the simplest games in town. When we become regular players, we tend to rely on those skills at the time of a mistake. And then we are in deep trouble.

Honesty is still the best policy. What is not made clear through direct statements will eventually be dispersed (and likely distorted) by the church gossip channels. Then Murphy's Law kicks in: The more harmful the idea, the more apt it is to be believed.

4. Integrity. Wrong alternatives abound in the aftermath of a mistake—cover-ups, finger pointing, run-from-it-all flight. Yet after our wrong is the time to be downright upright. Here lies the reason for searing these character traits into one's soul before the disaster. The one who makes integrity a habit will be able to respond with upright actions, even in the crunch.

—JAMES D. BERKLEY

To Discuss

1. What are some common mistakes you've seen leaders make during times of crisis?
2. What are some crises we have weathered as a church? What lessons could we learn from those experiences?
3. How is character built into our souls?
4. How does our church assess the character of potential leaders?

Hope for the Dry Times

Can you still lead when you don't feel spiritual?

Romans 12:15-16

The Case *What's wrong with me? Steve asked himself. Why can't I get with the program?*

He stole a glance at Greg, praying earnestly from the other side of the table. *Why can't I be that passionate? That sincere?*

Steve had felt the desert in his soul for several months, and it seemed to be spreading. Inside, he felt sand and dust and despair.

I should stop playing games—just get up and walk out of here. I can't be a leader when I'm so spiritually dry. I'm a hypocrite.

Steve stayed quiet throughout the meeting. Only one of the other board members noticed that and guessed that something was wrong with Steve.

What Would You Do?

- ◆ If you were Steve, what would you do? Would you talk with someone else on the board? With the pastor? With a spouse or friend? Why or why not?
- ◆ If you had noticed Steve's quietness and quick departure, would you have called him? Why or why not?
- ◆ If you were Steve, what would you most want another person to do for you?

What Happened

When the meeting adjourned, Steve headed for the church parking lot. But before he reached the door, he felt a hand on his shoulder. It was Greg.

"Hey, Steve. Want to go for coffee?"

"Uh, yeah. I guess so. It's still fairly early."

When they talked, Steve discovered Greg had some internal doubts himself. Before the evening was done, Steve felt at ease enough to admit a bit of his own frustrations—not everything, but it was a start. Greg and Steve even prayed together for each other. Later, as he drove into the driveway, Steve felt somehow refreshed. And his soul felt a little less parched.

To Discuss

1. How spiritual does a person need to be to be a church leader?
2. How do you find rain in seasons of spiritual drought?
3. What is the role of weakness in our spiritual development?
4. How much weight should we give our feelings about our spiritual condition?

Case Study

The Awkward Nominee

When should leaders speak up?

Acts 15:36-40

The Case A godly man with a totally different philosophy of leadership than the board's had been put forward by numerous members of the congregation. When our nominating committee came to his name, there was an uncomfortable silence. He had served the church faithfully in the past, yet everyone knew he wouldn't fit the leadership team. The problems would be philosophical, not spiritual, but problems nonetheless. I wondered, *Should I speak up?*

- What Would You Do?**
- ◆ Would you have the courage to speak up in this situation?
 - ◆ If the man with the different philosophy of leadership was a friend of yours, would you defend him? Why or why not?
 - ◆ What prevents us from being honest in such situations?

What Happened After what seemed like an eternity, I swallowed hard and spoke up: "I don't think we should have him run; we'll end up spending all our meetings going around in circles."

Once that was on the table, a couple of others were quick to agree. After a brief discussion, we came to a unanimous consensus to nominate someone else. It was obvious that others felt as strongly as I did, but no one had said a word until I broke the ice. Our consensus, a wise one, would have remained unspoken and unacted upon.

—LARRY OSBORNE

- To Discuss**
1. What do you think the phrase "the problems would be philosophical" means?
 2. What kinds of "philosophical differences" would be worth asking about?
 3. Are philosophical differences important enough not to nominate someone for a leadership position in the church?
 4. Are there other, perhaps unspoken qualifications for leadership in our church other than just biblical character? What are they?

Everyone Needs Accountability

Why the small things matter.

Galatians 2:11-14

The Case One evening I stopped by the church just to encourage those who were there rehearsing for the spring musical. I didn't intend to stay long, so I parked my car next to the entrance. After a few minutes, I ran back to my car and drove home.

The next morning I found a note in my office mailbox. It read: "A small thing, but Tuesday night when you came to rehearsal, you parked in the 'No Parking' area. A reaction from one of my crew (who did not recognize you until after you got out of the car) was, 'There's another jerk parking in the 'No Parking' area!' We try hard not to allow people—even workers—to park anywhere other than the parking lots. I would appreciate your cooperation."

It was signed by a member of our maintenance staff.

What Would You Do?

- ◆ If this happened to you, would you dismiss the note, stop talking to the maintenance person, or make an angry visit to the maintenance person?
- ◆ If you were the maintenance person, would you have the courage to point this out to the pastor? Could you do it in the same spirit?

What Happened

I'm sorry to report this staff member is no longer with us. He was late coming back from lunch the next day, and we had to let him go. You have to draw the line somewhere....

No, I'm kidding. Actually he's still very much with us, and his stock went up in my book because he had the courage to write me about what could have been a slippage in my character.

And he was right on the mark. As I drove up that night, I had a thought, I shouldn't park here, but after all, I am the pastor. That translates: I'm an exception to the rules. But that employee wouldn't allow me to sneak down the road labeled "I'm an exception."

I'm not the exception to church rules, nor am I the exception to sexual rules or financial rules or any of God's rules. As a leader, I am not an exception; I'm to be the *example*. According to Scripture, I am to live in such a way that I can say, "Follow me. Park where I park. Live as I live."

That's why we all need people like my staff member to hold us accountable in even small matters. Because when we keep the minor matters in line, we don't stumble over the larger ones. Just when I was starting to think, I'm an exception, somebody on our staff cared enough to say, "*Don't do it, Bill, not even in one small area.*" That's love.

—BILL HYBELS

To Discuss

1. In what areas do we as church leaders need accountability?
2. How does our church encourage or discourage accountability?
3. What kinds of things ruin accountability—make it overdone or done poorly?
4. What steps would help us to keep each other faithful to Christ?

What Makes a True Leader

Servant leadership means putting first things first.

Luke 22:25-27

Read *"The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves. For who is greater, the one who is at the table or the one who serves? Is it not the one who is at the table? But I am among you as one who serves" (Luke 22:25-27).*

Comprehend Ever since Satan declared himself independent of God's authority, there have been two philosophies of life: submission or assertion. Modern bestsellers exhort us to "take care of number one" and even to use intimidation to accomplish this. Among Christians who ought to know better, "Love yourself" has replaced "Deny yourself." In the name of freedom, we are preaching and practicing anarchy. We are first servants, then rulers. No person who is not under authority has a right to exercise authority. We can never serve by asserting ourselves; it is only by submitting ourselves.

But submission is not subjugation. Subjugation turns a person into a thing, destroys individuality, and removes all liberty. Submission makes a person become more of what God wants him to be; it brings out individuality; it gives him the freedom to accomplish all that God has for his life and ministry. Subjugation is weakness; it is the refuge of those who are afraid of maturity. Submission is strength; it is the first step toward true maturity and ministry.

Discerning believers can detect the note of authority in the life of a worker who is himself or herself under authority, and they are not afraid to follow this person.

—WARREN WIERSBE

- To Discuss**
1. Church leadership often requires making decisions that others disagree with. How do you reconcile the role of being a leader with being submissive?
 2. What is the basis of authority for a church leader?
 3. What are some character qualities of a submissive leader?
 4. What are some current illustrations of submissive leadership in our church?

When No One Is Looking

Why character can't be ignored.

Daniel 1:8

Read *But Daniel resolved not to defile himself with the royal food and wine, and he asked the chief official for permission not to defile himself this way (Dan. 1:8).*

Comprehend God makes a worker, then he uses that worker to make a work. No matter what kind of ministry God gives to us, we can never give to others what we do not have ourselves. To ignore character is to abandon the foundation of ministry.

This explains why God spends so much time with his servants. He took thirteen years to prepare Joseph to become second-in-command in Egypt. He invested eighty years in his preparation of Moses. Even the learned Saul of Tarsus had to spend three years in post-graduate work in Arabia before God thrust him out as Paul the Apostle. The biographies and autobiographies of great Christian men and women reveal that God first builds Christian character in his servants, and then through them builds a ministry.

Apart from character, ministry is only religious activity or, even worse, religious business. The Pharisees called what they did ministry, but Jesus called it hypocrisy. He knew that the Pharisees were more concerned about reputation than character, that the praises of men interested them more than the approval of God.

Someone asked financier J. P. Morgan what the best collateral was a customer could give him. Morgan replied, "Character."

That reminds me of another Morgan: G. Campbell Morgan was riding with D. L. Moody at Northfield when suddenly Moody asked, "What is character, anyway?"

Morgan knew that the evangelist wanted to answer his own question, so he waited. "Character," said Moody, "is what a man is in the dark."

When the famous English preacher Charles Spurgeon was told that someone wanted to write a book about his life, he replied, "You may write my life in the skies—I have nothing to hide!"

Perhaps the key word is integrity. Jesus warned us that we cannot serve two masters, and James agreed when he wrote, "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways" (1:8). The opposite of integrity is duplicity. "The voice is the voice of Jacob, but the hands are the hands of Esau" (Gen. 27:22b). No one can minister and masquerade successfully at the same time—at least not for very long. No amount of reputation can substitute for character.

—WARREN WIERSBE

- To Discuss**
1. Why is integrity so important for a church leader?
 2. How can ministry become "religious activity"?
 3. In what subtle ways can church leaders become too worried about their reputation?
 4. How does a leader maintain his or her integrity?

The Danger of Spiritual "Vitality"

Keeping a realistic perspective on the Christian life.

2 Timothy 4:9-16

Read *Do your best to come to me soon, for Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica. Crescens has gone to Galatia, and Titus to Dalmatia. Only Luke is with me.... At my first defense, no one came to my support, but everyone deserted me (2 Tim. 4:9-16).*

Comprehend Recently someone asked me, "How can Christian leaders stay spiritually vital?" I said, "I don't worry about that." He looked surprised, even shocked. "To me, there's an issue even bigger than staying spiritually vital," I explained. "The important thing is to stay spiritually authentic." There's a difference. Usually when I hear people talk about staying spiritually vital, they're talking about staying pumped, being spiritually up, feeling strong, keeping the glow. But that's only part of the spiritual life. To expect to be spiritually high all the time is like expecting to romance your spouse every evening. It just isn't realistic. In the Christian life, there's an ebb and flow. Sometimes you feel exalted and glorious; other times you feel weighed down or simply quiet. Some days you feel despairing, other days resilient and joyful. The strong, vital times come, too, but they're not the constant. The rub comes when we expect to be buoyant constantly. In some churches each week has to be a grand and glorious spiritual experience, higher and stronger than the last. But then comes a day when, to be truthful, we're spiritually wrung out. There's not a drop of vitality in us. At that moment we are greatly tempted: Will we be honest about it, or will we mask it because we're supposed to be "spiritually vital"? Being honest, being true to our actual spiritual condition, is what I mean by being spiritually authentic. It's not easy. But when you're authentic, you'll grow—and so will those you lead.

—BILL HYBELS

- To Discuss**
1. Why do people feel pressured to be "up" spiritually most of the time?
 2. To whom should we reveal the condition of our spiritual life?
 3. What are some steps to becoming more spiritually honest with each other?
 4. How can the concern about staying "spiritually vital" actually be an indicator of our self-absorption?

CHARACTER OF A LEADER

Character the Old-Fashioned Way

Six ways to grow as a Christian leader.

1 Timothy 4:15-16

Our goal on earth is to grow into the likeness of Christ, the one who gave himself for others. Here are six ways to continue to grow as a person:

1. Focus on self-development, not self-fulfillment. The motive is the difference. Self-fulfillment means doing what I enjoy most and will receive the most strokes for doing. Self-development means doing what I am talented and uniquely fit to do, and that becomes my responsibility. Self-fulfillment thinks of how something serves me. Self-development thinks of how something helps me to serve others.

2. Grow through association. It is not always comfortable, but it is always profitable, to associate with people larger than yourself. It is necessary to schedule associations that keep you developing.

3. Adopt a personal creed. Some years ago I was reading research about corporations that had adopted creeds. It was surprising how much more profitable, progressive, and permanent these organizations were, compared to ones that operated without a stated creed.

A creed is personal and will vary from individual to individual (and group to group). My creed also spells out what I will not do. Several years ago I wrote, "I will not sacrifice these things for business success: (1) self-respect, (2) health, (3) family, and (4) relation with God."

4. Build the habit of continual learning. Harvey Penick, the dean of golf pros, wrote the best-seller *Harvey Penick's Little Red Book*. He taught Ben Crenshaw, Tom Kite, Kathy Wentworth, Mickey Wright, among other pros. Yet Penick is self-taught. He carried a little red book in his pocket, and whenever he observed something about golf, he wrote it down. A continual learner doesn't learn to be thought of as brilliant—that's drifting back to self-fulfillment. A continual learner lets nothing pass him or her without absorbing it.

5. Guide learning with major themes. I put a priority on my major themes. If I have an opportunity to go to two or three different meetings, I choose the one in line with my priority. Knowing your themes is a healthy way to channel your energy.

6. Move from duty to delight. Many people approach self-development as one more thing they ought to do, whether they want to or not. Not doing it makes them feel guilty. The secret of growing for a lifetime is to move from seeing self-development as a burden to seeing it as a joy—the way to fulfill responsibility, the path of worthwhile accomplishment.

—FRED SMITH

To Discuss

1. How does our church encourage its leaders to grow personally?
2. What are the consequences of a church leadership team that has stopped growing in the area of spirituality and leadership?
3. What is one thing our church could do to foster leadership development among staff and lay leaders?