

Practicing Greatness

December 2012 – Got a question for you. Just for you.

Do you aspire to be a great spiritual leader?

Now before you answer the question, allow me to bring some context to the question. No, we're not talking about people with an oversized ego in search of a spotlight and a stage. We're talking about people with a soul-resonating passion to leverage all that has been entrusted to them for maximum Kingdom impact. (The kind of greatness to which Christ called His followers).

If you count yourself among those who camp out in category #2, I've got some things for you to think about. A few things that will elevate your game. Read on.

A few years ago, I was introduced to an author and a book. The author is Reggie McNeal. And the book is *Practicing Greatness*. I'm currently on my sixth re-read. I guess you can say I'm a fan.

Long story short, *Practicing Greatness* is a nest egg of insights and inputs about the pathway to leadership greatness. Consider it a trustworthy MapQuest to get you where you are today to where you want to be tomorrow.

Essentially, with the wisdom of a field-tested leader, McNeal calls out seven spiritual practices that mark the trail to leadership greatness: self-awareness, self-management, self-development, mission, decision making, belonging, and aloneness.

Allow me to trot out a few of his insights. Give you a chance to kick the tires a bit. And given the time of year, it may serve as a stocking-stuffer for someone who hangs out in the space of your leadership influence.

- *Leaders who have an appropriate view of self (humility), combined with the capacity to help others (service), don't just show up in the nick of time. They are crafted over time. They practice being great. Extraordinary character and exceptional competence develop over time. Leaders must make countless good choices and right calls to fashion greatness.*
- *Genuinely great spiritual leaders do not do what they do for themselves or even as a way to become recognized as great leaders. The end game for spiritual leaders is about expanding the kingdom of God.*

- *Great leaders, on the other hand, tell you what they are intending to accomplish, the mission they are on. “I am working to change _____” or “I am investing my life in _____ in order to _____.” These leaders speak in terms of contribution, of significance, of changing the world. They don’t work for an organization; the organization works for them. Their job, their role, their current assignment is the venue or platform from which they pursue their life mission. No matter what job they take or role they fill, they redefine the position to fit their mission, not the other way around. They do not hammer their mission into fitting their work assignment. Just the opposite is true. The life mission of great leaders determines the content of their days, of their work, of their energies and talents.*
- *Great spiritual leaders understand that their mission is not something they invent. Rather, they realize that their life mission is something they discover. They believe God is the One who has determined their life assignment. He has gone to great efforts at sowing clues in the leader’s life to help foster this discovery process. Talent, passion, experiences, successes, personality traits, opportunities—all provide helpful hints in this discovery process. Great leaders discern a divine pattern for an intentional path to significance and fulfillment. These gifts and clues are interrelated. Together they form a picture of the leader’s mission—the one that guides his life’s efforts, much the way an image on the box lid of a jigsaw puzzle helps the puzzle worker know what to look for and see how the pieces of the puzzle fit together.*
- *Your best shot at making your greatest contribution in the world is for you to get better at what you are already good at.*
- *The greatest leaders are those liberated by purpose. They know why they are on the planet, and they are pursuing their life mission with determined enthusiasm. They have gained permission not just to lead; they also possess the freedom to live, really live. Knowing their mission and ordering their life and ministry around it grants these leaders certain key permissions.*
- *Great spiritual leaders bless people. Depending on their sphere of influence, the blessing may extend to those in their organization, their spiritual tribe, a region, an entire nation, the whole human race—whoever populates their leadership constellation. Great spiritual leaders are not just given to great issues; they are given to people. In the end, this capacity to bless is the deciding category that elevates them to greatness in spiritual leadership. The spiritual enterprise is about enhancing peoples’ lives. God is in the people business.*

So let me ask you once more: Do you aspire to be a great spiritual leader?

The job market is wide open.

And the world is waiting.