LEAD: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in Church

One of my mentors in the early days of ministry was Prof Howard Hendricks. One of his most memorable sayings was: The greatest crisis in the world today is a crisis of leadership, and the greatest crisis of leadership is a crisis of character. This formidable crisis of leadership is the theme of Paul David Tripp's book Lead: 12 Gospel Principles for Leadership in the Church. In his compelling book, he argues convincingly that behind every pastoral failure is a lack of strong leadership community. From there, as the book subtitle suggests, he unpacks twelve gospel-based principles to address this leadership crisis.

While written to those who serve in vocational ministry, the application to all spheres of leadership is easy (and important) to make. Of the many golden nuggets to be found in these pages is the lengthy list that provides a heart check-up for all those who are called to leadership (see Location: 1226).

Check out these Book Notes to get a closer look at a perspective of leadership that is both timely and needed.

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Title: LEAD: 12 Principles of Leadership In Church

Author: Paul David Tripp

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Book Description:
The church is experiencing a leadership crisis.

What can we do to prevent pastors from leaving the ministry?

For every celebrity pastor exiting the ministry in the spotlight, there are many more lesser-known pastors leaving in the shadows. Pastor and best-selling author Paul David Tripp argues that lurking behind every pastoral failure is the lack of a strong leadership community. Tripp draws on his decades of ministry experience to give churches twelve gospel principles necessary to combat this leadership crisis. Each of these principles, built upon characteristics such as humility, dependency, and accountability, will enable new and experienced leaders alike to focus their attention on the ultimate leadership model: the gospel.

Book Quotes:
You see, the gospel is not just a set of historical facts. It is that, for sure. It is rooted in divine acts of intervention and substitution that if not real and historical would rob the gospel of its reliability, promise, and power. But the gospel is not just a set of historical facts; it is also a collection of present redemptive realities. Certain things are true now, and are true of every believer, because of what God historically did and is presently doing on their behalf. There is more. The gospel is a living identity for all who believe. We have become something in Christ, something that is glorious and new and filled with new potential. Good gospel

theology doesn't just define for you who God is and what he has done; it also redefines who you are as his child. LOCATION: 158

Whether they are aware of it or not, every human being is a meaning maker, a theologian, a philosopher, or an anthropologist, always taking things apart to understand what they mean. LOCATION: 167

I write always as a pastor. This may seem strange to you, but I write with a congregation in view in my mind's eye. I write with love for the people in view. I write with a passion for them to know the full depth and breadth of what they have been given in the amazing grace and boundless love of Jesus. And I know that because the work of Jesus on our behalf is so completely sufficient, I can be honest. There is no damage that sin has done or will do that hasn't been addressed by his person, work, promises, and presence. I write convinced that we, the community of believers, can be the most honest community on earth because there is nothing that could be known, revealed, or exposed about us that hasn't been covered by Christ's atoning work. LOCATION: 176

We have all been witnesses to the fall of well-known pastors with a huge amount of influence and notoriety, but for every public falling, there are hundreds of unknown pastors who have lapsed, have left both their leadership and their church in crisis, or are spiritual shells of the pastors they once were. We have talked about the idolatry of celebrity, about pastoral immorality, and about seduction of power, but I am writing this book because, very often, behind the failure of a pastor is a weak and failed leadership community. We don't have just a pastoral crisis; I am convinced from conversation after conversation with pastors and their leadership that we have a leadership crisis. LOCATION: 218

It is with the same assurance Jesus gave to the disciples that I write this book. Because of the completeness of Christ's authority, the inescapability of his presence and the surety of his promises, we don't have to be afraid of examining our weaknesses and failure. The gospel of his presence, power, and grace frees us from the burden of minimizing or denying reality. The gospel of his presence, power, and grace welcomes us to be the most honest community on earth. We are not cemented to our track record. We are not left to our small bag of personal resources. Because he is his best gift to us, our potential is great and change is possible. And so it is the gospel of his presence, power, and grace that gives me the courage and hope to write about a very important place where change needs to take place. May the same grace give you an open heart as you read. LOCATION: 300

I want to suggest that if you really do want your relationships to be worthy of the gospel you received, then you will value humility, gentleness, patience, forbearing love, and peace, and if you value these gospel characteristics, you will ask yourself, "What would my leadership community look like if we truly valued these things more than positions, power, achievement, acclaim, or success?" Let me answer this question by suggesting six characteristics that will mark out a leadership community formed by gospel values. LOCATION: 328

1. **Humility.** Humility means that each leader's relationship to other leaders is characterized by an acknowledgment that he deserves none of the recognition, power, or influence that his position affords him. LOCATION: 333

Humility means you love serving more than you crave leading. It means owning your inability rather than boasting in your abilities. It means always being committed to listen and learn. Humility means seeing fellow leaders not so much as serving your success but serving the one who called each of you. It means being more excited about your fellow leaders' commitment to Christ than you are about their loyalty to you. It's about fearing the power of position rather than craving it. It's about being more motivated to serve than to be seen. LOCATION: 335

2. **Dependency.** Dependency means living, as a leader, as if I really do believe that my walk with God is a community project. LOCATION: 341

Dependency means no longer being afraid of exposure, because I really do believe that there is nothing that could be known, exposed, or revealed about me that has not already been addressed by the person and work of Jesus. It means living as if I really do believe that isolated, individualized, independent Christianity never produces good fruit. It means acknowledging that every leader needs to be led and every pastor needs to be pastored. Dependency means acknowledging theological understanding, biblical literacy, ministry gifts, and ministry experience and success do not mean that I no longer need the essential sanctifying ministry of the body of Christ. It means confessing that as long as sin remains in me, and that apart from restraining grace and the rescuing ministry of those around me, I continue to be a danger to myself. LOCATION: 345

3. **Prepared Spontaneity.** If you acknowledge the presence and the seducing and deceiving power of remaining sin, you will also acknowledge that everyone in your leadership community is still susceptible to temptation and is still at risk. LOCATION: 350

You live with the knowledge that everyone in your leadership community is still in need of rescuing and sanctifying grace. LOCATION: 353

Prepared spontaneity means that because you have taken seriously what the gospel says about ongoing spiritual battles in the heart of every leader, you have prepared yourself to deal with the sin that God exposes, even though you don't know beforehand what he will, in grace, expose. LOCATION: 356

4. **Inspection.** Inspection means that we invite people to step over the normal boundaries of leadership relationships to look into our lives to help us see things that we would not see on our own. LOCATION: 358

5. **Protection.** We all sin, but we don't all sin the same. For reasons of history, experience, gift, biology, and a host of other things, we aren't equally tempted by the same things. You may be susceptible to the temptations of power, while someone else may be susceptible to the temptations of pleasure, while I may be tempted by the lure of material things. This understanding of the variegated seductions of sin and the different way they impact each one of us is vital to the long-term health and gospel fruitfulness of every local church leadership community. LOCATION: 364

The words of Hebrews 13:17 speak with a motivational clarity: "Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they are keeping watch over your souls, as those who will have to give an account." Leaders are responsible to protect the souls of those who are under their care. LOCATION: 371

6. **Restoration.** One of the most beautiful, hopeful, and encouraging gospel themes that courses its way through Scripture is the theme of fresh starts and new beginnings. Fresh starts and new beginnings are a hallmark of the rescuing, forgiving, restoring, and transforming power of God's grace. LOCATION: 383

Grace means we are not held to our worst moment or cursed by our worst decision. Grace means out of the ashes of sin, leaders can rise because the Savior has resurrection power. LOCATION: 392

So this book is shaped by twelve leadership-community gospel principles. These principles are deeply relational because the gospel is. Remember that the gospel of God's grace teaches us that lasting change of heart and hands always takes place in the context of relationship, first with God and then with the people of God. LOCATION: 417

Every leader leads while being in desperate personal need of the full resources of God's grace. This inescapable reality must be a major influence on the way those in the leadership community see themselves,

conduct themselves, and do the work to which God has called them. LOCATION: 427

In this chapter I want to consider how the good thing—achievement—can become a bad thing for leadership because it has become a ruling thing. LOCATION: 432

So it must be said that for me, and I'm sure for you, ambition is a spiritual battleground, and it must also be said that in the leadership community of the church, ambition for God's glory and his kingdom easily and subtly morphs into something else. LOCATION: 448

Gospel-oriented achievement is a beautiful thing, but the desire to achieve becomes dangerous when it rises to rule the hearts of the leadership community. LOCATION: 481

1. Achievement becomes dangerous when it dominates the leadership community. LOCATION: 483

We cannot allow ourselves to migrate from being pastor and ministry leaders to being the corporate board of a religious enterprise. We cannot allow ourselves to move from being humble, approachable gospel servants to being rather proud and not-so-approachable institutional achievers. LOCATION: 489

2. Achievement becomes dangerous when it controls our definition of leaders. LOCATION: 504

3. Achievement becomes dangerous when it forms our view of success and failure. LOCATION: 522

True failure is always a character issue. It is rooted in laziness, pride, lack of discipline, self-excusing, failure to plan well, lack of joy in labor, and failure to persevere during hardship. Failure is not first a matter of results; failure is always first a matter of the heart. It's failure when I have not invested my God-given time, energy, and gifts in the work God has called me to do. LOCATION: 528

4. Achievement becomes dangerous when it silences honest leader communication. LOCATION: 540

5. Achievement becomes dangerous when it causes leaders to view disciples as consumers. LOCATION: 561

Our ministry passion and energies should be focused on doing everything we can to lead the people entrusted into our care into a deeper love for and service to Jesus so that everything we do serves this disciple-making purpose. LOCATION: 571

6. Achievement becomes dangerous when it tempts us to see people as obstacles. LOCATION: 585

7. Achievement becomes dangerous when it causes leaders to take credit for what they never could have produced on their own. LOCATION: 602

If you take credit as a leader instead of assigning credit to the one who sent you and who alone produces fruit out of your labors, you will praise less, pray less, and plan more. Leadership communities are in trouble when they assign more power to their planning than to their prayer. LOCATION: 612

8. Achievement is dangerous when it becomes the principal lens of leader self-evaluation. LOCATION: 628

A life of long-term ministry productivity is always the result of the condition of the leader's heart. Godly leaders, because of humility of heart combined with a robust faith in the power of God's grace and the reliability of his promises, are able to weather the storms, defeats, and disappointments that are the inescapable experience of every leader's life. Because of their humility they become increasingly thankful for, open to, and dependent on fellow leaders. And because of their acknowledgment of their need for God's grace, they don't take credit for what only God can bring about. LOCATION: 634

9. Achievement becomes dangerous when it tempts us to replace prayer with planning. LOCATION: 643

The gospel is profoundly more than the grace of past rescue and future hope. It is both of these and much more. The gospel provides a lens for us to look at and understand everything that we deal with in church and ministry leadership while also providing guidance as to how we should do everything we are called to as leaders in Christ's church. LOCATION: 716

If we are called to gospel mission, we must, as leaders, be a gospel-drenched, gospel-functioning community. LOCATION: 718

One of the sure signs of a spiritually healthy leadership community is the degree to which heartfelt, humble, honest confession is not only possible but a regular ingredient of the life and work of that community. Do the members of your community fear being honest about their sin, weaknesses, and failures, and, if so, what changes do you need to make? LOCATION: 781

The long-term health and gospel productivity of a church or ministry leadership community are directly related to the humility of the members of that community. LOCATION: 792

It is vital for every leader to recognize that the call to patience is a significant and inescapable aspect of the call to ministry. Impatience in a leadership community will again and again put that community in the way of, rather than being part of, what God is doing in their lives and in the lives of those they have been called to lead. As leaders, we are called to wait because we live in a fallen world where things just don't function in the way God intended. The brokenness of the world surely interrupts the best of our plans. We are called to wait because we lead imperfect people who don't always listen well, think well, choose well, or follow well. We are required to be patient because we are not sovereign. LOCATION: 825

And we are called to wait because waiting is one of God's most regular tools of maturing grace. From the perspective of the gospel, waiting is never just about getting what you've been waiting for but, more importantly, about the good changes in you that God produces through the wait. Willingness to wait with patient hearts is a clear sign that your leadership community has been and is being shaped by the gospel. LOCATION: 832

I am afraid that in the face of the wandering, failure, or fall of a ministry leader, many of our ministry communities are much more conditioned to get rid of such a leader than to work toward his restoration. Restoration should not be confused with being soft on sin. Gospel restoration never minimizes sin. Gospel restoration never values efficiency over character. Gospel restoration never compromises in the face of position and power. Gospel restoration never puts the needs of the institution over the heart of the person. Gospel restoration never compromises God's ordained qualifications for ministry leadership. LOCATION: 935

In reality, when God gives you ministry and leadership gifts, he is calling you to be willing to suffer. Because of your gifts you will suffer a kind and severity of temptation that others don't face. Because of the public nature of your gifts, you will suffer dangerous adulation and harsh criticism. The demands of your ministry life will tempt you to neglect your personal devotional life. The attractiveness of public ministry will tempt you to neglect the private ministry of marriage, family, and friendship. Your gifts will tempt you to be demanding, irritable, and impatient with people of lesser gifts or who happen to be in the way of what you want. You will be tempted to confuse your giftedness with your level of spiritual maturity. Yes, it is true: your gifts mean you have been called to suffer for the sake of the giver and what he intends to do through you (see 2 Cor. 1:3–11). LOCATION: 1030

Shalom is everything in its right place, doing what it was meant to do, in the way God intended it to be done. LOCATION: 1161

What does a heart in balance look like in the life of a leader? Here is a suggested list. (I will resist the cumbersome "his or her"—both here and throughout the book. All of these apply to both men and women leaders.)

- His leadership is shaped by faith, not fear.
- He leads out of humility and neediness, not pride and self-reliance.
- He is uncomfortable with a disharmony between his public ministry persona and his private conduct.
- He is quick to give grace because he knows how much he needs that same grace.
- He does not love power and position more than he loves God and the people he has called him to serve.
- He stewards the gifts of others rather than use those gifts to gain position and control for himself.
- He is as excited about and committed to the private pastoring of his family as he is to his public leadership work.
- He resists being defensive, and is humble and approachable toward others and quick to confess sin.
- He does not take credit for things he could never produce on his own without the sovereignty and grace of God and in partnership with others.
- He does not use ministry calling and position to build a kingdom of his own.
- He cares more about living and leading in a way that pleases God than about gaining the praise of those around him.
- He argues for what is right but in a way that is gracious, patient, and understanding.
- He does not look for his identity in his role as leader but rests in his identity in Christ.
- He leaves the people around his feeling loved and nurtured, even in places where ministry is hard and the leadership community seems divided.
- He never talks in negative ways outside the leadership community about those he has been called to partner with in ministry.
- His leadership is more pastorally driven than politically driven.
- He finds greater joy in the gospel than in the success of any ministry institution.
- He has such a rest in God's wise and loving control that he does not need to be in control.
- He always deals with diversity in a way that promotes unity.
- He does not despise weakness but fears delusions of independent strength.
- He leads out of a generous heart, more ready to give and to serve than he is to demand and to get.
- His leadership is marked more by love than by power.
- He is sympathetic, understanding, patient, and forgiving.
- He is always committed to reconciliation and restoration, no matter how costly.
- There isn't a constant tension in his life between ministry and family.
- He sees his physical body as an instrument of his calling, and because he does, he gives it proper attention and care.
- He leads out of a heart that has its appetites and desires under control.
- He is not more irritated by the sin, weaknesses, and failures of others than by his own.
- He does not ask of others what he is not willing to do himself.
- He is not jealous of or intimidated by the gifts, experiences, and successes of fellow leaders.
- His public leadership is always connected to and driven by robust personal worship and meditative study.
- He is as committed to sabbaths of rest as to the achievement of goals.
- Personal holiness motivates him more than leadership position or ministry success.
- He does not take advantage of the perks of his leadership for the purpose of personal gain.
- He does not crave power but willingly cedes it to others.
- He is known more for joy than complaint.
- He willingly sits under the instruction of others and weighs others' opinions with humility and grace.
- He leads as a sad celebrant, always mourning the destructive presence of sin, while he celebrates the power of redeeming grace.

• His leadership is more of an extended act of worship than a commitment to career advancement.
• He loves Jesus more than he loves himself.
• He loves the church more than he loves herself.
• He gives up precious things out of love for fellow leaders and those they together have called to lead.
• His children do not feel ministry has robbed them of their dad.
• He longs for the gospel to transform the deepest reaches of his heart, and he is open to the instruments of gospel transformation that God has placed in his life.
• He leads with the mentality of an ambassador and never with the mentality of a king.
• When he is wrong or has done wrong, he willingly submits to loving confrontation and godly discipline.
• He owns his errors and never defends what should not be defended.
• His ministry is shaped by the promise of the gospel and not by the "what ifs" of an anxious heart.
• Everything he does in ministry is done for the glory of another. Location 1226

A leadership community is spiritually safe and prepared for a long-term and productive life of ministry only when what is important to God is not just theologically important to them but also functionally important. The life and work of a leadership community is shaped not just by the gifts of its leaders, their vast experience, the force of their public personalities, entrepreneurial skill, or vision and strategic planning, but most importantly by their values. Whatever they value most shapes the way they relate to one another, what they long to accomplish, and what they name as success. So it is important for a ministry leadership community to keep asking the question, "Is what's important to God still important to us?" At the root of many of the heartbreaking leadership failures we have all witnessed is this subtle and progressive shift in values. By the time the church or ministry blows up, the leaders who pilot it are not what they once were, and they do not value what they once did. Most often, this movement occurs in small increments over many years, so small and slow changing that it is hard to notice. LOCATION: 1320

Here is another question we must always be asking: "Have we closed our eyes to certain character deficiencies in a leader because of the effectiveness of his leadership performance?" Or here is another way of asking this question: "Is there anyone in our leadership community whom we have quit holding accountable because of his ministry effectiveness?" LOCATION: 1371

Every leadership community needs to understand that ministry can be the vehicle for pursuing a whole host of idolatries. In this way, ministry leadership is war, and we cannot approach it with the passivity of peacetime assumptions. LOCATION: 1436

How does a biblically based, gospel-committed, Christ-serving leadership community not move to lovingly confront a leader who has changed, seeking to rescue him from himself and to protect him from false ministry gods? I am going to answer my question in a way that will upset and maybe even anger some of you, but please give me the chance to explain. The reason we are often way too passive in the face of troubling evidence in the attitudes and actions of a leader is that way too often, performance trumps character. LOCATION: 1448

No leader can be left to himself. No leader should be permitted to drive away fellow leaders who have godly concerns. No leader should command loyalty in a way that compromises gospel integrity and morality. No leader's ministry fruit should result in his heart not being protected. Every leader, no matter how powerful and successful, should be willing to look at himself in the reliable mirror of the word of God. No leadership community should compromise its integrity to accomplish its vision. No leader should be untouchable by the gospel community that God has lovingly placed around him. Every leader needs confronting and restorative grace. LOCATION: 1483

Leadership in the church of Jesus Christ is not just a battle for theological faithfulness, gospel purity, and

methodological integrity; it is also always a war for the heart of every leader. Many more leaders fail because they have lost the battle for their heart than because of shifts in their theology or view of the gospel. In fact, it is often the case that theological wandering is but a visible symptom of a heart that has already wandered. I want to think with you about what it looks like for a leadership community to prepare for spiritual war and to do the work that God has called them to do with a wartime mentality. LOCATION: 1504

How do we strategize together as leadership communities for the battle? Let me suggest three ways.

1. Each leader must humbly accept and be growingly aware of his susceptibilities. LOCATION: 1616

If your leadership community functions as a gospel community, then your humble confession of personal areas of susceptibility won't be dangerous because it will be greeted with mercy-infused understanding, intercessory prayer, and strategies for help—all fueled by confidence in the presence and grace of the Savior. LOCATION: 1637

2. As a leadership community, personal and corporate spiritual war must be a regular part of our ongoing conversation with one another and a central focus of our prayer together. LOCATION: 1643

3. We must examine and defend ourselves against Satan's devices. LOCATION: 1667

It is so important to understand that the primary tool the enemy uses to attack, disable, defeat, and set aside ministry leaders is ministry. Ministry itself is fraught with temptations that play to the complicated loyalties, desires, and motivations of the heart of every leader. Desires for good things morph to become dangerous things because they have become ruling things. Things that are okay to want become things that now control. Along with this is the fact that our sense of identity is always in a state of flux, that is, we are always thinking about who we are and defining and redefining ourselves. Ministry failure can redefine a leader in ways that make him vulnerable to attack. Ministry success can also redefine a leader and expose him to new deceptions and seductions. Public acclaim can alter the way we think about who we are and what we need. Leaders who once led with a servant mentality assess their track record and become comfortable acting entitled and demanding. The trust and respect of fellow leaders tempt us to give way to fear of man, becoming, as a result, less than candid about spiritual attack and our spiritual health. LOCATION: 1668

The most often used term for a spiritual leader in Scripture is servant. So it is vital that every leadership community does its work, understanding that what God has called each leader to be defines how God has called him to do what he has been called to do. What is the motivational joy in the heart of a true servant? The joy of a true servant is not power; the joy of a true servant is not control; the joy of a true servant is not acclaim; the joy of a true servant is not comfort or ease; and, of course, the joy of a true servant is not position. What gives a servant joy in being a servant is service. LOCATION: 1694

But there is something else beautiful and encouraging to consider. The call to a life of joyful servitude and willing suffering is itself a grace. In calling me to deny myself, God is freeing me from my bondage to me. Self-focus never leads to happiness, it never produces contentment, and it never results in a satisfied heart. The more a leader has himself in focus, the more he thinks about how ministry inconveniences him, and the less he will experience true joy and lasting contentment. The call to servanthood is the tool that your Lord uses to free you from your discouraging and debilitating bondage to you. The call to servanthood is not just for the glory of your Lord and the benefit of others, but it is God's grace to you as a leadership community. This is the upside-down world of ministry calling. The pathway to freedom is servanthood, the pathway to greatness is slavery, and the pathway to deep and lasting joy—joy that people and circumstance cannot take away—is denying yourself. It is only the grace of the Redeemer that will make a ministry leader find joy in the upside-down world of leadership to which he has been called. Leader, have you entered into that joy, or has it been robbed by delusions of mastery? LOCATION: 1874

Let me say again, as I've written before: an isolated, independent, separated, and self-hiding Christian life is alien to the Christianity of the New Testament. Biblical Christianity is thoroughly and foundationally relational. No one can live outside the essential ministries of the body of Christ and remain spiritually healthy. No one is so spiritually mature that he is free from a need for the comfort, warnings, encouragement, rebuke, instruction, and insights of others. Everyone needs partners in struggles. Everyone needs to be helped to see what they cannot see about themselves on their own. This includes leaders. It's not enough to just do leadership activities together, because there is not a moment in time when every leader is free from the need of gospel community. Every leader, to be spiritually healthy, needs spiritual help—every one. LOCATION: 1954

A gospel-shaped leadership community will be a confessional community, where leader honesty is a not only a constant protection but encourages a deeper and deeper dependency on God. Confessing communities tend to be humble communities. Confessing communities tend to be worshiping communities. Confessing communities tend to be praying communities. Leaders who confess tend to be tender and kind when people they are called to lead mess up and need to confess. The more a leader has the joy of being in a confessing community, the more he will come to see his need for grace, and because he does, he will tend to be a giver of that same grace. In a confessing leadership community, leaders' pride shrinks and worship of God grows. LOCATION: 2019

Why isn't humble candor more of a regular part of our ministry leadership culture? Why aren't we more ready to confess spiritual discouragement or struggle? Why do we sit in silence as we watch fellow leaders drift away from the type of people God calls them to be? Why are too many of us more defensive than approachable? Why do we seem to be more concerned about and activated by the sin of others than we are by our own? What silences humble gospel candor in our leadership communities? Well, I want to suggest a few answers to these questions. LOCATION: 2033

1. Pride of Personal Maturity. LOCATION: 2037

Pride is a huge issue for all ministry leaders. Knowledge gets to us, experience gets to us, success gets to us, position gets to us, increasing notoriety gets to us, and in so doing we are placed in spiritual danger. LOCATION: 2038

2. Ability to Minimize Sin. LOCATION: 2047

It is one of the most powerful aspects of the scary and destructive deceitfulness of sin. As long as sin is inside us, we all carry with us a dangerous ability to participate in our own spiritual blindness. It should be a warning to every leadership community everywhere that all members of your community are regularly tempted to think that their sin is something less than sin. LOCATION: 2048

3. Must Have the Respect of Others. LOCATION: 2057

There are times when I give more of the concern of my heart to the opinion of a particular ministry colleague than to the view of my Lord. I want too much to be respected. I want too much to be liked. LOCATION: 2059

4. Identity in Ministry. LOCATION: 2068

If ministry leadership is your identity, then Christ isn't, along with that life-changing catalog of comforts that are the result of his person and work. Ministry leadership identity produces fear and anxiety and will never produce the humility and courage that come with identity in Christ. LOCATION: 2069

5. Functional Gospel Doubt. LOCATION: 2076

Yes, it is possible to be part of a leadership community that has the gospel as its central message and the spread of the gospel as its central mission but whose leaders are silenced by gospel doubt. Too many leaders struggling with issues in their hearts, lives, and relationships have their responses shaped more by a catalog of doubtful "what ifs" than by the hope-producing promises of the gospel. Leaders can't imagine how their confession will turn out well, so they hide behind silence, denials, or nonanswers. Rather than being thankful for the ever-present grace that is theirs in Christ and the community of grace that surrounds them, they doubt rescuing and forgiving grace and fear the very people tasked with being tools of that grace. LOCATION: 2076

Getting our identity from ministry is not only a dangerous and miserable ministry experience, but also disrupts the kind of ministry community that we need and that serves the spiritual health of fellow leaders. LOCATION: 2119

There is always the temptation this side of eternity to look for identity horizontally, but looking there never delivers what you seek and never results in a harvest of good fruit. LOCATION: 2157

A ministry leader's identity is a place of temptation and a spiritual battleground and, sadly, does not always remain constant. It is clear to me that a significant aspect of the drift and then fall of ministry leaders begins with an identity exchange. This exchange is not a dramatic event but rather a subtle and often long-term process. LOCATION: 2193

It is incredibly ironic that the fruit of a leader's identity in Christ is what tempts him to look elsewhere for identity. Somewhere, without a conscious rejection of his gospel theology, he has exchanged the stability of vertical identity for the instability of horizontal identity. LOCATION: 2199

There are too many leaders among us who do too many things out of fear and not faith. Too many of us are anxiously driven. Too many of us are too moved by the criticism of others. Too many of us care too much about our opinions winning the day, our sermons being applauded, or about people liking us. Too many of us, in the suffering that is the life of every ministry leader, are not suffering well. Too many of us develop negative attitudes toward people we are called to minister with or to, because we overly need them to appreciate and cooperate with us. Looking horizontally for our identity and peace is burdensome, exhausting, and self-defeating. For some of us, it will make us fantasize about moving to another ministry leadership place or quitting altogether. LOCATION: 2227

Every church or ministry leadership community must be a restorative community if it's going to have long-term spiritual health and ministry effectiveness. A commitment to the spirit, attitudes, and actions of restoration is vital. As I have written before, there may be nothing more important, humbling, or culture-shaping for a ministry leadership community than to keep in view at all times that every member of the community is in the middle of their own sanctification. No leader is sin free, no leader lives above the great spiritual battle for the focus and rulership of his heart, and no leader has graduated from his need for grace. Every leader fails to live up to God's standard in word, thought, or action somehow, someway, every day. Every leader still has moments when he thinks things that he should not think, desires what he should not desire, and acts or speaks in ways that are wrong. LOCATION: 2343

So if it is true that every leader is in the middle of the ongoing work of God's sanctifying grace, then it is also true that there is still the presence of remaining sin in every leader's heart. And if there is the presence of remaining sin in their hearts, the leaders will fail, sin, and fall. LOCATION: 2354

I love the first verse of Jonah 3. I find it deeply encouraging and hope giving. It also gives me insight into an aspect of the heart of God that I am called to represent in my relationship with and ministry to fellow leaders: "Then the word of the Lord came to Jonah the second time." Here's what restoration is about—fresh starts and new beginnings. Between the "already" and the "not yet," it's what the gospel of God's grace offers every

ministry leader. It's amazing that God's call would come to Jonah, or to us, even once, but in the face of our foolishness, rebellion, and wandering, it is incredible that it would even come to us a second time. LOCATION: 2447

You see, every leadership community needs to understand that there is no such thing as individual ministry. Every leader's ministry is a community project. Every leader needs the ministry of other leaders in order to grow to the kind of maturity that will allow him to lead well over the long term and end well. Every leader needs leaders who will stand in his way when he is about to choose the wrong way. Every leader needs other leaders to speak truth to him when he can't seem to speak those truths to himself. Every leader, in order to lead long and well, needs fellow leaders to help him see sin that he is too blind to see if left alone. Longevity is the fruit of spiritual maturity, and spiritual maturity is the result of longevity, and both are the fruit of gospel community. LOCATION: 2525

Every leadership community should be clear that giftedness is not the same as spiritual maturity. Biblical literacy is not the same as spiritual maturity. We need to be clear that theological acumen is not the same as spiritual maturity. Ministry success is not the same as spiritual maturity. Popularity is not the same as spiritual maturity. Strategic insight is not the same as spiritual maturity. God is working to produce oaks of righteousness, so every leadership community should be working to produce the same in each of its members. LOCATION: 2558

Following are three characteristics of his ministry that define spiritual maturity and drive ministry longevity.
- Humility
- Courage
- Hope LOCATION: 2640-2659

Spiritual maturity in the life and ministry of a ministry leader is about being humbled by the gospel, made courageous by the gospel, and infused with sturdy hope by the gospel. As leaders we are not naturally humble, courageous, or hopeful. We naturally swing from pride to fear and back again. In order to be what we were designed to be and do what we were called to do as leaders, we need grace, which we are called to protect and proclaim to others, ministered to us in a way that progressively transforms our hearts. This means that in order to lead, we need to be rescued daily from ourselves. As leaders we are not as humble or as courageous or as hopeful as we could be by grace. We all need to grow in greater maturity so that we can experience fruitful longevity, and for this we need faithful, loving gospel community. LOCATION: 2668

Here's how gospel growth works: you cannot grieve what you do not see, you cannot confess what you haven't grieved, and you can't repent of what you haven't confessed. LOCATION: 2680

This model of loving, growth-producing confrontation is organized in four parts.

1. Consideration. What do we need to see, and how can we help our fellow leaders to see it?

2. Confession. What thoughts, attitudes, and actions do we need to confess individually and collectively, making humble and honest confession to God and to others when needed?

3. Commitment. How is God calling us, individually and as a leadership community, to live out new thoughts, attitudes, words, and actions?

4. Change. How can we ingrain these new commitments, individually and together, into our routine life and ministry as a leadership community? LOCATION: 2681-2696

Bad things happen to a ministry leader and to a leadership community when ministry leadership work so

commands focus that they begin to functionally forget the presence of the Lord. LOCATION: 2744

I have been shocked by the selfism that is regularly accepted in our ministry leadership community, as I have been saddened to see those temptations in my own heart. You can see ministry leadership self-glory in self-aggrandizing Twitter posts, in Instagram photos, and all over Facebook. You see it in the needless demands that speakers regularly make. You see it in pastoral entitlement and impatience. You can see it around the table in regional and national leadership gatherings, where way too much bragging takes place. There is too much confidence in self and self-importance among us. There are times when we are too similar to the disciples arguing about who is going to be the greatest in the kingdom. LOCATION: 2806

When a leader forgets the powerful and gracious presence of the Lord, he also forgets who he is and what is his as God's child. Vertical amnesia always leads to identity confusion. LOCATION: 2849

Perhaps it doesn't need to be said, but I'll say it anyway: effective, long-term ministry leadership takes courage. You will face opposition. You will endure accusations, misunderstandings, and questions about your qualifications. At times precious relationships will be strained and family burdens will weigh you down. Physical illness and weakness might at times make ministry look impossible, and you'll feel weak and unable, not up to the task God has assigned you. The enemy will taunt and tempt. At times your work will bear no visible fruit. You will be tempted to fantasize about an easier place or ministry. There may be times when you feel undervalued and underappreciated. At times you might feel overburdened by trying to balance family ministry with your gospel ministry, and it seems you're not doing either well. LOCATION: 2867

When, as a leader, in a moment of hardship, you forget the grace of God's presence and his commitment to exercise his power for your sake, you are then a sitting duck for the cruel lies of the enemy. He wants you to give way to anxiety-producing "what ifs." He wants you to go back and question your calling. He wants to rob you of your courage and desire to continue. He wants to create chaos inside you and disunity between you and fellow leaders. He will attack as often as he can and take any foothold he is given. LOCATION: 2879

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "location" is provided after each entry.