

SPIRITUAL FOUNDATION

SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

BY RICK BETENBOUGH

“Moses said to the Lord, 'You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send with me. You have said, 'I know you by name and you have found favor with me. If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.' The Lord replied, 'My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.'”

– Exodus 33:12-14

Leadership, itself, is hard to describe, but even more is the subject of spiritual leadership. In fact, isn't ALL leadership spiritual? We believe *all* leadership serves and is led by *some* spirit. It is only a question of “by what spirit?”

Adolf Hitler was an effective leader with vision, resources, and execution, but he and his leadership teams were under the influence and led by evil spirits of hate, bigotry, and manipulation. All leaders serve the spirit that controls them. The marketplace is full of leaders leading by a spirit of greed, self-promotion, and domination. Led by the wrong spirit, business leaders may allow work or profit to become the highest priorities. Led by God's Spirit, business leaders can understand the necessity of work and profit, but not establish them as the highest priorities.

The absence of God's Spirit in a leader is not unspiritual, but instead, a perfect home for other spirits. Simply put, if we are not filled and led by God's Spirit, we will be led and possibly filled with some other spirit. And that spirit will lead us to its result, not the result God intends. God created us and loves us perfectly and wants the very best for us. His Spirit in us allows Him to work through us for the mutual flourishing of everyone! His plan is the best plan and His Spirit in us will transform us so that we can truly love people and care about them more than ourselves. We cannot do that without God's transformation. And we cannot have transformation without His Spirit in us.

“But seek first His Kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you.”

— Matthew 6:33

Betenbough Companies, Board of Directors and the executive leadership team have gradually allowed the Lord

to reign in what used to be our business. We now know our business is His ministry! To that end, our Board of Directors has established our purpose:

Betenbough Companies Purpose

To reveal God and His Kingdom through our work in the marketplace.

For this Kingdom purpose to be fulfilled, above all else, our leaders must be filled and led by God's Spirit!

Agree With God — He Established Your Authority

In the amazing movie, *Braveheart*, the main character, William Wallace, in real life and through his death, led Scotland to seek and gain its independence from England. His leadership was recognized, and he was formally knighted. When another character in the movie comments, "You have been given the title of Sir Wallace," he replied, "I have been given nothing. God makes men what they are." Amen!

"Everyone must submit himself to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, he who rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves."

— *Romans 13:1-2*

If men have confirmed your authority and charged you with leadership of a team, *YOU* have been given nothing. God has established your authority, for there is no authority except by God! True humility is to agree with God. Agree with Him and accept His ordination. Arise a knight!

At the same time, obtaining authority for personal gain should not be practiced. Authority is not for the benefit of the leader, but for the benefit of the people they're leading. While some see leadership as power, true leaders see it as responsibility. God will not allow authority to continue for selfish gain. Therefore, choose to agree with God and be submitted to Him so that the people you lead will be lifted up to their highest potential for God's purposes. Helping them

be their best and leading them to great results is the right heart for God's spiritual leaders.

Ask God to Lead You — He Will

Moses asked the Lord to teach him His ways. He met with Him regularly to get direction for the people. Because this enterprise belonged to God, Moses had to stop and ask, "Which way should we go, Lord?" As leaders – as strong-minded people – we don't like to stop and ask directions, but the posture of the spiritual leader is one of humility. Stop and ask. Spiritual leaders understand that this is God's Kingdom. ***How can we lead in His Kingdom, if we don't spend time with the King?*** If you aren't talking to the King regularly, you are probably building *your* kingdom!

A spiritual leader must set aside time regularly to rest in His presence and hear from Him. The Bible says crowds pressed in on Jesus everywhere He went. People came to Him with requests while He was often leading His disciples. Yet, Jesus made time in His busy schedule to go to the mountain and spend time with His Father.¹⁹ How could He be about His Father's business without spending time with His Father? When is the best time of the day for you to sit with God and hear from Him? God's leaders must read and study His word and spend time with Him every day. The commitment to do this is important, even as we go through busier seasons where we don't stop to hear from Him. Additionally, we must invite His presence to go with us throughout our day! As we go, we should go with God. His Spirit should lead us. Build a habit of talking with God as you go through your day.

¹⁹ MATTHEW 14:23, MARK 1:35, LUKE 5:16, LUKE 6:12

“The Lord would speak to Moses face to face, as a man speaks with his friend.”

— Exodus 33:11

God gives us authority for people, not over people, so that we may bring them to Him for His higher purpose. We must care about them and for them, for then we will fall in love with them – not for our gain or for what they can do for us in their work, but so they may know God’s unconditional love for them through us!

“Don’t just pretend to love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Hold tightly to what is good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.”

— Romans 12:9 (NLT)

This is not about “saving” people. Only God saves. Our job is to truly love people in authentic, transparent relationships. How can we lead people well if we don’t love them well?

Anointed by God

At times, most leaders will feel inadequate for a situation or even a season, but by God’s anointing – His Spirit in us and equipping us – we have the power to accomplish what our leadership requires. God’s power by His Spirit in us manifests as knowledge, wisdom, clarity, skill, favor, and vision to do and see things supernaturally beyond our normal capacity. God equips His leaders with the anointing of His Spirit in us!

“Then the Lord said, ‘Rise and anoint him; he is the one.’

So Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the presence of his brothers, and from that day on the Spirit of the Lord came upon David in power.”

— 1 Samuel 16:12-13

The Latin word “anointing” expresses ongoing action. *God’s anointing is continual and increasing as we seek Him.*

Ask Others to Lead With You

You can’t lead alone, and you shouldn’t! A leader in isolation is not a good thing.

*“Plans fail for lack of counsel,
but with many advisers they
succeed.”*

— Proverbs 15:22

Dad and I established
Betenbough Homes
together, and
though we knew we
complemented each

other and made a great team, one of us needed to be in charge. Because of his humility and personality, Dad truly believed that the vision I had for our homebuilding company was the right one and that I was the person to lead us. Additionally, Dad had suggested we “honor God” with this partnership, and I agreed. The business was doing well, but I was not leading people very well. We had lots of turnover and internally we were, to be transparent, a mediocre company. Holly was leading our giving, but God wanted more, and I knew it. I began seeking the Lord for what He wanted from me as His leader.

As I sought Him, I really began to hear from the Lord regarding my leadership! He came to me, telling me to choose a few

of our managers whom I knew were trustworthy to form a leadership team. We would begin seeking the Lord together and build a management team that we would lead.

Wow! And then He told me the rest:

- He wanted to protect the company from me. Absolute power corrupts absolutely.
- He wanted to protect me — from me. I was dying from the burden of leading alone.
- I was to be accountable to this team. It was not to be a democracy, and I was not to abdicate or abandon my responsibility as the senior leader. Only God can release His leaders from the authority He has entrusted to them. However, we would lead together moving forward.

Our first Leadership Team (now our Board of Directors) was born. Rick, Ron, and Holly, plus Megan, Bob, Kerry, Jon, and Charlie. We shared all the decisions, and as we got better at asking the Lord, our decisions got better. We learned to really love each other and trust each other, and to allow the Lord to speak to all of us, through each of us. The Lord brought many of our current leaders here after that, and He *did* build a management team to operate His company under our leadership. We planted a seed that has grown into an amazing culture of team collaboration, and I did not die, but really began to live!

The enemy loves to attack leaders in isolation. They can become distracted and a target, just as David became isolated and fell prey to sin (2 Samuel 11:1-5). God's ministries must be led by teams.

Those teams leading must be submitted to God and the senior leader of that team.

However, that senior leader is accountable to the team and must love the team above himself or herself. The relationship of the senior leader and his team looks like this:

- Each leader on the team is submitted to God, including the senior leader.
- Each leader on the team is submitted to the God-given authority of the senior leader.
- All leaders are accountable to each other. The senior leader has the highest accountability to the others.
- Decision making is highly collaborative and transparent. The senior leader has the final authority, but rarely exercises it.
- All ideas become community property and lose individual ownership immediately.

Some of the fruit from a healthy team might be:

- Love abounds! There are genuine, authentic, and transparent relationships and everyone enjoys being together. God blesses this team with unity, even as there is healthy disagreement.
- Accountability for our actions, our words, and the results of our work is natural. Everyone is open to it and brings it gently and regularly to each other, including to the senior leader on the team. There is no fear of reprisals and “all of us hear from God from each of us.”

- Everyone is at least open to new ideas. Cooperation means we get along and it is a good thing. Collaboration means we work together and it is a **great** thing. God blesses collaboration and multiplies the results! There may be heated discussion, but everyone believes that "**my** idea is not as good as **our** idea!"
- No one is isolated from the team, that is working apart from the team without really regular, daily contact, and vulnerable to the attacks of the enemy.

A team is healthy because the people on it are healthy. The people are engaged, loved, challenged, and accountable. Now, *that* is a fruitful team!

Obey God — Truly Submit to Him

This was the end of Saul as king of Israel. And yet it had begun with his anointing in 1 Samuel 10:1, "Then Samuel took a flask of oil and poured it on Saul's head and kissed him saying, 'Has not the Lord anointed you leader over His inheritance?'" A few verses later, it says, "As Saul turned to leave Samuel, God changed Saul's heart ... and the Spirit of God came upon him in power ..." But then, eventually, he stopped obeying and instead did what he wanted to do. The Lord's instructions as recorded in 1 Samuel 15:3 were clear: "Now go, attack the Amalekites and totally destroy everything that belongs to them. Do not spare them; put to death men and women, children and infants, cattle, sheep, camels, and donkeys." But Saul made excuses, citing religious purpose for altering God's absolutely clear instructions, "...the soldier spared the best of the sheep and cattle to sacrifice to the Lord your God, but we totally destroyed the rest..."

“Does the Lord delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as much as in obeying the voice of the Lord? To obey is better than sacrifice, and to heed is better than the fat of rams. For rebellion is like the sin of divination, and arrogance like the evil of idolatry. Because you have rejected the word of the Lord, he has rejected you as king.”

— 1 Samuel 15:22-23

Spiritual leadership demands that we seek direction from God, and once we hear it we must follow through. Our leadership covenant with God is only fulfilled when we obey. God's leaders must continually submit to His authority fully, or He won't trust us with His people. This often isn't as much discerning what the will of God is, as much as simple obedience once we know. God spoke clearly to Saul, and he failed to follow those instructions. Moses had a similar story in Numbers 20. In both cases, God replaced them as His leaders of the people.

Just as leaders must submit to God's authority, those we are leading must be submitted to our authority as their leader. We love them and care for them, but few things tear a team apart as quickly as a rebellious spirit that refuses to submit to a leader. Passionate and diverse opinions abound, but in the end, all must be under authority. Team members who subvert authority must be dealt with immediately and firmly. That is part of our responsibility as a leader. If left unaddressed, the result will be disunity which God does not bless. Instead, His blessing is on a unified team under His authority and the authority of His appointed leader!

“Let everyone be subject to the governing authorities, for there is no authority except that which God has established. The authorities that exist have been established by God. Consequently, whoever rebels against the authority is rebelling against what God has instituted, and those who do so will bring judgment on themselves. For rules hold no terror for those who do what is right, but for those who do wrong. Do you want to be free from fear of the one in authority? Then do what is right and you will be commended. For the one in authority is God's servant for your good. But if you do wrong, be afraid, for rulers do not bear the sword for no reason. They are God's servants, agents of wrath to bring punishment of the wrongdoer. Therefore, it is necessary to submit to the authorities, not only because of possible punishment but also as a matter of conscience.”

— Romans 13:1-5

Spiritual Opposition

Since all leadership is spiritual, then as leaders seek God for their leadership, there will be opposition by the enemy. The enemy may whisper in your ear: You are not spiritual enough. You can't do this. You are not good enough. The workplace is not the place for God or faith. The people you lead will think you are crazy.

“For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.”

— Ephesians 6:12

These are lies from the enemy. The enemy will oppose your spiritual leadership. But God has established your leadership, and He will guide you and give you favor as you seek Him, and as you genuinely and authentically lead your team with love and their best interests in your heart!

“Here is a trustworthy saying: Whoever aspires to be an overseer desires a noble task.”

– 1 Timothy 3:1