

# MBC MEN'S TRAINING

## LEADERSHIP TRACK: COURAGEOUS CHURCHMEN

### CLASS 5: THE DANGERS OF LEADERSHIP – PART II

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- January 9: A Biblical Theology of Servant Leadership
- February 13: The Dynamics of Leadership (Chapters 1-5)
- March 6: The Dangers of Leadership – Part I (Chapters 8-10)
- *April 10: The Dangers of Leadership – Part II (Chapters 6-7, 11-12)*
- May 15: The Development of Leadership (Chapters 13-14)

### INTRODUCTION

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- The Lord has called men to spiritual leadership, both in the home and in the church.
- “[W]e’re expected to make difficult decisions, wisely navigate ethical dilemmas, protect and provide for others, model godly character, and remain steadfast for as long as we live.”<sup>1</sup>
- However, as we think of leadership in the church, what is it that makes a godly leader? What are the qualities that characterize a man that can effectively lead and influence others?
- We can often bring in worldly ideologies and motivations into the church. However, it is not wise to assume that we can pursue leadership with earthly means and produce spiritual fruit.
- The question we need to ponder is, “What does God look for in a leader in the church?”
- With that in mind, this study will cover the dynamics of faithful leadership, looking at the makeup of the man himself, the dangers of leadership, which come both from without and within, and how to develop leadership in the church, producing a continual chain of godly men that will take up that mantle of leadership.
- In this section, we will continue to discuss the dangers of leadership. However, this time we are not looking outward at the dangers of conflict, but inward, looking at the kinds of leaders that God rejects, what happens when a leader defects, and how to guard against it as watchmen who are on guard for ourselves and all that the Lord has given us charge of as stewards.

<sup>1</sup> Ibid, 7.

## DANGERS OF LEADERSHIP WITHIN US

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- While there are many dangers that can arise as conflict comes into the church, which can threaten the unity and the call to preserve that unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Eph 4:3), one of the greatest potential threats to the church is unfaithful leadership.
  - **Acts 20:29-30** - *I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away the disciples after them.*
  - **2 Timothy 3:13** - *But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived.*
  - **Titus 1:10-11** - *For there are many rebellious men, empty talkers and deceivers, especially those of the circumcision, who must be silenced because they are upsetting whole families, teaching things they should not teach for the sake of sordid gain.*
- While we must certainly be on guard, as Paul warned the Ephesian elders, for men like this that can threaten to lead the church astray, we must be mindful of the fleshly tendencies within ourselves, knowing that none of us are immune to temptation in the areas listed below.
- While we may not struggle as much in certain areas, we must still be guarding our hearts in these areas, knowing that the moment we think we have something mastered, we have just taken our first step toward falling in that area.

### An Unhealthy Model of Leadership (Chapter 6)

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- What are some of the marks of unhealthy and unfruitful leaders within the church, or as Jerry Wragg states – those leaders that God resists?
  1. **The Begrudging Leader**
    - I've noticed that in the midst of serious ministry conflict, leaders can often become cynical, negative, and suspicious.
    - Men who have long since lost their joy and courage keep drudging on for fear of blemishing their reputation.<sup>2</sup>
    - This is the “leadership out of obligation”, which points to an insincere leadership, or leadership through wrong motivations, rather than voluntarily with joy! (1 Pet 5:2)

<sup>2</sup> Jerry Wragg, *Courageous Churchmen: Leaders Compelling Enough to Follow*, 81.

## 2. The Greedy Leader

- This is the leader that sees his position as a means of fleshly gain. (1 Pet 5:2)
- While Wragg takes time to evaluate the love of money as the root of this, and rightly so, it is helpful to remember that greed can express itself in a number of ways:
  - Money
  - Prestige/prominence
  - Power/influence
  - Holding to earthly measures of success/achievement
- All of the above areas signal the presence of materialistic interests. The love of money has so saturated Western culture that wanton avarice is no longer a vice but the single greatest virtue of the ambitious and executive.<sup>3</sup>

## 3. The Belligerent Leader

- This is the overly/sinfully hostile, aggressive leader. It is the person that is “itching for a fight”, or as Jerry states it, “uses their God-given privileges as a bludgeon.”
- This can express itself as:
  - Intolerance of others: unable to hide frustrations toward others
  - Arrogance and joylessness: lead according to their agenda vs. God’s purposes
  - Self-righteousness and judgmental attitudes: amplifying others sin and minimizing their own
- The world can often rephrase this quality in leadership to have a positive connotation, emphasizing the need for strong, “type-A” leaders that keep things moving forward, that aren’t passive/ineffective, etc.
- However, Scripture is clear that the Lord’s bondservant is not to be quarrelsome (2 Tim 2:24), and in the qualifications for elders, they are not to be pugnacious, but gentle/peaceable (1 Tim 3:3).

## 4. The Conceited/Insecure Leader

- When we become intoxicated with our own gifts and influence we begin to see people as a means to our advancement.<sup>4</sup>

<sup>3</sup> Jerry Wragg, *Courageous Churchmen: Leaders Compelling Enough to Follow*, 85.

<sup>4</sup> *Ibid*, 92.

- Similar to the greed, this is a man who sees ministry/leadership as a means to his own ends – those who think more of themselves than they ought. (Rom 12:3)
- It is these men who driven by a lust for power and man’s applause vs. faithfulness as a steward and slave of Christ.
- This kind of leader will also have a warped view of the sheep:
  - Viewing others as a threat to their success
  - Being unteachable when contradicted
  - Letting others bear blame for failed decisions
  - Withholding important resources/information needed by others
  - Unwilling to delegate responsibility

### **An Unhealthy View of Spiritual Gifting (Chapter 7)**

- Not only must we be aware of the sinful character that can threaten leadership in the church from following the charge of the Lord and His word faithfully, there can also be temptations toward discontentment within leadership when we begin to compare spiritual gifting.
  - This can creep up in us when other men are gifted in areas that we desire to serve in, but perhaps are not gifted in.
  - This can also happen when other men that are serving in areas with us are seemingly “farther along” or “getting more opportunities” in areas that we also serve and are gifted in.
- It is the result of men comparing themselves to others rather than faithfully serving where God has placed them and how God has gifted/equipped them.
- While leadership is a great aspiration (1 Tim 3:1), we must be careful to examine our motives and desires that feed those aspirations.
  - As leaders, we have to be brutally honest with ourselves. Are we clawing after the more noticed gifts and leadership roles? Where do our gifts best fit in the purposes of God for the advance of the gospel? Are we content with our strengths for ministry and the special niche the Holy Spirit has carved out for our life?
  - All believers, but especially those in leadership, ***ought to do the ministry a favor and bloom where God plants us.***<sup>5</sup>
- We cannot be those who, as Jerry states, “despis[e] a gift in jealousy and envy.

<sup>5</sup> Jerry Wragg, *Courageous Churchmen: Leaders Compelling Enough to Follow*, 104. (emphasis added)

- Also, it would be helpful to think through a few biblical principles when it pertains to spiritual gifting and calling in leadership:
  - First, we must remember the aspects of biblical calling to leadership in the church.
    - There is the **subjective** desire on the part of the man for the work (1 Tim 3:1)
    - There are **objective** qualifications: man's character/gifting (1 Tim 3:2-7; Titus 1:5-9)
    - There is the **collective** affirmation of the man's qualifications (1 Tim 4:14)
  - Second, we must remember God's design for spiritual gifts in the church
    - All believers have gifts, though in varying combinations (1 Cor 12:4-7)
    - All believers are given gifts for the good of the body (1 Cor 12:7; Eph 4:16)
    - The variation of giftings is a blessing of the Lord, so that as the body is coming together and serving one another, all of the spiritual gifts are represented and used for the building up of the body (Eph 4:16)
  - Third, when it comes to gifting, particularly within the realm of leadership, we must acknowledge that *testedness is more important than giftedness*.
    - By this, I mean that the testing of a man's character and qualifications is of greater importance than the perceived (or even proven) giftedness of the man.
    - Example: A man is a clearly gifted teacher, can articulate and explain Scripture well, is very charismatic, etc. BUT he is well-known for being belligerent and overly forceful in trying to get his way, and he is eager to be known as an elder, not really desiring to serve in non-public service areas.
      - Is this man gifted: Yes
      - Is this man qualified for leadership: No
    - Example: A man is gifted in teaching/exhorting/communicating, but no one in the church really knows him (perhaps he's newer to the church or just isn't that close to anyone)
      - Is he gifted: Yes
      - Is he qualified: Untested
    - Given the potential disaster that can come when the wrong leadership is in place, it is necessary to test a man before putting him into leadership.
      - **1 Tim 5:22** - *Do not lay hands upon anyone too hastily and thereby share responsibility for the sins of others; keep yourself free from sin.*

## **THE DANGERS OF DEFECTIVE LEADERSHIP (CHAPTER 11)**

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- With all of these temptations and sinful styles and views within leadership, we must remember that the ones who suffer in the midst of that leadership are the sheep.

### **Sinful Anger and Vengeance**

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- First, in the midst of a leadership crisis the people will be tempted to become angry and vengeful. Mentally and emotionally traumatized people—even the most godly—are prone to let their sense of betrayal rule them. Fear of being further duped and betrayed by those you trusted begins to consume your thought life. The temptation to retaliate is very intense!<sup>6</sup>
- One of the most damaging effects of unfaithful leadership: Bitterness/anger toward the leadership.
  - This is not just toward those who have proven themselves unfaithful and defected, but it can begin to paint an unhealthy picture in the minds of the sheep toward leadership.
  - This is not just for elders, but also deacons, small group/ministry leaders, lay leadership, etc.
- While this is obviously a sinful response on the part of the sheep, as the Lord Himself will bring justice against unfaithful shepherds (Rom 12:19), defective leadership can present this stumbling block to the sheep that bring about this temptation.

### **Unchecked Suspicion**

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- Not only can the sheep be tempted toward anger and vengeance, but it can also lead to a constant suspicion or cynical view of leadership.
- Rather than appreciating those who diligently labor among them, esteeming them highly because of their work (1 Thess 5:12-13), the sheep will have their guard up so as not to be hurt again.
- Again, while this is not a biblical response on the part of the sheep, a congregation can become jaded and distrusting of leadership in the church as a defense mechanism put in place because of fallout from previous leadership.
- It may take some time for an offended brother or sister to be at ease with trusting someone who has betrayed them or defected. [...] Overcoming their betrayal with the kindness of spiritual blessings instead is the power of the gospel (1 Pet 3:9).<sup>7</sup>

<sup>6</sup> Jerry Wragg, *Courageous Churchmen: Leaders Compelling Enough to Follow*, 162-163.

<sup>7</sup> Ibid, 164.

## Using Another's Sin as License

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- A third temptation is to use another's sin as license for your own: "*Well, if men I respect are not able to remain faithful, then there cannot be any hope of my faithfulness, so why continue to battle?*" In the wake of leadership defection, we are tempted to become discouraged, giving in to temptations we have been resisting for some time.<sup>8</sup>
- This is a sobering reminder that as the leadership of the church goes, so the church goes.
- Unfaithful leadership in the church can threaten to mute the power of the gospel – and effectively lead others toward sin – within a congregation.
- Remember, leadership is influence, and those in leadership will constantly have eyes on them, with many looking to leadership to be an example to the flock (1 Tim 4:12).
- What is it that we're modeling? Can we, though certainly not perfect, say to others within the body, "Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Christ."? (1 Cor 11:1)

## Self-Pity and Disillusionment

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- Another temptation that will come is that of becoming disillusioned and plunging into self-pity. The defection of a leader can bring a ministry to its knees. Otherwise peace-filled churches are suddenly thrown into a season of backbiting, unresolved bitterness, public rancor, private slander, and every kind of evil.<sup>9</sup>
- When leaders defect, it can cause a congregation to question everything that leader was a part of:
  - Wedding, baptisms, discipleship, teachings: all of these impactful events can be questioned for effective legitimacy.
  - In this, ministry can come to a screeching halt due to the weariness and brokenness of the sheep.

## Fear of Reproach from Outside the Church

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- Lastly, there can be a temptation to fear reproach from others outside the church if a fallen leader has besmirched the name of Christ and His body.
- What will others think? How can I invite others to come here? Should I/we leave?

<sup>8</sup> Jerry Wragg, *Courageous Churchmen: Leaders Compelling Enough to Follow*, 164.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 165.

## CULTIVATING WATCHFULNESS IN MINISTRY (CHAPTER 12)

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- While Jerry emphasizes the encouragement the Lord brings in the midst of these kinds of seasons, and gives wonderful reminders of the Lord's sovereign work in building His church through the sanctifying power of the word of God, it is a sobering and needed reminder of the devastation that can come through unfaithful leadership.
- Because of this, any who desire leadership within the church must constantly guard their hearts and developing a sense of watchfulness in their walk with the Lord.
  - Moral and doctrinal defection rarely occurs quickly, nor does it usually permeate the entire congregation all at once. It is much more subtle, hard to identify at first, and frequently traceable to a particular leader whose life slowly unraveled into spiritual neglect and hypocrisy. Wherever we establish spiritual vaccinations in our own hearts, we will strengthen the corporate body's overall immune system against ultimate defection.<sup>10</sup>

### Be a Faithful Workman

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- **2 Timothy 2:15** - *Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth.*
  - If you aspire to any form of leadership in the church (elder, deacon, lay leader, etc.) or if you just desire to be a faithful husband/father/man, you must live and breathe the word of God.
  - Leadership devoid of the word will default to worldly or prideful pursuits and styles of leadership.
  - Not only in how we lead, but what we are leading others toward must be informed by the word of God.
- Paul says to Timothy that this must be a **diligent** pursuit: to be a workman who is not ashamed.
  - What does this look like?
  - An accurate handling of the word of truth.
- This implies that there is both a right way and wrong way to handle the word of truth.
  - We must know and practice it for ourselves, working hard to interpret it rightly for our own application.
  - Our leadership/ministry, then, is an overflow of a life dedicated to Scripture (Ezra 7:10)

<sup>10</sup> Jerry Wragg, *Courageous Churchmen: Leaders Compelling Enough to Follow*, 162.

## Be an Example of Godliness

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- **1 Timothy 4:12, 16** - *Let no one look down on your youthfulness, but rather in speech, conduct, love, faith and purity, show yourself an example of those who believe. [...] Pay close attention to yourself and to your teaching; persevere in these things, for as you do this you will ensure salvation both for yourself and for those who hear you.*
  - This is the helpful guardrail that brings godly character to bold proclamation of the truth.
  - These characteristics are the much needed character emphasis that will guard us against being the belligerent/greedy/conceited leader that can so damage the church.
- This is the greatest gift a leader can give to others in the church: being a godly man.
- This is why Paul calls Timothy to take pains/persevere in these things, and to pay close attention to himself and his teaching (note the significance of the ordering!)
  - We need to not only know the word and how to effectively communicate it, but we also need to be living it out!
  - Remember, again, the idea of leadership as influence. You cannot lead someone to a place you have never been.
- The call to godliness not only protects from temptation toward unfaithful leadership, it authenticates the message you are teaching!

## Be a God-Fearing Man

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- **2 Timothy 1:7-8, 12** - *God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline. Therefore do not be ashamed of the testimony of our Lord or of me His prisoner, but join with me in suffering for the gospel according to the power of God [...] but I am not ashamed; for I know whom I have believed and I am convinced that He is able to guard what I have entrusted to Him.*
  - Many of the pitfalls in leadership can come from a sinful fear of man.
  - We can tend to make people big and God small in our minds.
- Fearing God means that we are willing to suffer (2 Tim 1:8; 2:3); it means that our hearts are immovably grounded in the power of God to save us and make us instruments for the gospel (2 Tim 1:9–11); we become unashamed servants of the living God in whom we have confidence to guard the fruit of our labors until He returns for His people in glory (2 Tim 1:12).<sup>11</sup>

<sup>11</sup> Jerry Wragg, *Courageous Churchmen: Leaders Compelling Enough to Follow*, 173.

- Being watchful in leadership is caring more about God thinks of us than what man thinks of us.
  - This is so helpful in guarding against worldly metrics of success or seeking praise from men.
  - It gives us the boldness to communicate the truth of the gospel, regardless of the outcome.
- If we're going to be faithful watchmen, we must realize that our responsibility is more than mere titles. We're called to do more than just feed the sheep and hear them say, "Great sermon!" It is our charge also to lead and protect our people by being more concerned about where God is taking them than any human agenda.<sup>12</sup>

## Be a Faithful Steward

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- **1 Corinthians 4:1-2** - *Let a man regard us in this manner, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. In this case, moreover, it is required of stewards that one be found trustworthy.*
  - We've touched on this before, but remembering the role of leadership in the church as stewards and slaves of God is crucial for effective leadership.
    - If we are stewards, we seek to be faithful with what the Lord has entrusted to us (gifting, ministry opportunities, etc.) rather than jockeying for position.
    - If we are stewards, nothing we have is ours, but we know that we are accountable to God for any ministry/leadership He gives, and it is all for His glory.
  - This also defines our metric for success: faithfulness.

## Be a Diligent Guard

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- **Acts 20:28** - *Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the church of God which He purchased with His own blood.*
  - As Jerry says, we must "know the certainty of trouble".
  - We must recognize the threats that continually come upon Christ's church, whether through false teaching, disunity, or even our own leadership (if not guarded carefully).
- Again, this should bring a sobriety and weightiness to our view of leadership in the church.
- If the Lord has called you to leadership, it cannot be done flippantly or passively.
- The work is one of sacrifice and strenuous labor (vv. 33–35), but we must keep in mind that to pour ourselves out for others is to follow Christ, who said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive" (v. 35).<sup>13</sup>

<sup>12</sup> Jerry Wragg, *Courageous Churchmen: Leaders Compelling Enough to Follow*, 173.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid, 182.