

## DYING TO LIVE AND DYING TO LEAD

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### Today's Treasure

*Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.*

*John 12:24-26*

I was 29 when I arrived at a leadership laboratory, just a seedling. I had been married six years and had a two-year-old and six-month-old. I could stop right there in my story and begin to tell you all the life-giving leadership lessons I learned in those early years, but let's include that my husband and I were embarking on planting a church from scratch in a town where we knew no one. Now you add all that together and you have the seedbed for some fertile leadership development. Church planting was the dirt where God planted me to transform me. I was a seed planted deep down in the soil of sanctification. In order for me to grow, He had to break me open so I could die and new life could emerge.

Growing up in church I had quite a few good Sunday School answers tucked in my back pocket. When half of our church membership came through conversion, all of my trite answers flew out the window. Many days I was in the seed casing of fear. I needed to die to my fears and step out in faith. There was the fear of man, failure, and the unknown. When things flopped I had to die to my reputation when I wanted to defend it. When we were on plan "Z", you know the one you get to when plan "A, B, C..." fizzle, I had to die to my plans, dreams, and agendas. When my house, calendar, and finances were taxed to the max I had to die to my comfort. When someone needed a listening ear I needed to die to convenience. Most importantly I learned that life-giving leadership is the call to die to my sin and be the chief repenter.

Death is sacrificial and costly and as Jesus reminds us, daily, "If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me (Luke 9:23). He shared this garden portrait, just days before He goes to the cross. **Life-giving leadership is not just an invitation to serve but at the most fundamental level, it is an invitation to die. We have to die to live and we have to die to lead.** Death is painful and scary, but it is also necessary and glorious for His life to be formed in us. When we

yield to this calling we can say like Paul, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me." (Galatians 2:20).

Have you considered where your plot of dirt is located? It is different for each one of us. Over the years the plot size may change, but our calling will not. As the plant grows the call is to abide. "I am the vine; you are the branches. Whoever abides in me and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing (John 15:5).

Life-giving leaders progressively die to self, abide in Jesus, and confidently bear gospel fruit for His glory. **Being a life-giving leader is becoming like Him in his death, so that others may see Him in us. Apart from this, we can do nothing as a leader.**

### LIFE-GIVING ENCOURAGEMENT

- Where is the plot of dirt Jesus has planted you?
- Are there areas in your life that Jesus is calling you to die?
- Are you seeking to be independent and self-sufficient or are you abiding in Christ?
- Spend time thanking God for the gospel fruit you have seen in your life and the lives of those around you.