

Small Group Guide: Learning to Lead and Love

Sermon Recap

This week's message focused on how God shapes us through everyday pressures and challenges to become leaders who love well. Pastor Clay explored biblical examples of both failures and successes in leadership and love, emphasizing that true leadership is about exhibiting God's character under pressure—whether at home, work, or church.

Key Scripture: 1 Corinthians 10:11-13

Key Takeaways

- Leadership is about exhibiting God's character under pressure (in your home, workplace, and church)
- You are a leader wherever God has placed you—whether pumping gas or running a company
- The vicious cycle of anxiety: Reactivity → Herding Instinct → Blame Displacement → Quick Fixes → Lack of Differentiated Leadership
- Five elements of cultivating godly resolve:
 1. Rooted Identity (knowing who you are in God)
 2. Upward Call (remembering you serve God, not man)
 3. Faithful Metrics (measuring what truly matters)
 4. Intentional Spiritual Practices (retreat and return rhythms)
 5. Continuous Improvement (Kaizen mindset)

Discussion Questions

Part 1: Understanding Temptation and Testing

1. The Greek word for temptation (*parazo*) also means "test." How does viewing your current challenges as tests rather than just temptations change your perspective?
2. Pastor Clay defined a test as "a difficult set of circumstances that comes to reveal the truth about who you are." What has a recent difficult circumstance revealed about your faith and character?
3. The sermon taught that God Himself is our "way of escape." How is this different from expecting God to simply remove us from difficult situations? Share an example of when you experienced God as your refuge rather than an escape route.

Part 2: Failure to Lead

4. Peter's momentum took him further than his heart was ready to go. Have you ever found yourself in a position where you looked more mature spiritually than you actually were? What happened?
5. Elijah let one voice (Jezebel) undo a great victory. Who or what is the "one voice" that tends to derail you? How can you build resilience against that voice?
6. Aaron couldn't handle people being unhappy with him. On a scale of 1-10, how much does people's approval or disapproval affect your decisions? What would change if you feared God more than people?

Part 3: Failure to Love

7. Moses endured 38 years of criticism before he finally snapped. What does "death by a thousand paper cuts" look like in your life? How can you prevent bitterness from accumulating?
8. Demas deserted Paul because he "loved this present world." What comforts or "easier paths" tempt you away from what God has called you to do?
9. The sermon asked: "Where have you been angry or disappointed in God?" This is a vulnerable question, but an important one. How does unresolved disappointment with God affect our ability to love others?

Part 4: Godly Differentiation

10. Godly differentiation means remaining connected to people while maintaining a strong sense of self and identity in God. In what relationships or settings do you find it hardest to maintain your identity in Christ?
11. The sermon mentioned that we live in "the most emotionally unstable generation in history." Do you agree? What evidence do you see of this, and how can the church be different?

Practical Application

Individual Reflection

Take 3-5 minutes of silence for each person to consider:

1. Where is God calling you to lead? (home, workplace, neighborhood, church)
2. Where is God calling you to love? (Who specifically?)
3. What is your biggest obstacle? (pride, people-pleasing, bitterness, disappointment, fear)

This Week's Challenge

Choose ONE practice to implement this week:

Option 1: The Elijah Practice

Spend 30 minutes each morning this week meditating on heaven and your eternal reward. Journal about how this changes your perspective on current difficulties.

Option 2: The Jesus Practice

Identify the "voices" currently pressuring you. Spend time in prayer returning to the "wilderness"—the place where the Father affirms your identity. Write down who God says you are.

Option 3: The Moses Practice

Make a list of people who have criticized or hurt you. Pray a blessing over each one daily this week. Ask God to help you "stand in the gap" for them rather than become bitter.

Option 4: Increase Your Tolerance

Identify one area where you're emotionally "wimpy" (easily reactive, defensive, or avoidant). Ask God for grace to increase your tolerance for emotional pain in that area. Practice pausing before reacting.

Option 5: Faithful Metrics Assessment

Evaluate what you're currently measuring your life by (money, success, comfort, approval). Write down 3-5 "faithful metrics" that will actually matter in eternity (growth in love, forgiveness, compassion, faithfulness in small things).

Additional Scriptures

1. Leadership Under Pressure / Testing Reveals You
 - James 1:2–4 – Testing produces steadfastness
 - Luke 16:10 – Faithful in little → faithful in much
 - Proverbs 17:3 – The Lord tests hearts like fire refines metal
 - Deuteronomy 8:2 – God tests to reveal what's in your heart
 - 2 Corinthians 4:7–10 – Pressure reveals Christ in us

2. Non-Anxious Presence / Peace in Chaos
 - Philippians 4:5–7 – Be anxious for nothing
 - Isaiah 26:3 – Perfect peace for the fixed mind
 - John 14:27 – My peace I give to you
 - Colossians 3:15 – Let the peace of Christ rule
 - Proverbs 14:30 – A (calm) heart gives life

3. Godly Differentiation (Identity + Stability)
 - Galatians 1:10 – Not living for the approval of man
 - Romans 12:2 – Not conformed to the world
 - Ephesians 4:14–15 – Not tossed to and fro
 - 1 Corinthians 15:58 – Steadfast, immovable
 - Psalm 1:1–3 – Tree planted, not shaken

4. Rooted Identity in Christ
 - Romans 8:14–17 – Sons and daughters of God
 - 1 John 3:1 – See what kind of love the Father has given
 - Ephesians 1:4–5 – Chosen and adopted
 - Colossians 3:3–4 – Your life is hidden in Christ
 - John 15:9 – Abide in my love

5. Upward Call / Living for God Alone
 - Colossians 3:23–24 – Work as unto the Lord
 - 2 Corinthians 5:9 – Make it our aim to please Him
 - Hebrews 11:6 – God rewards those who seek Him
 - Psalm 73:25–26 – God is my portion forever
 - Matthew 6:33 – Seek first the kingdom

6. Growth Through Correction (Kaizen mindset)
 - Proverbs 9:8–9 – The wise love correction
 - Hebrews 12:5–11 – Discipline produces righteousness
 - Psalm 141:5 – Let a righteous man strike me—it is kindness
 - Proverbs 27:6 – Faithful are wounds of a friend

7. Loving in Difficulty (The Real Test)
 - Luke 6:27–36 – Love your enemies

- 1 Corinthians 13:4–7 – What love actually does
- Romans 12:9–21 – Overcome evil with good
- 1 Peter 4:8 – Love covers a multitude of sins
- John 13:34–35 – Love proves you're His

8. Dealing with Offense, Bitterness, and Hurt

- Ephesians 4:31–32 – Put away bitterness
- Hebrews 12:14–15 – Root of bitterness defiles many
- Matthew 18:21–35 – Parable of unforgiveness
- Proverbs 19:11 – Overlooking offense is glory
- Psalm 55:12–14 – Hurt from close relationships

9. Endurance Over Quick Fixes

- Galatians 6:9 – Don't grow weary in doing good
- Romans 5:3–5 – Suffering → endurance → character
- Hebrews 10:36 – You have need of endurance
- Luke 21:19 – By endurance you gain your lives
- James 5:7–8 – Be patient like a farmer

10. Strengthening Yourself in God

- 1 Samuel 30:6 – David strengthened himself in the Lord
- Psalm 23 – Restoration of the soul
- Isaiah 40:29–31 – Renewed strength
- Psalm 16:11 – Fullness of joy in His presence
- Nehemiah 8:10 – Joy of the Lord is your strength

11. Life in the Spirit (Essential for Leadership)

- Galatians 5:16–25 – Walk by the Spirit / fruit of the Spirit
- Romans 8:5–6 – Mind set on Spirit = life and peace
- Ephesians 5:18 – Be continually filled
- Acts 4:31 – Filled again with boldness

12. Fixing Your Eyes on Jesus

- 2 Corinthians 3:18 – Transformed by beholding Him
- John 13:15 – Follow His example
- 1 Peter 2:21–23 – Jesus under pressure
- Hebrews 4:15–16 – He understands your weakness

Closing Prayer

Prayer Focus:

- For the Holy Spirit to fill us afresh with power to lead and love
- For strength to absorb shock rather than spread anxiety
- For hearts that grow in capacity to forgive and love radically
- For specific situations group members shared

Closing Scripture:

"Put on then as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness and patience, bearing with one another, and if anyone has a complaint against another, forgiving each other as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these, put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony." (Colossians 3:12-14)