

Thinking Clearly

Leadership Begins with Me

June 18, 2017

Father's Day Video

Introduction

How many of you have ever said to someone, "I'm just not the leader type."? Most people say this because they misunderstand the essence of leadership. They say this because they either don't feel like they have leadership gifts or abilities or else they don't want the responsibility that comes with being a leader. But let me make something perfectly clear.

**We are all called to lead!
Avoiding leadership is next to
impossible.**

God has called each one of us to lead.
And furthermore, you cannot avoid
leading, like it or not.

Why? Because leadership is primarily
about influence. Having influence
means we all have an effect on the
character, behavior or development of
someone or something. If that is true,
then we can't avoid our own roles of
leadership, even if we don't have the
title, position or abilities that
characterize "leader-types".

Since we are ALL influencers. Then...

A father or mother is called to lead.

A brother or sister is called to lead.

A husband or wife is called to lead.

A friend is called to lead.

A teacher is called to lead.

A grandparent is called to lead.

A volunteer is called to lead.

A teammate as well as his coach is called to lead.

A boss as well as an employee is called to lead.

No matter what our role, position or ability, we are influencing others and so we are called to lead.

When we are in a work setting or sitting

in a restaurant at lunchtime, we have the opportunity to influence someone's life positively or negatively. If we take a second to thank the man cleaning the restrooms in our office building, or take the time to ask the waitress her name at lunch, both these simple actions can positively influence those people. If we choose to do nothing and walk past them like a piece of furniture, our actions can negatively influence those people as well.

You see everything we do and everything we say can have either a positive or a negative effect on others. And because we have influence, we are all leaders.

So all of this raises an important

question: If we are all influencers and we are all called to lead, how do we make sure we lead others well?

The answer to this question may surprise you.

The key to leading others well is to lead yourself first.

Bill Hybels, a well-known leader of one of the largest non-profit organizations in the world, points out, “The toughest leadership challenge is always yourself.” In one of his blog entries, he goes on to say this:

“In the Old Testament book 1 Samuel 30. David, the future king of Israel, is a young man at the time. He is just

learning to lead his troops into battle. He's still green. But God is pouring his favor on David, and most of the time the battles go his way.

One terrible day though, that pattern changes. After returning home from fighting yet another enemy, David and his men discover soldiers have attacked and destroyed their campsite, dragged off the women and children, and burned all their belongings.

This would define "bad day" for anyone! But it's not over. His soldiers are tired, angry, and worried sick about their families. They're miffed at God. A faction of his men spreads word that they've had it with David. They figure it's all David's fault, and they decide to

stone him to death.

In this crisis David is severely tested. Suddenly, he has to decide who needs to be lead the most. His soldiers? The officers? The faction?

Guess what His answer is? None of the above. In this critical moment he realizes a foundational truth: he has to lead himself before he can lead anybody else. Unless he is squared away internally he has nothing to offer those around him. So the bible says:

"David strengthened himself in the Lord his God" (1 Samuel 30:6).

Only when he pays attention to himself

in the Lord, does he lead his team to rescue their families and what's left of their belongings.

David understood the critical importance of self-leadership. He had to lead himself in the Lord before he could lead his army.”

I can't stress enough the importance of leading yourself first. Why? The reason is simple: when you pay attention to your internal world as it relates to God, you will appreciate others more, you will influence them for good, and you'll become the truest expression of yourself in God. But not only that, the practice of self-leadership prevents you from derailment. It keeps you from

running off the tracks and losing your long term success and legacy.

All this leads us to this simple truth:

In order to effectively lead and influence others, you must first learn to lead yourself.

To truly be God's greatest expression of yourself, you must pay attention to your internal world. You must practice self-leadership.

Series Review

Before we dive into the rest of the message for today, I want to remind you that we are in the middle of a series called, "Thinking Clearly". As the

subtitle of the series says, our goal is to help you “get your head straight on issues that affect your everyday life.”

Rick did a great job last week talking about our identity in Christ and clearing up some confusion we may have on the issue of forgiveness and how far God’s grace extends into our lives. We will refer back to some of the principles Rick shared in his message. But our topic for today is self-leadership.

Before we get into the topic of how to lead ourselves well, I want us to take a short assessment. The purpose of this assessment is to determine if we are showing any of the warning signs or symptoms of poor self-leadership. As we

go through these four categories of statements, keep track of the ones you agree with or say “yes” to.

Signs You Aren’t Leading Yourself Well (Self Assessment)

Category 1.

I feel chronically stressed.

I am emotionally and or physically exhausted most of the time.

I feel cynical about life in general.

I have no margin in my life with little or not time to think, relax and recharge.

If you agree with or say “yes” to

any of these, then you are showing symptoms of BURNOUT and are not leading yourself well.

Category 2

I feel a particular sin in my life is justified and I minimize or excuse it in myself and/or others.

I find more pleasure in pursuing my sinful habits than doing things God's way.

I feel obedience to God and his commands is optional and/or unimportant.

If you agree with or say “yes” to any of these, then you most likely RATIONALIZING SIN and are not

practicing good self-leadership.

Category 3

I feel stuck or without direction in my life as though I'm going nowhere.

I don't feel optimistic about the future, but find myself discouraged.

Life is boring and meaningless.

I am very interested in keeping my life as it always has been so I can feel happy.

If you agree with or say "yes" to any of these, then you are showing signs of AIMLESSNESS

and aren't leading yourself well.

Category 4

I see my problems as the result of someone else's poor choice.

I don't see how my situation will change anytime soon.

I feel powerless.

I struggle to take responsibility for my choices.

If you said, "yes" to any of these, then you may be suffering from a VICTIM MENTALITY and aren't practicing good self-leadership.

How did you score? How many of those "symptoms" describe you? If you

agreed with any of these statements, then your self-leadership is lacking. But here's the good news. By God's grace, there is something we can do to move from these places of defeat and despair to a place of powerful leadership and influence in our lives.

Things to Know to Lead Yourself Well

I believe that there are three basic truths we need to know about our life in God if we are going to lead ourselves well. I'm sure someone else might come up with a different set of three, but I believe these truths from the Scripture will help us to succeed and become the truest expression of ourselves in God. So let's look at them.

The first truth you need to know to lead yourself well is...

You are inexhaustibly forgiven.

Understanding the breadth of our forgiveness is extremely important to maintaining a healthy internal world. If you were here last week, you heard Rick do a masterful job of teaching on this subject of forgiveness. A couple of the key points he made were:

The forgiveness that Jesus offers us as Christians covers all of our sin (past, present, future – all the ones we’re aware of, plus the ones we’re not aware of).

When you do sin – even if it’s the 999th time – all we need to do is confess, repent and rejoice in the grace and forgiveness you have already received in Christ.

Both of those statements are foundational if we are ever going to understand the breadth of God’s forgiveness for us. But I want to share with you a verse from Scripture that expands on this idea of forgiveness even more. It’s found in Romans 5:20:

The Law came in so that the transgression would increase; but where sin increased, grace

**(forgiveness) abounded all the
more. Romans 5:20 NASB**

When you read the last half of this verse in the original language it goes something like this: Where sin abounds, grace (or forgiveness) SUPER abounds. That's literally how it's translated. That's why earlier I used the adjective "inexhaustible" to describe the unlimited forgiveness God offers us as believers in Christ. Inexhaustible is the best word to describe this SUPER abounding grace of God, because it conveys the idea that we can't out sin the grace of God. God's forgiveness SUPER abounds even when it comes to our worst sins. No matter what you have

done as a Christian, no matter how bad, horrible, or awful it may seem to you, God's grace and forgiveness is right there to cover it. This is the same truth that is expressed in the Old Testament book of Lamentations, where the author writes:

The steadfast love of the Lord never ceases; his mercies never come to an end; they are new every morning; great is your faithfulness. Lam 3:22, 23 NIV

I used to think that there was a boundary on God's forgiveness, kind of like the edge of a cliff. Once you come to the edge, you can't go any further. But I

no longer believe that. The older I get, the more I am grasping how vast and wide and deep is the forgiveness of God. It's much bigger and broader than we can even imagine. It's so inexhaustible that God will never turn his back on you no matter how far you have strayed away from him.

What does knowing you have inexhaustible forgiveness have to do with SELF LEADERSHIP?

Simply this: If you believe you have been completely forgiven, you won't get so down on yourself AND you will treat others differently. Your knowledge of God's infinite forgiveness will help you

get off the mat more quickly when you make a mistake and it will help you be more humble and compassionate towards others when they do the same. It's that simple. That's why knowing that you are inexhaustibly forgiveness is so important to self-leadership.

Now besides getting a thorough grasp of God's unlimited forgiveness, you must also understand that...

You have supernatural power.

The moment you place your faith in Christ as the forgiver of your sins and the lord of your life, the Holy Spirit of God takes up residence inside you. Not

only does the Holy Spirit take up residence inside your heart, but he supplies you with supernatural power. This power is mentioned by Paul in Ephesians 3:

Now to him who is able to do far more abundantly than all that we ask or think, according to the power at work within us, to him be glory in the church and in Christ Jesus throughout all generations, forever and ever. Amen. Ephesians 3:20-21 ESV

It is through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit that we who are Christians have abundant resources at our

disposal. The rest of the world knows no such power.

For example, the Holy Spirit gives us the power to love those who hate us and power to face tragedy with inner peace and confidence. I could list many more practical examples of how the power of God can work in and through in us.

But here's the crazy thing: Even though I know God's power lives in me, I often fail to tap into it. My tendency, when faced with most situations in life, is to just use my own strength, or my will power or intellect to get things done. I somehow think I can handle most situations myself.

But when I choose, instead, to trust and rely the Holy Spirit's power, he will

produce extraordinary results through my ordinary words and deeds.

For example, when I'm about to go into a hard counseling session, all I have to do is ask the Holy Spirit to speak through me and he begins to use my ordinary words to accomplish results that I could not accomplish on my own.

Or when I am trying to overcome a bad habit like overeating, I can ask the Holy Spirit to give me the willpower to choose the right foods with the right portions when my flesh would rather binge and overeat.

God wants us to tap into the power of the Holy Spirit to say and do far more than we ever could using our own

strength.

What does knowing that you have supernatural power have to do with SELF LEADERSHIP?

Simply this:

You will never become the God's fullest expression of yourself by limiting your efforts to ONLY what you can accomplish by your own natural strengths and abilities. You will fall short of your potential.

To accomplish all that God wants you to accomplish, you must learn to depend on the Holy Spirit for unlimited power and unlimited resources. You do this through prayer and walking by faith in

every situation. And if God's power is working in you, then that same power is at work in others as well. That means collectively, we can accomplish greater works than even Jesus did on the earth. Jesus himself said this. "I tell you the truth, anyone who believes in me will do the same works I have done, and even greater works, because I am going to be with the Father." John 14:12

.

So an understanding that we possess the supernatural power of God is another important truth to fully grasp if we want to lead ourselves well. The third thing you need to know to practice self-leadership in your life is...

You have an invisible enemy.

We have an enemy who opposes us on every side. This enemy goes by various names in the bible, Satan (“adversary”) and the devil (“false accuser”). In the book of Revelation he is called Abaddon and Apollyon (destroyer). Each of those names points to Satan’s one goal: to “steal, kill and destroy.” John 10:10. His main objective is to wreak havoc on the life of every believer in Christ. Fighting against an enemy like Satan is hard enough as is, but he possesses an extra dimension that makes him that much harder to detect and do battle with. He’s invisible. While this makes him no less real, it makes him that much more

dangerous, like invisible CO2 gas in your home. You don't see it or even know that it's there, but it can kill you if left undetected.

The most lethal aspect of this invisible enemy of ours is that he's "the father of lies". And if you don't protect yourself against his lies, you will succumb to his lies and they will ruin your life.

So what are some of the more common lies of the devil? Let me share with you three that I think are especially dangerous: one is about God, one is about others and one is about yourself.

The first lie about God is this:

Satan wants you to think that God

isn't really good, that He can't be trusted.

This is the lie he tried to get Adam and Eve to believe in the Garden of Eden. Satan tried to convince them that because God wouldn't let them eat from the tree in the middle of the garden, He wasn't good and so he couldn't be trusted.

Just like back then, the devil now wants you to believe that God is doesn't have your best interests in mind.

Whenever you don't get what you want out of life or your prayers aren't answered the way you hoped, the devil will fill you with thoughts that God is holding out on you, and there's no point

in following him. He wants you to become suspicious of God, because once you become suspicious about God, you'll start acting independently of Him. That's his goal.

But here's the truth: God can be trusted, even though doesn't always give us exactly what we want. His goodness and triumphs look differently than ours at times because he has the long view in mind, not just the short view. So the first lie is that God isn't good and can't be trusted.

The next lie concerning others is this:

The devil wants you to believe that all of your speculations and assumptions about other people

are true.

This is another big lie of the enemy. If he can make you think that “so and so” is thinking poorly of you, or hates you, or no longer has your best interest in mind, then he has snared you. Once he has you speculating about a relationship, he will fill you with all sorts of negative thoughts about that person and before you know it, you have “horrible-ized” that person in your mind. You start speculating and “climbing the ladder of assumption”. This occurs whenever you begin to make assumptions about a person without knowing the facts.

But here’s the truth friends: God wants

us to live by the facts and not by assumption. He wants us to take our thoughts captive and destroy speculation. We destroy speculation through loving dialogue with whomever we have doubts about. That's why 1/1 truth-telling conversations with other people are so important. When you meet face to face with another person, you can get the facts and destroy any speculation and remove all doubt about what's really going on in the relationship.

So the second lie is you should believe all your speculations about others.

Now the third lie concerning yourself is this:

**The enemy wants you to believe
that you're all alone.**

Just like a lion in the wild, the enemy
wants to separate you from the herd so
that you are more easily destroyed.

Satan loves

detached believers,

unplugged from the life of the Body,

isolated from God's family, and

unaccountable to spiritual friends.

He knows that if he can isolate you and

make you think you have no friends or

that everyone is against you, then he's

won the battle. He knows that believing

this lie will cause you to feel helpless

and depressed, and then he can plant

discouraging, and hateful things in your mind,

But the truth is, people like those of here at NHCC DO care about you. That's why we encourage you to get in a small group. When you are in a small group, you discover that people care about you, and then you can fill your mind with hope and light and there's no room for the enemy's dark thoughts.

What does being aware of our invisible enemy have to do with SELF LEADERSHIP?

Simply this:

You will get too easily discouraged and lose heart unless you accept the fact that

you are being opposed at every turn by Satan. And if you know you are being opposed by an invisible enemy, then you will take the necessary precautions to protect yourself from his attacks.

You will put on God's armor, like is outlined in Ephesians 6. You will fill you mind with truth to combat his lies. You will live by facts and not by speculation. You will stay focused on the bigger picture of what God is doing in your life and in the lives of others instead of getting sucked into all of the relational speculation and worldly pursuits that the devil wants to drag you into.

By avoiding these three lies of the enemy about God, and knowing that we

are battling against an invisible enemy, we are practicing good self-leadership and strengthening ourselves in the Lord, just like David did in the Old Testament.

Conclusion

As we said in the beginning of this message, we all are influencers and therefore we are called to lead. As leaders, we must care for, nurture and manage our internal world. We must build our lives on the knowledge that we are inexhaustibly forgiven, and that we have the supernatural power of the Holy Spirit within us, and that we have an invisible enemy that we must defend against.

When we build our lives on these truths,

we are practicing good self-leadership. We are doing exactly what the writer of the Proverbs tell us to do. He says,

**Above all else, guard your heart,
for everything you do flows from
it. Proverbs. 4:23**

Friends, God is calling us to become inside-out leaders — leaders who first take care of what's happening on the inside before worrying about what's going on on the outside. And when what's happening on the inside is good, then we will lead well and we will appreciate others more and influence them for good and become the truest expression of ourselves in God.

Let's pray.

Closing Comments

Offering at the door

Don't forget to sign up for fireworks

Next week, we will continue our series,

Thinking Clearly