

**Discipleship Groups — Level 7**  
**WEEK 1**  
**Life Check: My Spiritual Leadership**

During this next round of discipleship, we are continuing to examine our lives to make sure we are still in the faith, as 2 Corinthians 13:5 says, *“Examine yourselves to see if your faith is genuine.”* So, that is what we are doing! This time is going to be a bit different than last round of discipleship. This time we are doing a men’s track and women’s track. So, this teaching is specifically designed for men and the things we deal with.

This first session is dealing with our spiritual leadership as men. This is a very big topic, and in the few minutes of this video, it is impossible to cover everything that could be said. However, let’s start with a quick orientation on where our spiritual leadership begins—it begins with, first, surrendering our lives to Jesus, and then, there are decisions that we have to make about how we are going to live our lives in Jesus. There is no room for passivity. The man who is passive about his faith is one who will never grow into the man God has called him to be, and subsequently, will never lead spiritually in any of the circles of influence for which God has made him.

The reality of how God designed life is that we, as the men, are to be the spiritual leaders of our homes. Too often we abdicate this role for a variety of reasons—some of which have to do with not taking care of our spiritual life or not taking it as seriously as we ought to. As surely as an athlete that stops training is reduced in his physical capacity to excel in his sport, a weakened spiritual life will produce weakened spiritual leadership in our homes. As men, God has made us with great capabilities that we too often tend to be reticent about walking into. Maybe it is from ignorance or a terrible sense of failure—failures that we have committed in the past, or fear of failures that could be if we step fully into our God-given role.

In the beginning, Adam was created before his wife, and he was created to love, serve, protect, and cover his wife, and she was created as one who would come alongside him. When the serpent deceived the woman, the man failed in every aspect to lead, defend, cover, protect, and redeem his wife—it was the first failure of the man in the garden. I wonder if that has some effect on us as men all through the long generations from Adam to today. Whereas Adam failed in his spiritual oversight in the garden, there is a hesitancy among men to take full spiritual authority in their lives and families.

In walking into our spiritual authority, we need to decide what kind of people we are going to become—and I’m not talking about Christian or non-Christian; I’m talking about being a productive, fruitful Christian, or one who lives passively and let’s their faith become fruitless. Listen to this parable Jesus told:

*“Listen! A farmer went out to plant some seeds. As he scattered them across his field, some seeds fell on a footpath, and the birds came and ate them. Other seeds fell on*

*shallow soil with underlying rock. The seeds sprouted quickly because the soil was shallow. But the plants soon wilted under the hot sun, and since they didn't have deep roots, they died. Other seeds fell among thorns that grew up and choked out the tender plants. Still other seeds fell on fertile soil, and they produced a crop that was thirty, sixty, and even a hundred times as much as had been planted! Anyone with ears to hear should listen and understand."*

There are four types of soil, and we each have a decision to make as to which type we are going to be. The first is one that is totally hard-hearted. There is a part of us that needs to guard our hearts from becoming hard. There can be indulgence with sin, or straight up pride that, over time, hardens us toward receiving further anything God has for us. It is painful to watch good men, who genuinely love God, become fruitless in their families, churches, and spiritual lives because of a hard pride that disallows them to repent, receive, be instructed, be humble, and subsequently grow in God's Word. This attitude cannot be allowed and must be vigilantly guarded against.

The second and third types of soil are equally dangerous to all of us—because in both the rocky and the weed-filled soil, BOTH of them actually do hear and receive the Word of God! They did not reject it; they accept it gladly and even began to grow!

The men with rocky soil are those who receive God's Word with gladness and start to grow, but they have no depth; they are shallow. They are content to simply hear and grow a little bit. They believe, and then pay little more than lip service to their faith. There is not a life of discipline, full commitment, or integration into the family of God. There is some growth, but their growth IS NOT ENOUGH TO SUSTAIN THEM—there is not enough of a life that is rooted in Jesus and in God's Word for them to resist the difficulties and hardships of this life. It is the man who, after confessing faith, encounters the realities of life and decides that God did him wrong. After all, shouldn't it be easier? Isn't God good, and yet hard and bad things have happened! He walks away in his ignorance and pride, and he never ends up growing to fruitfulness, but the faith he once had withers away.

The other type of soil is the one that has weeds in it. The same thing happens: the Word of God is received, the soil is better than the rocky soil, and the roots might even start going deeper, and the man is getting stronger. He grows and his faith might even start to bud with fruit. But the weeds are also being allowed to grow in the soil alongside the plant—the cares and worries of this life; the addictions, the lust for money, the too much work—they all get in the way of our growing faith and end up choking any sort of fruitfulness we would have had. We make excuses for it: Well, I'm just being a man and doing what I've gotta do. But the reality is that our eyes are elsewhere, our priorities are elsewhere, our hearts are elsewhere, and the faith we had is choked out by many other things that vie for our attention. He decides that there is too much to do, and following Jesus is too hard and takes too much time. The fruit that was growing which is rich towards God is replaced with the temporary and much less satisfying fruits of this life that don't really gain us anything.

What God is looking for is the fruit of our faith, the fruit of a spiritual life that is dynamic and vital with the Power of the Holy Spirit and the living presence of Jesus Christ. It is so easy to become a plant that is fruitless, and then we end up deceiving ourselves, believing that we are in the faith when there's really little to no fruit. If God is the farmer and his Word is the seed, but the seed is not adequately growing and bearing fruit because other things have priority and are choking out God's life from us, then can we really say that we're still in the faith?

So, our spiritual leadership starts with our spiritual life and making sure that we're not allowing weeds to grow with the cares of this life, the deceitfulness of riches and lust that are choking out God's life in us so that the fruit that we have is dying or that we end up not bearing any fruit. This is true not only for a new believer, but for a long-term believer, too. Just as a tiny plant can die, so can a big one—it just takes longer—but it can die all the same and lose the fruit it once had.

This is a hard truth to swallow, but it's one that is necessary. Our worship life is taking God seriously as king over our life, so we need to examine ourselves to make sure that our life is pleasing to the King and that our heart is not becoming hardened, and it's being kept clean from stones and weeds.

Our spiritual leadership is something that we exercise in our homes and in our church. God made the woman and our children to respond to male leadership and covering. God has given it to men. Women should not carry the weight of this—and do when we have somehow abdicated that role. There are four areas of leadership that will give our families a sense of security. First: Financial security—that we are working hard to provide for them. Second: emotional security—that we are available for them, and that we do not disconnect from them when we get home. Third: physical security—that they feel physically safe with us and that we are not lording our strength over them in anger and intimidation. And fourth: spiritual security. Many things could be said about each one of those categories, but we're focusing on the spiritual. Your wife and your family need you to be the spiritual leader of the home. There is nothing as powerful as when the man of the house takes spiritual charge.

First of all, you are taking time with Jesus personally and also praying for your family. There is nothing that will grow your life and spiritual leadership more than taking time to be with Jesus. Talk to Him and let Him talk to you. Read your Bible! Growing in Jesus doesn't happen all by itself—it's a decision that you have to make.

Secondly, keep your life clean. This takes lots of intentionality and personal accountability with other brothers. This is difficult in the days we live in, but you will only be as accountable as you want to be—no one can force you—you have to want to be. I want to encourage you to find another brother who is faithful and trustworthy to pray together about things in your life that are out of order, things you struggle with, and things that just need prayer covering.

Thirdly, you need to be making Jesus the priority in your family's life above everything else. Church is not an extra-curricular activity, it is essential to who we are as God's people. When other things come up, church is not the first thing that gets thrown aside.

These are a few very simple ways we can begin to exercise our spiritual authority. It starts by deciding that Jesus is King. Then, we decide that we are going to live by what He says and engage in the things that will keep our lives clean and growing.

God bless you, and we'll see you next week!