

A Leader's Walk with Christ

As Moses was leading God's people out of Egypt, it was important for him to spend time alone with God as well as the people. Dr. Lynn Anderson writes, "...Moses couldn't stay too long in either place. If he stayed too long with the people, he eventually had no glory to reflect. He had to go back into the Presence. But if he stayed only in the Presence, he was of no value to the people."

As a shepherd, you too need to be a student of both the Lord as well as your people. Spending too much time in either place will prohibit you from leading well. This will cause you undue frustration, poor spiritual health, and a quick exit from leading. To learn how to spend time with your people, please refer to the role of Caregiver and Coach.

How can you be a student of the Lord? God communicates to his people through his "means of grace." These means are the "instruments in which the Holy Spirit enables believers to receive Christ and the benefits of redemption." (<https://tabletalkmagazine.com/article/2020/06/what-is-a-means-of-grace/>) These instruments include the Holy Scriptures, prayer, and the sacraments.

1. God's Word

Spending regular time reading, processing and applying biblical truth is critical for Christians, especially for shepherds, to grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus Christ (2 Peter 3:18).

Create a daily routine of time reading and studying God's Word for yourself. The apostle Paul tells us to, "... be transformed by the renewing of our mind" (Romans 12:2) and that the Word is, "... useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:16-17). By the grace of God, the goal of being a student of God's word is to have the Spirit illuminate meaning and transform how you live.

2. Prayer

Richard Foster says, "Prayer catapults us into the frontier of the spiritual life." Put simply, leaders pray! Spend time in prayer on a daily basis. Use this ACTS model to help improve your effectiveness. It can be practiced in as little as fifteen minutes.

- **Adoration** (Psalm 100) – spend several minutes in praising of God and His character. Choose one (or several) of his attributes to verbally praise Him for.
- **Confession** (1 John 1:9) – review your day (or previous day) and inventory any thoughts, words, actions or omissions that would be displeasing to the Lord. Share those – speak them to Him and telling him your sorrow and dissatisfaction in those. Once done, forget them – they're behind you.
- **Thanksgiving** (Luke 17:9-11; 1 Thess. 5:16-18) – simply count your blessings! Consider making a mental or written list. Think through your blessings: Spiritual, relational, material and physical.
- **Supplication** (Phil. 4:6-7; 1 John 5:14-15) – Pray for the needs of others (family and friends), yourself, the world, those who don't know Jesus and your church.

3. Corporate Worship

One of the most underrated aspects of spiritual health is attendance and participation in corporate worship. If personal prayer is drinking from a water foundation, participation in corporate worship is a firehose of the "means of grace."

Corporate worship includes every element we are talking about in this section. It is the people of God meeting together to pray, listen to the word preached, worship through song, and partake in the sacraments.

The sacraments of Baptism and the Lord's Table are of utmost importance for the believer. As Augustine said, "Sacraments are visible signs of invisible grace." We are deprived of God's grace when we neglect the corporate worship with God's people. When we diminish corporate worship to a dull or at worst optional exercise, we are choosing to be a student of the world and not a student of the Lord and his people.

How can the shepherds lead well if in their pursuit of studying God, they neglect worshiping with their brothers and sisters?

4. Holy Spirit-led

A common trait of all great spiritual leaders, throughout Scripture and history is that their lives and ministries were led by the Holy Spirit. A leader who walks with the Spirit is empowered to lead a responsible Christ-honoring life and a ministry characterized by authentic relationships with God and others. It is also fruit-bearing. Galatians 5:22-23 provides for us what this looks like.

John 16:5-15 reminds us that the Spirit is our helper, guide and teacher of truth.

To walk in the Spirit requires:

- **Faith** – Trust God and His Word. Taking steps of faith means not depending on yourself (or anything / anyone else) other than the Lord to provide. Begin to give up your own control and submit yourself (and your life) to His. This is the point that the Holy Spirit's work becomes evident.
- **Devote** – Devote yourself to reading the Bible. The Spirit uses the Word of God to empower people of God to do the works of God.
- **Mind** – Consciously begin to focus your mind on the things of the Spirit. Pay attention to what is God honoring; relationships, words, decisions, thoughts and activities. Paul challenges the believer about this in Romans 8:5-9.
- **Breathe** – Bill Bright, founder of Campus Crusade for Christ, introduced the concept of Spiritual breathing that helps the Christian walk in the Spirit, even at times of sin saying, "If you retake the throne of your life through sin – a definite act of disobedience – breathe spiritually. Spiritual breathing (exhaling the impure and inhaling the pure) is an exercise in faith that enables you to experience God's love and forgiveness."
 - **Exhale:** Confess your sin – agree with God concerning your sin and thank Him for His forgiveness of it. Confession involves repentance – a change of attitude and action
 - **Inhale:** Surrender the control of your life to Christ, and receive the fullness of the Holy Spirit by faith. Trust that He now directs and empowers you, according to Ephesians 5:18 and 1 John 5:14-15.