

FOUNDATIONS—
ESSENTIALS FOR
LEADERSHIP AND MINISTRY
A 14-Day Devotional

Written by
Pastor Eric VonRaeder

Introduction

The purpose of this leadership & ministry devotional guide is to help give church leaders and ministers insight into Biblical principles for Godly service.

This leadership & ministry devotional guide is by no means exhaustive. It is meant to give some basic Biblical foundational principles to build on. It also sets forth some expectations related to those serving in ministry at NLCF.

Day 1—The Plan and the Purpose

1. From the beginning, God has had a plan for each and every one of us.

Genesis 1:28 NLT

“Then God blessed them and said, “Be fruitful and multiply. Fill the earth and govern it. Reign over the fish in the sea, the birds in the sky, and all the animals that scurry along the ground.”

2. When Jesus called His first followers, He called them with a purpose in mind. He didn’t call them to just hang out with Him.

Matthew 4:19 NLT

“Come, follow me,” Jesus said, “and I will make you fishers of men.”

3. We were created by God for great and noble intentions.

Ephesians 2:10 NLT

“For we are God’s masterpiece. He has created us anew in Christ Jesus, so we can do the good things he planned for us long ago.”

4. Our main purpose is to witness to the awesomeness of God and bring honor to Him.

Acts 1:8 NLT

“But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Matthew 5:13-16 NLT

“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.”

5. We have been commissioned by Christ to reach a lost and dying world with His good news of salvation.

Matthew 28:18-20 NLT

“Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

Today's Questions for Thought:

- Do you realize that your life is not your own?

- Do you realize that you were created by God for His purposes?

- Do you agree or disagree with this concept? Please explain your answer.

Day 2—Salvation

God has created us for a purpose—to have a life-giving, personal relationship with Him through His Son, Jesus Christ.

It is so important to realize it isn't our serving or not serving that God uses to guarantee our salvation—we are saved through our hearts being humbled enough to ask for forgiveness of sins committed and inviting Jesus Christ into our lives. We then serve out of that sense of love, gratitude and commitment.

John 3:16 NLT

“For God loved the world so much that he gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life.”

Romans 3:25, 27 NLT

“For God presented Jesus as the sacrifice for sin. People are made right with God when they believe that Jesus sacrificed his life, shedding his blood...Can we boast, then, that we have done anything to be accepted by God? No, because our acquittal is not based on obeying the law. It is based on faith.”

Again, this main idea begs to be brought out again—in order to be a healthy servant and to be able to serve in a healthy frame of mind—it is essential that we have a saving relationship with Jesus.

We don't want to put the cart in front of the horse. It isn't our serving in the church that makes us right with God. It is accepting God's righteousness in our lives through receiving Jesus into our hearts as our personal Lord and Savior.

I have a friend in fulltime ministry. He once told me that he had been serving in the church for many years and wasn't saved—hadn't truly given his life and heart over to Jesus Christ. He was even serving as a church elder. He attended services, gave the tithe, was a “good person” but didn't know Jesus personally. He, in essence, was “working” for Jesus, not *servicing* for Jesus.

Today's Questions for Thought:

- When did you give your life to Jesus?
- Describe the moment when you repented of your sins and received Jesus as your personal Lord and Savior?
- How are you certain that you are saved?
- Do you need to meet with your leader to discuss if you are unsure?

Day 3—Spiritual Gifts

Every born-again Christian has been endowed by God with spiritual gifts. A spiritual gift is a divine enablement given by God to His children. The purpose of spiritual gifts is to build up the Body of Christ also known as the Church. The Church is not simply a building or institution. It is a living organism made up of every Christ-follower around the world. There are local gatherings of Christ-followers. We are denomination and non-denominational. We are conservative and charismatic. But we are not an island unto ourselves. We are brothers and sisters that are connected to the Church—Body of Christ—around the globe.

Every Christ-follower is gifted and plays a key role in the growth and health of the Church. One of the best passages of scriptures that describes the connection of the body of Christ and spiritual gifts is 1 Corinthians 12:

1 Corinthians 12 NLT

“Now, dear brothers and sisters, regarding your question about the special abilities the Spirit gives us. I don’t want you to misunderstand this. ² You know that when you were still pagans, you were led astray and swept along in worshiping speechless idols. ³ So I want you to know that no one speaking by the Spirit of God will curse Jesus, and no one can say Jesus is Lord, except by the Holy Spirit.

⁴ There are different kinds of spiritual gifts, but the same Spirit is the source of them all. ⁵ There are different kinds of service, but we serve the same Lord. ⁶ God works in different ways, but it is the same God who does the work in all of us.

⁷ A spiritual gift is given to each of us so we can help each other. ⁸ To one person the Spirit gives the ability to give wise advice; to another the same Spirit gives a message of special knowledge. ⁹ The same Spirit gives great faith to another, and to someone else the one Spirit gives the gift of healing. ¹⁰ He gives one person the power to perform miracles, and another the ability to prophesy. He gives someone else the ability to discern whether a message is from the Spirit of God or from another spirit. Still another person is given the ability to speak in unknown languages, while another is given the ability to interpret what is being said. ¹¹ It is the one and only Spirit who distributes all these gifts. He alone decides which gift each person should have.

¹² The human body has many parts, but the many parts make up one whole body. So it is with the body of Christ. ¹³ Some of us are Jews, some are Gentiles, some are slaves, and some are free. But we have all been baptized into one body by one Spirit, and we all share the same Spirit.

¹⁴ Yes, the body has many different parts, not just one part. ¹⁵ If the foot says, ‘I am not a part of the body because I am not a hand,’ that does not make it any less a part of the body. ¹⁶ And if the ear says, ‘I am not part of the body because I am not an eye,’ would that make it any less a part of the body? ¹⁷ If the whole body were an eye, how would you hear? Or if your whole body were an ear, how would you smell anything?

¹⁸ But our bodies have many parts, and God has put each part just where he wants it. ¹⁹ How strange a body would be if it had only one part! ²⁰ Yes, there are many parts, but only one body. ²¹ The eye can never say to the hand, ‘I don’t need you.’ The head can’t say to the feet, ‘I don’t need you.’

²²In fact, some parts of the body that seem weakest and least important are actually the most necessary. ²³And the parts we regard as less honorable are those we clothe with the greatest care. So we carefully protect those parts that should not be seen, ²⁴while the more honorable parts do not require this special care. So God has put the body together such that extra honor and care are given to those parts that have less dignity. ²⁵This makes for harmony among the members, so that all the members care for each other. ²⁶If one part suffers, all the parts suffer with it, and if one part is honored, all the parts are glad.

²⁷All of you together are Christ's body, and each of you is a part of it. ²⁸Here are some of the parts God has appointed for the church:

first are apostles,
second are prophets,
third are teachers,
then those who do miracles,
those who have the gift of healing,
those who can help others,
those who have the gift of leadership,
those who speak in unknown languages.

²⁹Are we all apostles? Are we all prophets? Are we all teachers? Do we all have the power to do miracles? ³⁰Do we all have the gift of healing? Do we all have the ability to speak in unknown languages? Do we all have the ability to interpret unknown languages? Of course not! ³¹So you should earnestly desire the most helpful gifts."

We, as Christ-followers, have all been blessed by God with spiritual gifts. No one is exempt. There is no spiritual gift of "spectator." We have been called and gifted to serve Jesus and each other. It is imperative that you discover, develop, and deploy your spiritual gifts. If you do not know what your gifts are, please let your ministry leader, the pastors, or NLCF's office know so we can help you find your place in community.

I think the following vision statement from the *Boulder Valley Vineyard Christian Fellowship* sums it up:

"We believe that God has designed the church to function as a unified body of spiritually gifted ethnically and socially diverse men, women and children, loving and serving one another in humility, availability and submission, thereby presenting a compelling case to the world around them for trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation."

How do we serve? We have been called into service. We know what our gifts are, but how do we serve the Lord? Here are some Biblical perspectives:

- **First Biblical Perspective—We serve in and out of Love.**

1 Corinthians 13 NLT

"But now let me show you a way of life that is best of all.

If I could speak all the languages of earth and of angels, but didn't love others, I would only be a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. ²If I had the gift of prophecy, and if I understood all of God's secret plans and possessed all knowledge, and if I had such faith that I could move mountains, but

didn't love others, I would be nothing. ³If I gave everything I have to the poor and even sacrificed my body, I could boast about it; but if I didn't love others, I would have gained nothing.

⁴Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud ⁵or rude. It does not demand its own way. It is not irritable, and it keeps no record of being wronged. ⁶It does not rejoice about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. ⁷Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

⁸Prophecy and speaking in unknown languages and special knowledge will become useless. But love will last forever! ⁹Now our knowledge is partial and incomplete, and even the gift of prophecy reveals only part of the whole picture! ¹⁰But when full understanding comes, these partial things will become useless.

¹¹When I was a child, I spoke and thought and reasoned as a child. But when I grew up, I put away childish things. ¹²Now we see things imperfectly as in a cloudy mirror, but then we will see everything with perfect clarity. All that I know now is partial and incomplete, but then I will know everything completely, just as God now knows me completely.

¹³Three things will last forever—faith, hope, and love—and the greatest of these is love.”

Paul says in effect that spiritual gifts are simply a means to an end. The beginning and the end is living in the love of God. Too often we focus on the “means” and not the “end.”

Love is the central ethical expression of the Christian faith, the primary fruit of the Holy Spirit, and one of the most important motivations for ministry.

Paul summed up the whole essence of Christian ethics as; “*The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love.*” Galatians 5:6 NLT

One day my wife asked me, “Do you love your flock?” I had to stop and think about it. I was so focused on *servicing* my flock that I wasn't focused on *loving* them. I was glad for the heart check. I needed it. Even as I write this devotional guide, I am being checked by the Spirit about my lack of love at times. God helps us to serve out of a heart of God's love for one another!

Today's Questions for Thought:

- In what ways are you serving out of love?

- What obstacles to loving others or serving out of love, do you face?

- Do you need to ask God to forgive you for your lack of love? Write out your prayer.

- Do you personally need to receive His love so you can love others?

- Do you know how you are spiritually gifted?

- Would you be willing to take the Networking test on our website: newlifebootjack.com?
Please discuss this with your leader.

Day 5—Third Biblical Perspective—*A Servant's Heart*

Many times we do things to get things that gratify us. In other words, we are self-serving. It is ingrained into us. Everywhere we look there are more opportunities to serve yourself, to take care of number one. But we are to serve as Jesus did—with a servant's heart. We are not here to serve ourselves. We are called to serve the Lord. There are benefits and joys in serving God. But it isn't always easy or fun.

The early church fathers saw themselves as servants—even as slaves—to Christ. Too often in our cultural Christianity, we serve God as *volunteers* and not as *servants*. A volunteer serves on his terms and commitment level. They can choose when they are going to serve or when they are not going to serve. They even stay in control. A servant serves on the master's terms and relinquishes his care and control to the master. Even if it is an inconvenience to them, they still serve with a joyful spirit. Big difference!

Romans 1:1 NLT

“This letter is from Paul, a slave of Christ Jesus, chosen by God to be an apostle and sent out to preach his Good News.”

2 Peter 1:1 NLT

“This letter is from Simon Peter, a slave and apostle of Jesus Christ.”

James 1:1 NLT

“This letter is from James, a slave of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.”

Jude 1:1 NLT

“This letter is from Jude, a slave of Jesus Christ and a brother of James.”

Philippians 2:5-11 NLT

“You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.

⁶Though he was God,
he did not think of equality with God
as something to cling to.

⁷Instead, he gave up his divine privileges;
he took the humble position of a slave
and was born as a human being.

When he appeared in human form,
⁸he humbled himself in obedience to God
and died a criminal's death on a cross.

⁹Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor
and gave him the name above all other names,

¹⁰that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow,
in heaven and on earth and under the earth,

¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord,
to the glory of God the Father.”

John 13:12-17 NLT

“After washing their feet, he put on his robe again and sat down and asked, ‘Do you understand what I was doing?’ ¹³You call me ‘Teacher’ and ‘Lord,’ and you are right, because that’s what I am. ¹⁴And since I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other’s feet. ¹⁵I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you. ¹⁶I tell you the truth; slaves are not greater than their master. Nor is the messenger more important than the one who sends the message. ¹⁷Now that you know these things, God will bless you for doing them.”

Today’s Questions for Thought:

- Explain the spiritual thought process between “volunteering” and “serving”?

- How can you be a servant with a joyful spirit?

- Do you agree or disagree with this concept? Please explain your answer.

Day 6—Fourth Biblical Perspective—Responsibility & Honor

It is an honor to serve the Lord and His people. It is also a great responsibility. Just think, God chose you to be in His service. To care for His children and to share His love to the world. Imagine the great honor and sense of responsibility you would feel if someone of high standing that you respected very much turned their greatest possession over to you to care for. That is what God has done. He has given us the honor of representing Him and His love to one another and the world around us. We should be honored and treat this charge as a wonderful gift to treasure and take care of.

Joshua 18:7 NLT

“The Levites, however, do not get a portion among you, because the priestly service of the LORD is their inheritance.”

1st Timothy 1:11 NLT

“The glorious Good News entrusted to me by our blessed God.”

2 Corinthians 4:6-7 NLT

“For God, who said, “Let there be light in the darkness,” has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

⁷We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.”

Hebrews 13:17 NLT

*“**Obey** your spiritual **leaders**, and do what they say. Their work is to watch over your souls, and they are accountable to God. Give them reason to do this with joy and not with sorrow. That would certainly not be for your benefit.”*

Today’s Questions for Thought:

- Do I honestly recognize the honor and the responsibility that I have in serving God?

- On a scale of 1 (being the lowest) through 10 (being the highest)—how would I rate my commitment level to serving God and His people?

- Are there any changes in how I serve God that I need to make or let Him make?

Day 7—Fifth Biblical Perspective—Biblical Qualifications

Let's look at some of the biblical qualifications for serving. There are a variety of services within the Body of Christ. But the qualification for any service is similar.

Let's consider this passage from Acts.

Acts 6:1-8 NLT

“But as the believers rapidly multiplied, there were rumblings of discontent. The Greek-speaking believers complained about the Hebrew-speaking believers, saying that their widows were being discriminated against in the daily distribution of food.

² So the Twelve called a meeting of all the believers. They said, ‘We apostles should spend our time teaching the word of God, not running a food program. ³ And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility. ⁴ Then we apostles can spend our time in prayer and teaching the word.’”

⁵ Everyone liked this idea, and they chose the following: Stephen (a man full of faith and the Holy Spirit), Philip, Procorus, Nicanor, Timon, Parmenas, and Nicolas of Antioch (an earlier convert to the Jewish faith). ⁶ These seven were presented to the apostles, who prayed for them as they laid their hands on them.

⁷ So God's message continued to spread. The number of believers greatly increased in

⁸ Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people.”

Notice several key points. There was a very real need. Food needed to be distributed in an equitable way. The apostles recognized the need; they also knew that they could not let the need to care for the widows distract them from what they were called to do. Notice they did not jump in and carry the load or solve the problem. This is a big difference from the way many pastors and parishioners view church life. They think that hey, this is what they are being paid to do, so what happens? The clergy do all of the ministry and the church members are mere spectators!

The apostles had the people pick several servants to meet the need. Here were the qualifications; godly character that was recognized by the community; Spirit-filled and steeped in Godly wisdom.

Acts 6:3 NLT

“And so, brothers, select seven men who are well respected and are full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will give them this responsibility.”

Notice also the power of the servants and the importance of their ministry.

Acts 6:8 NLT

“Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed amazing miracles and signs among the people.”

Stephan was anointed by the Holy Spirit and not only performed great miracles, but was the first recorded martyr for Christ.

By the time the early church was growing and expanding throughout the Roman world, the need to define church roles and qualifications was necessary. We will look to Paul's writing to Timothy to gain a greater understanding of these roles.

Paul describes two types of servants, *elders* and *deacons*. The word elder means "overseer" and deacon means "one who serves." Typically, an elder is viewed as a person that is involved in church leadership and deacons are involved in serving the needs within the congregation.

Notice that Paul addresses the character of the elder and deacon more than just specific duties.

1 Timothy 3:1-13 NLT

"This is a trustworthy saying: "If someone aspires to be an elder, he desires an honorable position."² So an elder must be a man whose life is above reproach. He must be faithful to his wife. He must exercise self-control, live wisely, and have a good reputation. He must enjoy having guests in his home, and he must be able to teach.³ He must not be a heavy drinker or be violent. He must be gentle, not quarrelsome, and not love money.⁴ He must manage his own family well, having children who respect and obey him.⁵ For if a man cannot manage his own household, how can he take care of God's church?

⁶ *An elder must not be a new believer, because he might become proud, and the devil would cause him to fall.⁷ Also, people outside the church must speak well of him so that he will not be disgraced and fall into the devil's trap.*

⁸ *In the same way, deacons must be well respected and have integrity. They must not be heavy drinkers or dishonest with money.⁹ They must be committed to the mystery of the faith now revealed and must live with a clear conscience.¹⁰ Before they are appointed as deacons, let them be closely examined. If they pass the test, then let them serve as deacons.*

¹¹ *In the same way, their wives must be respected and must not slander others. They must exercise self-control and be faithful in everything they do.*

¹² *A deacon must be faithful to his wife, and he must manage his children and household well.¹³ Those who do well as deacons will be rewarded with respect from others and will have increased confidence in their faith in Christ Jesus."*

Some of the character qualities that the Bible affirms are: integrity, faithfulness, self-control, honesty, worthy of respect.

When we recognize people for particular areas of service, it is important that we do so with the above passage of scripture as our guide. The character of the servant is more important than what they do. We should never rush anyone into ministry or look to simply fill a vacancy. When we do not adhere to Biblical standards for ministry qualifications, the result is usually not God blessed.

Day 8—Sixth Biblical Perspective—Leadership Responsibilities

Leadership responsibilities include, but are not limited to: teaching, preaching, prayer, encouraging, setting an example of a godly lifestyle, managing church resources, church operations, ministry oversight, ministry team development, church discipline and restoration, policy setting, and whatever other challenges and opportunities that may rise.

Titus 1:7 NLT

“For the overseer must be above reproach as God’s steward.”

The Greek word for steward is “Oikonomia” and means; a person who manages a household, business, or other significant responsibility. The steward is generally a person of authority who is accountable to a superior. Leaders are managers of God’s household.

James 5:14, 15 NLT

“Is anyone among you sick? Then he must call for the elders of the church and they are to pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord; ¹⁵and the prayer offered in faith will restore the one who is sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they will be forgiven him.”

Titus 1:9 NLT

“He must have a strong belief in the trustworthy message he was taught; then he will be able to encourage others with wholesome teaching and show those who oppose it where they are wrong.”

Acts 20:28 NLT

“So guard yourselves and God’s people. Feed and shepherd God’s flock—his church, purchased with his own blood—over which the Holy Spirit has appointed you as elders.”

Leaders and ministers in the church have a variety of functions. Areas of service will vary due to calling, gifting and needs. But the theme of scripture is clear; we are called to manage God’s household in a manner worthy of the name of Jesus.

1 Peter 5:2-4 NLT

“Care for the flock that God has entrusted to you. Watch over it willingly, not grudgingly—not for what you will get out of it, but because you are eager to serve God. ³Don’t lord it over the people assigned to your care, but lead them by your own good example. ⁴And when the Great Shepherd appears, you will receive a crown of never-ending glory and honor.”

Today’s Questions for Thought:

- In what ways do I show how seriously do I take the call to serve God and His people?
- Do I understand what is expected from me?
- What is my attitude when it comes to serving?

Day 9—Seventh Biblical Perspective—Tithing/Financial Giving

As a leader, the Apostle Paul said to follow his example.

Titus 2:7 NLT

“And you yourself must be an example to them by doing good works of every kind. Let everything you do reflect the integrity and seriousness of your teaching.”

The Bible has much to say about finances and the giving of money. However, money and the Biblical view of financial stewardship is often challenged, mistaken and even abused. How we handle money is a reflection of our relationship with God. Jesus said, “*You cannot serve God and money.*” Good works of every kind includes giving of our monetary resources.

Here are just a few of the verses that our Lord put in the Bible that instructs us about the importance of the act of tithing.

Malachi 3:8-10 NLT

“‘Should people cheat God? Yet you have cheated Me!’ But you ask, ‘What do you mean? When did we ever cheat You?’ ‘You have cheated Me of the tithes and offerings due to me. You are under a curse, for your whole nation has been cheating me. Bring all the tithes into the storehouse so there will be enough food in My Temple. If you do,’ says the Lord of Heaven’s Armies, ‘I will open the windows of heaven for you. I will pour out a blessing so great you won’t have enough room to take it in! Try it! Put me to the test!’”

Luke 6:38 NKJV

“Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you.”

Matthew 23:23 NLT

“What sorrow awaits you teachers of religious law and you Pharisees. Hypocrites! For you are careful to tithe even the tiniest income from your herb gardens, but you ignore the more important aspects of the law—justice, mercy, and faith. You should tithe, yes, but do not neglect the more important things.”

Mark 12:41-44 NLT

“Jesus sat down near the collection box in the Temple and watched as the crowds dropped in their money. Many rich people put in large amounts. Then a poor widow came and dropped in two small coins. Jesus called His disciples to Him and said, ‘I tell you the truth, this poor widow has given more than all the others who are making contributions. For they gave a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she had to live on.’”

Acts 4:32-35 NLT

“All the believers were united in heart and mind. And they felt that what they owned was not their own, so they shared everything they had. The apostles testified powerfully to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus, and God’s great blessing was upon them all. There were no needy people among them, because those who owned land or houses would sell them and bring the money to the apostles to give to those in need.”

I Corinthians 16:2 NLT

“On the first day of each week, you should each put aside a portion of the money you have earned. Don’t wait until I get there and then try to collect it all at once.”

2 Corinthians 9:6-9 NLT

“Remember this—a farmer who plants only a few seeds will get a small crop. But the one who plants generously will get a generous crop. You must each decide in your heart how much to give. And don’t give reluctantly or in response to pressure. ‘For God loves a person who gives cheerfully.’ And God will generously provide all you need. Then you will always have everything you need and plenty left over to share with others. As the Scriptures say,

*“They share freely and give generously to the poor.
Their good deeds will be remembered forever.”*

2 Corinthians 8:1-12 NLT

“ Now I want you to know, dear brothers and sisters, what God in His kindness has done through the churches in Macedonia. They are being tested by many troubles, and they are very poor. But they are also filled with abundant joy, which has overflowed in rich generosity.

For I can testify that they gave not only what they could afford, but far more. And they did it of their own free will. They begged us again and again for the privilege of sharing in the gift for the believers in Jerusalem. They even did more than we had hoped, for their first action was to give themselves to the Lord and to us, just as God wanted them to do.

So we have urged Titus, who encouraged your giving in the first place, to return to you and encourage you to finish this ministry of giving. Since you excel in so many ways—in your faith, your gifted speakers, your knowledge, your enthusiasm, and your love from us—I want you to excel also in this gracious act of giving.

I am not commanding you to do this. But I am testing how genuine your love is by comparing it with the eagerness of the other churches.

You know the generous grace of our Lord Jesus Christ. Though He was rich, yet for your sakes He became poor, so that by His poverty He could make you rich.

Here is my advice:

It would be good for you to finish what you started a year ago. Last year you were the first who wanted to give, and you were the first to begin doing it. Now you should finish what you started. Let the eagerness you showed in the beginning be matched now by your giving. Give in proportion to what you have.

Whatever you give is acceptable if you give it eagerly. And give according to what you have, not what you don’t have.”

We understand that the subject of tithing/financial giving can be sensitive but it needs to be addressed because it is Biblically referred to many, many times in His Word. This shows how our Lord knew that humans could have the tendency want to keep what He has blessed them with all to themselves. So it is up to the church to help guide individuals—that in order to have a complete walk—that tithing is an importance part of that walk.

Day 10—Eighth Biblical Perspective—Discipline & Restoration

There are times when church discipline is needed. The goal is to achieve repentance and restoration. If the goal is punitive, we stop short and can do great spiritual harm. When there is a sin issue, it is the goal of the church to come alongside the person and restore in love. We must always follow the way of God's love and His holy scripture.

Hebrews 12:5-13 NLT

“And have you forgotten the encouraging words God spoke to you as his children? He said,

*“My child, don’t make light of the LORD’s discipline,
and don’t give up when he corrects you.*

*⁶For the LORD disciplines those he loves,
and he punishes each one he accepts as his child.”*

⁷As you endure this divine discipline remember that God is treating you as his own children.

Who ever heard of a child who is never disciplined by its father? ⁸If God doesn’t discipline you as he does all of his children, it means that you are illegitimate and are not really his children at all.

⁹Since we respected our earthly fathers who disciplined us, shouldn’t we submit even more to the discipline of the Father of our spirits, and live forever?

¹⁰For our earthly fathers disciplined us for a few years, doing the best they knew how. But God’s discipline is always good for us, so that we might share in his holiness. ¹¹No discipline is enjoyable while it is happening—it’s painful! But afterward there will be a peaceful harvest of right living for those who are trained in this way.

¹²So take a new grip with your tired hands and strengthen your weak knees. ¹³Mark out a straight path for your feet so that those who are weak and lame will not fall but become strong.”

Jude 1:22-23 NLT

“And you must show mercy to those whose faith is wavering. ²³Rescue others by snatching them from the flames of judgment. Show mercy to still others, but do so with great caution, hating the sins that contaminate their lives.”

It is always the goal to address the sin issue, seek repentance and move forward with restoration. Depending on the severity of the sin issue—simple confession and repentance could be enough. Sometimes a person may need to place themselves in a position to be accountable to another leader. For example, someone with a pornography sin issue would need to be willing to be accountable to a leader or accountability group that would be supportive in the restoration process.

When a person is repentant and humble, most of the time they will be able to remain in ministry. Some issues are a one-time occurrence. Sometimes we are bound up and need help. The goal is not to punish, but restore.

There may be occasions when restitution must be made. In some cases, it may be necessary to remove the person from ministry for their own good and the bigger good of the church. Then they would continue with the restoration process, with the possibility of being reinstated as they are healed.

Unfortunately, in some extreme cases when a person is unrepentant, they must be removed from ministry and even the fellowship. There is no other recourse, for they simply will not submit to scripture and church leadership.

Matthew 18:17 NLT

“If the person still refuses to listen, take your case to the church. Then if he or she won’t accept the church’s decision, treat that person as a pagan or a corrupt tax collector.”

1 Timothy 5:19-20 NLT

“Do not listen to an accusation against an elder unless it is confirmed by two or three witnesses. ²⁰Those who sin should be reprimanded in front of the whole church; this will serve as a strong warning to others.”

Titus 3:10 NLT

“If people are causing divisions among you, give a first and second warning. After that, have nothing more to do with them.”

Leaders are held to a high standard. There will be times when we have to address sin. Our goal is to do so in love, with restoration and the name of Christ being honored. We will use the Bible as our standard and God’s spirit for guidance. We will do everything to stand against personal bias or anything else that would hinder the restoration process. We will treat each issue individually, prayerfully, and reverently.

As you are reading this and you find that you are in a sin struggle, go to God in prayer for forgiveness and strength to overcome. Also, you should confide in someone that you trust, such as your pastor, ministry leader, spiritual mentor, Christian friend, family, so they can hold you up in prayer and accountability. If the sin issue persists, please be honest with your ministry team leader or pastor. We want to help each other to overcome the sin issues that try to entangle us.

Today’s Questions for Thought:

- What is sin?

- Why does sin bother your Heavenly Father so much?

- How do you handle a sin issue?

- Do you have an accountability partner to confide in? If so, explain how you keep each other accountable. If not—who can you begin that process with? Discuss with leader.

Day 11–Spiritual Authority

In the eyes of God, there is equality in the worth of individuals. In other words, my sex, race, or status does not make me better or worse than someone else.

Galatians 3:28 NLT

“There is no longer Jew or Gentile, slave or free, male and female. For you are all one in Christ Jesus.”

While we are all of equal value to God, He has ordained an authority structure of governance in the Spirit realm, in the family, government, and in the Church. Those in positions of authority must follow the example of Christ in how he exercises authority.

Mark 10:42-45 NLT

“⁴²Jesus called them together and said, “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. ⁴³Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. ⁴⁵For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

Jesus set this example of a leader when issues needed to be confronted—whatever He did. He did it in the spirit of righteousness. He was firm with some and gentle with others. He was humble, yet not a push over.

Leaders in the church have the authority to address issues, make determinations, guide the congregation, and speak into lives, to make a long list short. Leadership authority should be honored among the church and held as a sacred trust between God and the leader.

Here are some of the scriptures that pertain to Biblical authority and submission.

Ephesians 5:21-25 NLT

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

²²Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. ²³For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. ²⁴Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

²⁵Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her.

Hebrews 13:17 NLT

“Obey your leaders and submit to their authority. They keep watch over you as men who must give an account. Obey them so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no advantage to you.”

Day 12—The Holy Spirit

It is crucial for the success of our Christian life and roles as leaders to be Spirit-filled and lead. Jesus was not only fully God, but fully man. He depended on the Holy Spirit. Listen to these words that Jesus spoke at the outset of His ministry.

Luke 4:18-19 NLT

*“The Spirit of the LORD is upon me,
for he has anointed me to bring Good News to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released,
that the blind will see,
that the oppressed will be set free,
¹⁹and that the time of the LORD’s favor has come.”*

When Jesus returned to heaven, He told His followers to wait for the Holy Spirit to fill them, knowing that it was essential to their ministry.

Acts 1:4-5, 8 NLT

“Once when he was eating with them, he commanded them, ‘Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift he promised, as I told you before. ⁵John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit...But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.’”

The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Trinity. It is a gift to us from our heavenly Father. The Holy Spirit is our source of power. The Greek word for power is the same word used for “dynamite.” Jesus said that when we received the Holy Spirit, our lives would be filled with the mighty explosive power of God, enabling us to be effective witnesses to His love and grace.

The apostles recognized where the power came from. Consider this verse of scripture.

1 Timothy 1:12 NLT

*“I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who has given me strength to do his work.”
“One day as these men were worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Dedicate Barnabas and Saul for the special work to which I have called them.”*

It is essential for church leaders and ministers to be filled and lead by the Holy Spirit. The source of our power is the Spirit and He directs our paths. It is easy to fall into the trap of doing ministry on our own strength and with church growth formulas. However, anything that is not Holy Spirit filled and lead, will eventually fail. Praise God that He has not only called us to ministry but He gives us what it takes to accomplish the task.

Ephesians 1:19-23 NLT

“I also pray that you will understand the incredible greatness of God’s power for us who believe him. This is the same mighty power ²⁰that raised Christ from the dead and seated him in the place of honor at God’s right hand in the heavenly realms. ²¹Now he is far above any ruler or authority or power or leader or anything else—not only in this world but also in the world to come. ²²God has put all things under the authority of Christ and has made him head over all things for the benefit of the church. ²³And the church is his body; it is made full and complete by Christ, who fills all things everywhere with himself.”

Day 13—Role of Women in Ministry

The role that women play in the church can be controversial. This is in part due to scriptures that would limit or deny women to participate in ministry, such as the following passage that Paul wrote to Timothy regarding the church in Ephesus.

1 Timothy 2:11-12 NLT

“A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. ¹²I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she must be silent.”

Passages like this and others have divided the church and caused much controversy. When considering this passage and others that limit the role of women in the church, we may want to examine several factors beginning with the full context of scripture.

Throughout the Bible, women have played important roles in leadership and service. Consider the following.

- Deborah was a prophetess and one of the judges of Israel.

Judges 4:4-5 NLT

“Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lappidoth, was leading Israel at that time. ⁵She held court under the Palm of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in the hill country of Ephraim, and the Israelites came to her to have their disputes decided.”

- Esther was the queen of Persia and God used her to rescue the Jews from massacre. (See the book of Esther)

In the New Testament women served in ministry many different ways.

Philippians 4:2-3 NLT

“I plead with Euodia and I plead with Syntyche to agree with each other in the Lord. ³Yes, and I ask you, loyal yokefellow, help these women who have contended at my side in the cause of the gospel, along with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.”

Acts 18:26 NLT

“When Priscilla and Aquila heard him preaching boldly in the synagogue, they took him aside and explained the way of God even more accurately.”

Romans 16:1-7 NLT

“I commend to you our sister Phoebe, who is a deacon in the church in Cenchrea. ²Welcome her in the Lord as one who is worthy of honor among God’s people. Help her in whatever she needs, for she has been helpful to many, and especially to me.

³Give my greetings to Priscilla and Aquila, my co-workers in the ministry of Christ Jesus. ⁴In fact, they once risked their lives for me. I am thankful to them, and so are all the Gentile churches.

⁵Also give my greetings to the church that meets in their home.

Greet my dear friend Epenetus. He was the first person from the province of Asia to become a follower of Christ. ⁶Give my greetings to Mary, who has worked so hard for your benefit. ⁷Greet Andronicus and Junia my fellow Jews, who were in prison with me. They are highly respected among the apostles and became followers of Christ before I did.”

Acts 21:8-9 NLT

“The next day we went on to Caesarea and stayed at the home of Philip the Evangelist, one of the seven men who had been chosen to distribute food. ⁹He had four unmarried daughters who had the gift of prophecy.”

1 Corinthians 12:27 NLT

“All of you together are Christ’s body, and each of you is a part of it.”

These scriptures all show the variety of roles that women have served in various situations. The Bible doesn’t contradict itself. So why would Paul forbid women to serve and speak within the church? Perhaps Paul was speaking into a specific problem existing with the Ephesian church, such as false teaching and female domination. In response Paul, in a sense, declared Marshal Law in order to set things in order. Some of the cultures were patriarchal in nature. Paul could have been honoring the cultural norms insofar as possible in the evangelistic mission.

The above scripture taken as a whole shows a tendency by Paul and the early church toward full engagement of women in ministry. This makes it unlikely that Paul was making a universal limitation regarding women and ministry.

NLCF recognizes the gifts and callings in both men and women and seeks to help facilitate God’s call on each person’s life.

Today’s Questions for Thought:

- How can women play a powerful role in the ministries of Christ Jesus?

- Is there a woman in your life that has influence you in your spiritual walk? Who is she?

- How has God allowed this woman to influence you?

- Do you agree or disagree with this concept? Please explain your answer.

Day 14—God’s Plan for Marriage

We believe that God ordained the union of marriage to be exclusively between one man and one woman and anything else is going against His word.

Mark 10: 6-9 NLT

6 But ‘God made them male and female’ from the beginning of creation. 7 ‘This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife,⁸ and the two are united into one.’ Since they are no longer two but one, ⁹ let no one split apart what God has joined together.

Genesis 2:18, 21-24 NLT

18 Then the Lord God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper who is just right for him.” 21 So the Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man’s ribs and closed up the opening. 22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, and he brought her to the man.

23 “At last!” the man exclaimed.

*“This one is bone from my bone,
and flesh from my flesh!
She will be called ‘woman,’
because she was taken from ‘man.’”*

24 This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

In Genesis chapter 2, God declares it is not good for Adam (the first man) to live alone. All the animals are there, but none of them are a suitable partner for Adam. God, therefore, in a special act of creation, makes a woman. Just a few verses later, the woman is called “his wife” (Genesis 2:25). Eden was the scene of the first marriage, ordained by God Himself. The author of Genesis then records the standard by which all future marriages are defined: “A man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh” (Genesis 2:24).

This passage of Scripture gives several points for understanding God’s design for marriage. First, marriage involves a man and a woman. The Hebrew word for “wife” is gender-specific; it cannot mean anything other than “a woman.” There is no passage in Scripture that mentions a marriage involving anything other than a man and a woman. It is impossible for a family to form or human reproduction to take place asexually. Since God ordained sex to only take place between a married couple, it follows that God’s design is for the family unit to be formed when a man and woman come together in a sexual relationship and have children.

The second principle from Genesis 2 about God’s design for marriage is that marriage is intended to last for a lifetime. Verse 24 says the two become “one flesh.” Eve was taken from Adam’s side, and so she was literally one flesh with Adam. Her very substance was formed from Adam instead of from the ground. Every marriage thereafter is intended to reflect the unity shared by Adam and Eve. Because their bond was “in the flesh,” they were together forever. There was no escape clause written into the first marriage that allowed for the two to separate. That is to say that God designed marriage for life. When a man and a woman make a commitment to marry, they “become one flesh,” and that is why they say, “Till death do us part.”

Conclusion

God has given us the gift of salvation in Christ Jesus and the call to serve in His kingdom. The call to serve is a sacred trust. May our service to Christ our Lord bring Him glory and honor.

“We believe that God has designed the Church to function as a unified body of spiritually gifted, ethnically, and socially diverse men, women, and children, loving and serving one another in humility, availability, and submission, thereby presenting a compelling case to the world around them for trusting Jesus Christ alone for salvation.” James Ryle

Agreement of Understanding

I have read and understand the contents of this leadership & ministry daily devotional guide. I agree to adhere to the standards set forth in: *Foundations—Essentials for Leadership and Ministry—A 14 Day Devotional*.

Name: _____ Date: _____

Ministry interested in serving in: _____

By signing this Agreement of Understanding, I verify that the above signee has read and assures me that they understand what this leadership & ministry daily devotional teaches and agrees to abide by its standards.

Ministry Leader: _____ Date: _____