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Leading Yourself  
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Sanders Ch. 16: “Responsibilities of Leadership”

When you are a spiritual leader, people are your responsibility. What could be a greater responsibility, to take care of the spiritual wellbeing of others? The minister Paul expresses this weighty task on his shoulders: “Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches.” (2 Corinthians 11:28). Paul’s loving concern drives his sense of heavy responsibility. In Sanders’ Chapter 16: “Responsibilities of Leadership”, there are four specific responsibilities that fall under this larger responsibility: service, applied discipline, guidance, and initiative. These are four areas that leaders can develop in order to lovingly take care of their flocks.

Service is the first responsibility, and it drives all other aspects of responsibility. Filled with loving concern, we are to humbly serve those we lead. To do this, we follow the example of Jesus. Sanders writes, “The Son of God became the servant of God in order to do the mission of God” (Sanders 151). God Himself became a servant, as Jesus came to a fallen earth, ministering to the lost and the sick with compassion, and became humiliated and was killed for us. Leaders are to follow in Jesus’ footsteps by making those we lead our focus. What we do as leaders should always be what is best for their spiritual wellbeing, not what is desirable or comfortable for us.

Second, leaders are to apply discipline. First, leaders must be disciplined themselves. Sanders expresses, “The self-discipline that is one of the central characteristics of a leader will eventually be applied consciously or unconsciously to those around him or her” (Sanders 152). When a leader applies discipline, it does not only benefit their own spiritual well-being but also

others'. This is one way leaders help lead their flocks into a life of loving discipline. The second way is to directly discipline the person/group. There are five guidelines listed for a leader on how to discipline. These guidelines are 1: Gain a full, unbiased understanding of the situation. 2: Ask, what are the benefits of this discipline? 3: Retain a loving attitude. 4: Let spiritual restoration be the focus. 5: Be prayerful (Sanders 153). Discipline in every form must maintain a spirit of love and humility.

The next section is on guidance. Leaders cannot guide others into places they have not yet walked. They cannot lead others to follow Christ well if they are not already following Him. Paul puts it this way: "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ" (1 Corinthians 11:1). Leaders can be confident in asking others to follow them when they are going ahead and walking in the footsteps of Christ.

Finally, leaders must initiate. "The leader must either initiate plans for progress or recognize the worthy plans of others", Sanders explains. (Sanders 154). If the leader stands still, so will those behind them, following them. Leaders must not act out of comfort or self-doubt but take necessary risks in order to usher in new growth for individuals. For example, Moses looked to his own sense of ability and didn't accept God's call. Yet Joshua responded to God's call to not be afraid and led the Israelites into the land God was giving them.

Of these four responsibilities, I believe the first quality is most developed in me. Serving others is where my heart is, and God has worked this heart attitude in me over a number of years. I remember as a child praying to God and saying, "Father, my heart is cold. Melt my heart towards others." And He did! He continues to. It is amazing that God delights to help us develop these qualities. It is true the process can be hard and painful. The trials I faced growing up with bullying and sickness helped to soften my heart towards' others pain, and humbled me into

seeing that I have nothing except what God gives me. And God has freely given me all things, so I am called to pour myself out in love towards others.

On that note, as I reflect on these qualities, I realize that trials and difficulties can surround them in practice. Being self-disciplined is not often pleasant. Disciplining and confronting others would be a challenging task for me. Initiating and guiding takes leaps of faith into the unknown and facing loss. But I am joyful to remember that when I face these things, I am sharing in Christ's sufferings. I realize that this fallen age will end, and now might be my only opportunity to have the privilege to suffer for God and others—to show that my love for them is more important than self.

Finally, I found that one of Archbishop Benson's leadership rules was very applicable to my life and ministry. He advises, "Seek no favors, nor sympathies; do not ask for tenderness, but receive what comes" (Sanders, 156). I am reminded that others are not truly our source, God is. While God uses people to provide for us and fulfill us, He is our true fulfillment. And so, I should not expect others to be God for me: that would be idolatry, making God jealous. As others I am close to have this attitude, I found how much of a blessing it is to be on the receiving end. There is tremendous grace and an out-pouring of love from these individuals. They are also not afraid to be confrontational, as they do not fear the consequence. I am very challenged to adopt the same attitude.

In sum, the four leadership responsibilities of service, applied discipline, guidance, and initiative are central to aiding the spiritual wellbeing of others. We are to die to ourselves as leaders and follow Christ despite how it may feel. As I noted, the development of these areas takes us taking our eyes off of the self and onto Jesus and His children, which can be uncomfortable. I will take with me the commission to view God as my one, true source.