

**VALUABLE LEADERSHIP: BIBLE DEVOTIONS**

*The following Bible devotions are intended to accompany the ‘Valuable Leadership’ series of six videos. It is suggested that the Bible passage and devotion are read before watching the video and then the discussion questions used as a group or for personal reflection.*

**Video one: What are our values?**

(How our personal values shape our leadership)

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| **Bible passage: Mark 3:1-6**  **Leadership from the inside out** Have you ever put your jumper on inside out? We have put the label showing where it came from and the stitching that holds it together unintentionally on display for all to see.  It's a bit like that with our values. They are usually unspoken and lie underneath what we do, but they show whose we are and subtly test the consistency of our actions.  In the incident in these verses, Jesus' values come out into the open showing who He is as He displays His Father's compassion in action. He does so despite the criticism of the Pharisees, which puts a whole other set of values on display. Jesus' values are so deeply embedded that even the disapproval of others and possibility of painful consequences do not prevent Him from doing what the situation demands. As Jesus lives out His Father's values, the Kingdom of God touches down in the circumstances of the disabled man's life.  Values are like that. They anchor us in who we really are and what really matters to us so that we act out of that inner core of identity. They flow beneath the surface like an underground river, exercising a strong, hidden influence that shapes the landscape of our lives, empowering the direction and the decisions that we take. That's why our values are so important. Living out godly values is the ultimate mark of mature faith that demonstrably follows Jesus in the ways of the Father.  Because they work from the inside out, values can be difficult to see and name. Often like the jumper we have put on inside out, others are best placed to notice the values our actions are putting on display and make us aware of them.  Like being told our jumper is on inside out, an observation that is meant to be helpful can nevertheless make us feel vulnerable. So, exposing the values we see in others always needs to be approached with sensitivity. A calm conversation in the cool of the day is better than a public unmasking in the heat of the moment.  Of course, there is another way. We can take a moment, stop and look in the mirror ourselves and check what values we see reflected and coming into view, both through our actions and the things we aren't doing.  Leadership is always exercised from the inside out. It is 'valuable'! So, it is always good for us to check what labels are showing and if the stitching of what we say we believe is holding together. |
| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. List the values you would like your life and witness to express. 2. In what ways are those values on show to others? 3. Choose one value and think of some ways in which you could make it more visible to others? |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, when we think of Jesus and how he related to people with both compassion and with the courage of his convictions, we confess we often fall short. Help us by your Holy Spirit to take on the values of Jesus in our leadership. Values of patience, kindness, boldness and truth. Values of grace and forgiveness….  [*mention any other Christlike values that came up in your discussions*].  Help us to learn more about ourselves through listening to others and allowing them to affirm our strengths and spot the weaknesses we so often either downplay or even fail to see. In doing this, help us not to feel discouraged but rather seek your help to grow to be more like Jesus. Help us in all aspects of our walk with you but especially in our leadership and influence on others.  Help us to lead like Jesus in whose name we pray. Amen. |

**Video two: Valuing achievements**

(Why and how to celebrate when people do good things)

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| **Bible passage: 1 Thessalonians 1:1-3**  **The value of celebrating the glory in the story** Do you like stories? Reading them, watching them, listening to them, talking about them? There is something about stories. They have magnetic power. We find ourselves caught up in them. Unable to put that page turner down. Finding we need to watch just one more episode of that series before we go to bed.  Have you ever thought about how as a follower of Jesus you are caught up in the most amazing story of all? You are drawn in to play your part in the drama of how God is rescuing and reshaping His world person by person, place by place through the particular contribution of your local congregation. There is a radiance in that story like no other. It shines with significance. It gives off the glow of the glory of God as He works in us and through us as His people in His Church.  Isn't that worth celebrating? Paul thought so. He opens his first letter to the church in Thessalonica, locating that little congregation in God Himself and as part of what He is doing in and through the work of rescuing the world through Jesus. Then he goes on to tell the Thessalonians that their story causes him to praise and thank God in his prayers. As Paul draws on the memories of the faith, love and hope that he could see expressed in the ongoing work of the Thessalonian Christians, it inspired him in his walk with God. He wanted them to know that. He wasn't behind the door in telling them. He knew that sharing the effect their faith had on him would, in turn, spur them on and add momentum to their ongoing pursuit of God and His glory in their lives.  You see stories - listening to them, sharing them, drawing out what we see of God in them - can unleash an incredible energy and power into our congregation's life and witness. The shared celebration of God's power carries the energy of His Spirit.    So as leaders, let's think about how we can uncover the power of God's story in our congregation. It starts with us as we build our awareness and appreciation of how and where, and in whose life, we see God particularly at work. We can allow the grace of God to echo with an attitude of gratitude in our hearts. Just finding small ways to introduce that into conversations, we begin to unfold and unravel the story of God at work, encouraging others by affirming what we see God doing in their lives. As we see the bigger patterns in what God is doing among us as a congregation, we can find ways of colourfully drawing together the threads of the tapestry God is weaving. From there, we can create pictures of the future that others can share, imagine and develop in ways we have never even thought about.  The story of God at work in and through our congregation, the lives and witness of its members, is one of the greatest leadership resources that we have. So let's throw off some of our Presbyterian inhibitions, unleash what is life giving, highlight the positive, encourage one another in God and celebrate the glory of the story He is scripting through the life we share together in Him. |
| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. Think of a time when you have felt valued, or undervalued, in church life. 2. Why are we often uncomfortable about expressing our appreciation of others in the church? 3. In what ways could we celebrate the good things God does in church life? |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, help us to have eyes to see what you are doing in and through your people. Help us to encourage them by praising them for what they are doing in such a way that glorifies you.  We confess that often we see only the things that are going wrong around us and neglect to see what you are doing, however small or insignificant that might seem to us. We know you work in the smallest things and the biggest things – from the public platform of preaching to the quiet encouraging word in someone’s ear.  Help us to take a lead in that ministry of encouragement as an act of worship to you and a blessing to others.  *[Spend some time thanking God for specific people and their work in Christ’s service.]*  In Jesus name, amen. |

**Video three: Valuing learning**

(Understanding the process by which we learn to lead)

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| **Bible passage: 2 Corinthians 1:3-7**  **The value of hard lessons in leadership**  Often God's way of teaching us the things we really need to learn as leaders comes to us in the opposite order in which we are used to learning at school. There we get the teaching in the classroom followed by the test in the exam hall to see what we have learned. In life we are often tested first and are only then able to learn and apply the lesson that God was trying to teach us through that experience.  Our experiences shape our leadership more than we often think. The good influence of others rubs off on us. Painful lessons leave their mark and, if we are wise, we learn 'not to do that again', or to become more alert to warning signs that help us avert a crisis.  The Apostle Paul was a leader who had spent plenty of time in the school of hard knocks. In his second letter to the Corinthian church he recalls the value of what often bitter experience had taught him. He acknowledges the comfort of God he had experienced in times of trouble. He talks about sharing abundantly in the sufferings of Christ. He knows there are times when following Jesus brings distress.  Often today we want to experience the privilege of leadership without having to face the responsibilities it carries. Leaders go first, so inevitably that means they are often the first to encounter failure. Leaders step up, so they are usually an easy target for criticism. Leaders are human, so they feel the stress that comes with having to take unpopular decisions. These places are on the leadership map. If we never find ourselves standing in these circumstances we probably aren't leading as Jesus would want us to or taking others to the places He wants them to go. Leading for Jesus invariably means sharing in His sufferings.  However much we would prefer to avoid the lessons of painful leadership experience, they are often our best teachers. They help us grow as leaders in ways in which what we read or are taught or trained for in more formal ways never can. And more than that, they equip and enable us to lead others. God's comfort upholds us in our troubled times as leaders, and in turn, builds our ability to comfort and encourage those we lead as they pass through the experiences that God is also using to shape them as His followers.  Both suffering, and the comfort that goes with it, are the wounds and the wonder that God uses to build the reliance on Him and the resilience to endure that mark the lives of those who lead in His name and with the touch of His power. |

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| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. Think of something you have learned as a leader by practice and experience. 2. Think of something you have learned as a leader through difficult circumstances. 3. In what situations might what you have learned through painful personal experience be especially helpful to others you lead? |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, help us humbly accept that we are never finished learning to lead in this life. We pray that you would equip us to lead well in so that we honour you by serving well those we are called to lead.  We thank you for all we have learned through our experience of leadership and for the people who have taught us to be leaders by word and by example. We thank you too for shaping us through adversity to be better leaders today, even though those it was difficult to walk through those experiences at the time.  Most of all we thank and praise you for the grace shown to us in Christ Jesus. We thank you for our salvation and we thank you for the gift of leadership that is also the result of your grace shown to us. Help us to lead in a way worthy of the responsibility you have given us. Help us to lead more and more like Jesus in whose name we pray, amen. |

**Video four: Valuing understanding emotions**

(How to lead through relating to people’s emotional responses to our leadership)

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| **Bible passage: 1 Kings 12:1-19**  **The value of taking the temperature**  Leaders just lead, don't they? They have the vision, push ahead to make it happen, push on when others are questioning what they are doing, push back when things get in the way, push aside those who aren't moving fast enough. Often passion, personality, pride and the perception that they are never wrong tempts even good leaders to act in pushy ways. As has been commented, however, if you think you are leading and no-one is following, all you are doing is taking a walk!  So, as leaders it is always wise to take the temperature of the group you are leading. Good leaders understand that they operate on a balance of relational trust. Run that balance into the red and you are in trouble.  King Rehoboam came unstuck because he misjudged the temperature of the situation in which he was called to lead. When advised by the Israelites to lighten the load his father had put upon them, he asked for three days to go away and think about his next move. So far, so good. The best leaders are rarely rushed into taking big decisions. Rehoboam's next move was a good one as well. He consulted with others, in this case the elders who had served his father Solomon. These wise and experienced elders had the pulse of the people. They counselled Rehoboam to listen to the concerns expressed by those he led and consider how they felt after years of being stretched in the service of Solomon's agenda. But Rehoboam didn't really want to hear that. It didn't sit well with his own passions and priorities, so he asked some younger men what they thought and was all too glad to hear that they were for him pressing on with his own agenda. So, Rehoboam went back to the people and spoke harshly to them, only confirming their fears and causing them to decide that he wasn't someone they would be signing up to follow.  While vision and passion and plans all matter in leadership, we live in a rapidly changing and increasingly uncertain world. And, in the church, we lead among others rather than lording it over them. So, the people God calls us to lead matter. They matter to Him and they should matter to us. They are not to be pushed around or shoved out of the way. We need to learn to listen well to what they say, read between the lines, allow their opinions to trim our sails, temper our enthusiasm, cause us to take notice when the pace we set is too fast.  So, as leaders, let's learn from Rehoboam the value of finding ways of checking the emotional thermostat. |

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| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. Think of a time when you were surprised by someone’s unexpected emotional reaction to something that was happening in church life. How did you respond? 2. Think of a leader who brought energy and enthusiasm to a group in which you have been a part. What was it about them that made people feel positive? What can you learn from that for the way you lead? |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, we sometimes find that people don’t respond to our leadership as we would like because we don’t understand them well enough. Please help us to grow in our empathy for the people you have called us to serve. Help us to lead in a way that models the servant leadership of Jesus.  Help us to know when people are overburdened by what we want them to do and how to alleviate that burden. Help us to lead in a way that doesn’t make their situation worse but instead brings your light and your hope to transform their situation.  *[You may wish to bring specific leadership challenges to God as part of this prayer.]*  In the name of Jesus who transforms us, amen. |

**Video five: Valuing the right focus**

(How to lead purposefully with God at the centre)

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| **Bible passage: Matthew 4:1-11**  **The value of the right motivation for leadership**  Why does anyone want to be a leader? For some people it’s about helping others. Alternatively it can be about a passion for solving problems or getting things done. Less pure motivations might include desires for status, pride and power.  Christian leadership is always motivated by the stirring of God's grace in our lives and our desire to bring glory and honour to Him. That is an easy statement to read and with which to agree, but it is a harder reality to keep in focus as we lead. Temptations to lead for, or out, of other motives and by other methods than God's abound. Usually we don't intentionally lose our focus on God; rather we are subtly drawn away or deflected from it.  Jesus understands that only too well because He experienced the temptation to lead from wrong motives right at the start of His earthly ministry when tested by the devil in the wilderness. After forty days and nights in the desert He was hungry, weak, and tired. How often as leaders we also find ourselves most vulnerable to succumbing to second rate motivations when we most feel ourselves weary, lonely and desperately in need of the boost of a short sighted solution? So, the temptations came. First, the quick fix of stones into bread instead of trusting His Father to provide in His way and His time. Then, the grasp for the spectacular in the rash leap and the presumption that God would respond and it would all turn out alright in the end. Finally, the short cut to the glory of gaining a kingdom through the hardly insignificant matter of the surrender of His soul.  Throughout these temptations Jesus kept His focus on the purpose of His life and leadership with which He answered the devil when He said, 'Away from me, Satan! For it is written, 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve Him only.'  Among the many questions Christian leadership asks of us and will answer for others, its motivation must begin, and remain and will end with that twin focus on worshipping and serving God alone. It's what leaders are made for and it is why they want to lead. |

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| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. Think of a time when you felt the primary focus on ***who*** God is got blurred in the circumstances of leading in your church life. How did that happen? 2. Think of a time when ***why*** we are doing something got lost in the circumstances of leading in your church life. Why did that happen? 3. Think of a time in your church life when ***what*** exactly you needed to do became very focused. What brought that clarity? 4. Think of a time in your church life when ***how*** things got done was like clockwork. What went before to create a smooth path to delivery? |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, we confess that often we take our eyes off you and put other things in the centre of our leadership. We elevate our own concerns, our own ideas, our own priorities above you. Sometimes we listen to others too readily without being as discerning as we should. Other times we fail to listen because we think we know the answer already.  We do these things unintentionally rather than deliberately but we confess that even to forget to place you in the centre is sinful.  Help us to always place you and your purposes above all else. Help us to think about what your heart is for the people we serve as leaders and the mission you have given us to lead. Help us to know your Word and apply it in the situations you have called us to be leaders.  Father God, we pray that in putting you and your purposes in the centre we would see more clearly **why** we should be doing **what** we do. We pray too that we would be led by you in **how** we do what we do so that all we do honours you. May your name be glorified through our leadership. In Jesus name we pray, amen. |

**Video six: Valuing an outside perspective**

(How to identify your church’s culture)

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| **Bible passage: Acts 2:42-47**  **The value of being shown what we can't see**  Have you ever been shown one of those images that are two pictures in one? There is the one of the old woman's profile and the young girl's face. They are both there; it's just that some people can only see the old woman. It takes someone else to outline the contours of the young woman's features for them to begin to recognise what they couldn't see for themselves.  It is only a bit of fun, but it illustrates something very important for leaders. There are things about who we are that come out in what we do and the way we do them that we often don't recognise about ourselves. This can be a good thing, because we make a godly impression even though we don't know it is happening. However, the opposite can also be true. Powerful and deeply engrained traits become expressions of who we are and what we are really like. More than what we say we believe, these ways in which we behave as leaders leave impressions that reinforce the gospel or are expressions of the worldly ways that still shape our lives. In either case, it usually takes someone to tell us and show us what it is that our leadership is giving off. And as leaders often set the tone for the whole church or the part of it in which they work, the subtle influence they exercise can be either enormously life giving or deadening.  The early New Testament church in Jerusalem described at the end of Acts chapter 2 made a good impression on outsiders. Looking in they could see devotion, fellowship, awe, care for one another, togetherness, gladness and sincerity. No wonder they enjoyed the favour of others. The reality of the gospel, what God had done in their lives and was doing in their church, could be felt in the air. It was symbolised in what they did and how freely they did it. It came naturally to them and overflowed from them. It carried its own attractiveness. So much so, that the Lord brought new people on a daily basis. Of course there are also lots of examples in the New Testament of traits in the lives of churches and their leaders that were equally off putting to others.  What a fantastic and frightening thought that often the things about us that we can't see for ourselves carry such a powerful effect to draw or repel others. They put on display what we are really like and that in turn reflects well or badly on God and the gospel. So, in the little things we pick up about what others think about us and our church, are we making a favourable impression or are they showing us things that need to change? |

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| **Discussion questions following the video**   1. Think of something in your church life that you do in a certain way because, ‘you’ve always done it that way’. 2. Think of a time when a visitor or newcomer to your church asked a question about something you do that seemed strange to them, but seemed very normal to you. What did you learn about how your church looks and feels to others from that conversation? 3. Think of an important change you have made or hope to make in church life. What values could be encouraged to create a culture that will make that strategy fly? |

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| **Suggested prayer**  Father God, we know we are not a perfect church because we are not a perfect people. And yet we thank that we have been saved by your grace and we have been and are being transformed by your grace. Thank you for…  *[mention the various ways you have seen God work in your congregation].*  We know we are still a work in progress and so we ask that you would help us change by becoming…  *[mention the various ways you can see that transformation is still needed].*  We pray in the name of Jesus Christ that he might be glorified in his church, amen. |