

How To: Lead

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How To: Growing in your faith | October 20, 2026 | Proverbs 18:1-2; Proverbs 18:15; Proverbs 19:20; Proverbs 20:18; Psalms 25:4-5; Psalms 26:12; Psalms 27:11; Psalms 143:10

Prepared from the spoken message and lightly edited for readability. Scripture quotations and spoken phrasing are preserved as delivered.

If you have your Bible, go ahead and take it out, put it on your lap, and when you've done that, just look up at me, okay? Yeah, most of y'all are there already. Now start doing this. Start kind of warming up, because we are going to be all over the place today.

Here's the deal: we're changing things up a little bit. For the next few weeks, we're doing a series called How To. Now, this is a little bit different than what most of you are probably used to seeing us do here at The Grove, because normally we do what we call text-driven preaching. This probably doesn't mean anything to you, and there will be a definition on the screen if you want to take a picture of it real quick. But basically what this means is that the team gets together and we go, "Hey, we want to go through the book of Mark or Acts or something like that," and we go verse by verse and we represent the text, the structure, the substance, the spirit, everything about it.

But there's another type of teaching called topical teaching, and that's what we're doing for this week and the next four weeks. We're doing a How To series, a series on growing your faith. So what does the Bible say about fill in the blank, and how do I do it?

Tonight, what we're focusing on is how to lead. How to lead.

In addition to your Bible, I hope you have a notebook. Go ahead and take that out to write notes in. If you can do all this on your phone and not be tempted to get on any other app besides your Notes app and your Bible app, I trust you if you trust you, or maybe the person next to you, okay? But go ahead and start taking notes, and we'll start in the Psalms and the Proverbs if you want to go ahead and cheat and get there.

Tonight, as we answer this question, "How do I lead? What does it look like for us to lead as Christians?" I want to lead with this: What we're not answering is how to lead in a way that the world would deem successful, okay? I'm not going to tell you the ten secrets to being a CEO or a Fortune 500 person or a millionaire by the time you're 25. If you're 26, you already missed the boat on that anyway, right?

Every time I talk about leadership, every time I talk about how to lead, what I'm doing is talking about, as a Bible-believing, Christ-following, blood-bought believer, how do I lead? How do I steward all that God's given me and everything He's called me to do for His glory in a way that would influence other people to do the same? We're answering the question, "How do I lead biblically as a follower of Jesus?"

Leading is typically defined as influencing people for a desired result or common goal. If you get on any app, read any book, or watch any YouTube video, everybody's got a slightly different definition of leadership. This is

my favorite. It's from Henry and Richard Blackaby in their book **Spiritual Leadership**. They said, "Leadership occurs when you move people from where they are to where they ought to be."

As believers, if we're going to lead for the sake of the gospel, if we're going to lead in a way that's honoring to Christ and reflects how He led in His life, we're going to take people from where they are and point them to walk closer with Jesus. For you, it might look different than it does for me, but we are all tasked to lead ourselves and other people closer to Jesus.

Before you start leading, it's good to have a structure to it, okay? I'm going to walk through the structure in a second, but let me lead with this. I keep saying that. I want to lead on leadership with this: It is a good thing for you to lead in a God-honoring way, okay?

Sometimes it can come with a bad rap, and I understand that. Sometimes people can shy away from leaders because maybe you had a bad experience with one. But I want to encourage you today: If you want to lead and you feel called to lead, this is a great thing. Scripture says that the person who desires to be an overseer desires a noble thing. We're going to walk through what that looks like.

Before you start leading, it's good to have a structure, an understanding of how to lead. My goal today is to provide you with an approach, a framework for stewarding leadership in your life.

This is the journey we're going on today, all right? It's going to be on the screen. The journey on how to lead tonight is going to look like this, in three parts.

One: learn to follow. If you want to lead, the first thing you've got to do is learn to follow. All my guys in the room, underline three times the word **learn**, okay? No shortcutting this thing. No AI, ChatGPT, or friend with a YouTube video on how to do it. We've got to learn to follow, okay? That's part one.

Part two is this: live the example. Lead yourself is what that means. You've got to live out the example. If you're going to lead people to do something, you've got to live it out yourself first.

Then number three is simply this: lead others.

We're going to set a roadmap here, and it's going to build as we go through the night. We're going to spend a lot of our time talking about how to lead other people, but there are critical components of the believer's life that we've got to clear up before we're ready to lead.

Learn to Follow

Everybody say that with me: "Learn to follow."

That's good. Somebody got, like, triple bonus points for that, okay?

What I'm going to do is take some bricks, and we're going to start stacking these up, okay? Learning to follow. What do I mean by that?

Does anybody in this room think they have it all figured out on their own? If so, keep your hand down, because

you're going to embarrass yourself, okay? We don't have it all figured out. Unless you were born today, you've realized that at this point.

Scripture is clear: We've got to learn. We have to put our pride aside. We need to take the position of a student. We are not enough on our own. Can I get an amen on that?

Look at Proverbs 18:1-2 if you want Scripture that makes this clear:

*Whoever isolates himself seeks his own desire;
he breaks out against all sound judgment.
A fool takes no pleasure in understanding,
but only in expressing his opinion.*

— Proverbs 18:1-2

Anybody got a friend like that? Also, don't raise your hand. Good, y'all are thinking tonight. That's great.

If we're going to learn to follow, we have to realize that we are not enough on our own. It's foolish to isolate yourself. It's foolish to take no pleasure in listening to someone else, but only in expressing your own opinion.

If we're going to learn to follow, we've got to ask the question, "Who are we going to follow?"

You probably have people on your timeline every day who are telling you how to live your life. They're showing you by example, "This is what I do. You can do the same thing." A lot of you spend money to try to look like the people you follow, right? I'm not going to point at anybody, but I know a few of y'all spend some money on what you see online. It's all good.

But here's the deal. First and foremost, if you are a believer, we are all called to follow Christ. In that, we are going to lead other people in some way, because somebody's watching you. The first thing we have to do is follow the Lord. Very simple. Follow the Lord.

Psalms 25:4-5 says:

*Make me to know your ways, O Lord;
teach me your paths.
Lead me in your truth and teach me,
for you are the God of my salvation;
for you I wait all the day long.*

— Psalm 25:4-5

I want you to look up here at these Scriptures if you can. Zoom in and take a picture of it, but I've put in bold some things that I want you to see.

Psalms 25 says:

*Good and upright is the Lord;
therefore he instructs sinners in the way.*

— Psalm 25:8

If you look at Psalm 26:12, it says:

*My foot stands on level ground;
in the great assembly I will bless the Lord.*

— Psalm 26:12

Psalm 27:11 says:

*Teach me your way, O Lord,
and lead me on a level path
because of my enemies.*

— Psalm 27:11

If you look at Psalm 143:10, it says:

*Teach me to do your will,
for you are my God!
Let your good Spirit lead me
on level ground!*

— Psalm 143:10

What do you see in these Psalms? You see Your way, Your path, and level ground. What's the common denominator in all these Psalms and in our lives? We can't walk the path that God has called us to apart from Him. We have to follow Him. We have to listen to Him. We must keep our eyes on Him.

I love Psalm 26:12, Psalm 27:11, and Psalm 143:10 because they give this description of a level path, of level ground. Any of you walking through life right now feel like it's anything but level? It's difficult when we try to order our own steps, when we try to make our own way. But when we walk with the Lord, He makes a level way before us as we walk in His Spirit.

But we have to follow Him. He's not going to force us to do it, but He's given us the ability to follow Him, trust Him, and listen to Him on level ground.

Follow the Lord. This is first and foremost. But what I've learned as I've gotten older and walked with the Lord for a while is that it's also very important for us to follow older, more mature, godly believers. Can I get a witness on this?

If any of you have been in a similar boat as me, you start walking with the Lord for a while, and then you start hanging out with people who are your age and your stage of life. You start an accountability group or a discipleship group, and it's great, right? But then somebody in the group goes, "Man, I don't know what to do with this in my life," and you're all in the same stage. You're like, "Well, I heard, I saw, my friend told me," and you're like, "I don't want any part of this," right? Because it's just the blind leading the blind.

But once you start walking with the Lord, this is a beautiful thing. What He's given us in the body of Christ, the church, are other older, godly, mature believers to walk with us.

Let me show you this. This is why it's up here. As we start walking with the Lord, I think you're supposed to do three by three for Jenga. Does anybody know the rules of Jenga? You said, "Yes and amen." That's like, okay.

You start stacking these bricks in your life that are going to be what your leadership looks like one day. These at the bottom, where you're just following the Lord and following older, godly believers, it's not much, but you know what it is? It's a foundation that you build the rest of your life on. You follow the Lord and you walk with other older, godly believers.

Scripture is clear on this as well:

*An intelligent heart acquires knowledge,
and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge.*

— Proverbs 18:15

I want that, okay? You get that from Scripture, and you get that from older, godly, mature believers.

*Listen to advice and accept instruction,
that you may gain wisdom in the future.*

— Proverbs 19:20

I have sat at many breakfast places with my mentor and been like, "I don't know what to do." He's like, "I went through that exact thing 30 years ago." I'm like, "Wait, this is not unique to me? I'm not the only human who's ever been in this spot before?"

What he does is point me to sometimes the things that he messed up on, but he always points me to the truth of God's Word and the fact that we can trust Jesus, even in situations where we don't know how it's going to work out.

We build our lives on following Jesus, and then we also follow other believers.

*Plans are established by counsel;
by wise guidance wage war.*

— Proverbs 20:18

You need people in your corner who are going to be there for you, who are going to tell you hard things but good things that you just don't know yet. This is building a foundation of humility, service, and proper perspective.

Let me say this as I'm grabbing some more Jenga blocks: You never - everybody say never - you never graduate from this. Does this make sense? You never graduate from following Jesus. You never graduate from benefiting from other godly believers in your life. You don't graduate from it, but you build on it.

If you want to lead, you have to learn to follow.

Live the Example

Secondly, you have to live the example. This is going to be where it's a little bit difficult for some of us, because I know the room in here pretty well. I talked to the team this week. I talked to Cal and Matthew and Matthew and Alexis, and I was like, "Give me a breakdown of who's in this room."

They said it's like 60 percent age 24 and under, and then like 40 percent age 27 to 31 or 32, something like that.

What do I know about that demographic? You are not all leading organizations yet, but you have aspirations in life. You are probably walking with the Lord and growing in that, but you're not a finished product yet. We are never a finished product on this side of heaven, but you're not exactly in that mentor leadership role yet. You're kind of in this almost in-between.

On how to lead, we have to live the example. What do I mean by that? First, you have to lead yourself before you can lead anybody else.

We don't need anybody else in a place of leadership - I'm talking about Christian leadership - who does not meet biblical qualifications. Do you hear what I'm saying?

What I'm saying from my heart is that I've been in ministry not that long, but long enough to see people in a place of leadership who are not walking with Jesus. Everything comes unglued, and people get hurt because of it. If you have the aspiration to lead, and I hope you do, we cannot miss this because it's critical.

I've told you this before, and I'll tell you this again: There are people out there who will misrepresent the name of Jesus. They will blaspheme the name of Christ in a place of leadership, and this cannot be us.

I hope that you would never leave here and go, "Man, I'm going to just throw all the biblical qualifications of leadership to the side, but I want that spot. I just want to tell people what I think or how I feel."

Scripture is clear:

For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, disguising themselves as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. So it is no surprise if his servants, also, disguise themselves as servants of righteousness. Their end will correspond to their deeds.

— 2 Corinthians 11:13-15

There's weight to this. There's a responsibility to this, and I am tired of seeing people step into a place of godly, biblical authority and leadership and misuse it.

I want you to get this because this is so important. Whether you lead a church, just lead your family, or anywhere in between, we are charged to walk with Christ and display these things in our lives.

If you want to lead, here's what Scripture says it looks like. I made a slide that I think I put into ChatGPT, so big win for me because I have still not figured out this stuff.

If you look at 1 Timothy 3, it gives qualifications for the two offices recognized in the Bible that are in the

church: the overseer, the elder, the pastor. That's one. They're called different things depending on your background. You've probably heard them called different things.

Then there's the deacon. If you don't know what a deacon is, it's somebody who serves. The Greek word means to serve, someone who serves, okay? These are the two things recognized in Scripture.

You've got eyes. You can see what it says. What is an overseer, a pastor, a shepherd, charged with living out? Not, "What do they call other people to do?" If you have the desire, the aspiration, to be in a place of spiritual authority, you've got to do these things.

You must be above reproach. That means there's not even a whiff of you doing something sketchy. Do I need to fill in the blanks on that? Be above reproach.

Therefore an overseer must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, sober-minded, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach; not a drunkard, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money.

— 1 Timothy 3:2-3

He must manage his own household well, not be a recent convert, and be well thought of by outsiders. This is a high bar. This is a high bar.

Maybe you're going, "Hey, I want to serve. I want to lead. I want to get in the game, but I don't know if I'm going to lead a church." Well, there are qualifications for you as well.

For the deacon, for the servant, Scripture says to be dignified and not double-tongued, a.k.a. we're not going to be hypocrites. Can I get an amen? The walk and the talk are going to be the same.

Deacons likewise must be dignified, not double-tongued, not addicted to much wine, not greedy for dishonest gain.

— 1 Timothy 3:8

They must hold the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience. I don't mean, "I don't understand the faith," but the fact that a God that big could love a sinner this small, and my life revolves around it.

They are to be tested first, and then, if they're blameless, they serve. Their wives must be dignified, not slanderers, but sober-minded and faithful. A deacon is to be the husband of one wife, managing his children and his own household well.

I want to throw this out there. If you're going to lead yourself, the very next step before we talk about leading other people, both of these talk about you getting married. I'm just going to throw that out there. This is a good thing. This is a godly thing.

Some of you in the room need to stop liking somebody else's stuff at 2:00 a.m. and just go ask them on a date face-to-face, okay? Because this is an important part. If you're going to do this and follow the Lord for a long time, do you know what the greatest thing you could ever do is besides walk with the Lord? Marry somebody who's doing the same thing.

Somebody told me this when I met my wife. They said, "Your wife will either double your ministry or cut it in half." Marry somebody who's going to double it, okay?

If you're like, "They look good in pictures, but it's hard to talk to them. They don't know Jesus," walk away from it, okay? You've got to live out this example yourself, and the person you choose to spend your life with is a huge reflection of what you prioritize.

That's for free. I just want to throw it out there, but it's something to think about.

Then, for all believers, if you walked in here today and you're like, "I don't ever want to lead. I don't want to serve," one, you're missing a calling on your life. But two, this is clear for every blood-bought believer:

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control.

— Galatians 5:22-23

Does your life reflect that? Because as a believer, that's the bare minimum.

As we walk with the Lord, as we walk with godly mentors and older, wiser people in our lives, and then start living it out ourselves, what are we doing? We're stacking up bricks.

Do you know what's crazy about walking with the Lord? Before you ever lead publicly, people don't see everything that's gotten you up to this point. When you look at a pastor online, or even talk to maybe somebody on staff here, and you go, "Man, they have this platform. They have people who love them," you have probably never seen all that's gotten them here.

It's kind of like an iceberg. You can see the top of it, but most of it's underneath. Does that make sense?

Everyone is called to build a foundation of holiness and then to build on it. Your life as an example, that's the credibility. If you know construction, that's like the rebar in the concrete. Those are the studs behind the pretty painted walls. You might not see it all, but if you don't have it, it all comes tumbling down. It's important to everything we are called to do as believers.

Your public ministry and leadership are worthless if you're not walking in holiness. I don't care how many people listen to you or look to you. If you're not walking with Jesus in personal holiness, it doesn't matter.

As you walk this way, I'm going to tell you this: Other godly believers will affirm that they see all those qualifications in you that were on that previous screen. As an overseer, as a deacon, as a Christ follower, if somebody is like, "Man, do you know anybody who walks with the Lord?" and you're like, "Me!" No, no, no. Let somebody else speak up on your behalf, okay?

That's a good thing. If you've been walking the walk for a long time, you don't have to speak up much, because people know you by your reputation, by the credibility, and by the things that are done in secret a lot of the time. One, the Lord knows them. But the people who are close to you will affirm that you've been walking with the Lord for a long time.

As you set the example, as you lead yourself, I think it's imperative that we have a proper understanding of what grace is, okay?

If the whole point of tonight is for me to tell you how to lead, before you ever lead anybody else, you've got to know what grace is. I know different people in this room came from different backgrounds.

Some people came from a background where there's this thing called cheap grace. Do you know what that is? It's kind of like, "I go on sinning because grace will abound." Maybe you've had a friend like this, and I don't know if they should be your friend. They're like, "Hey, let's just go do it, and God will forgive us." You know somebody like that? Maybe that's been you before. That's cheap grace, and that's not a proper understanding of what grace is.

That's on one end of the spectrum. But then on the other end of the spectrum is maybe the - well, I don't want to put any descriptors on it because I might offend somebody - but there's this cheap grace, and then there's, "Grace is so far from me, and I've got to earn it on my own. If I do everything right, maybe God will give me a chance. Maybe God will like me for what I can bring to the table."

Both have missed the point of this by a mile, because the point of grace is that you don't deserve it and you couldn't get it, but because of God and what He did through Christ Jesus, we can walk in freedom and newness of life. Because of that, I never want to abuse it, but every day I want to be on my knees thanking God that He's given it to me.

It's got to be at the foundation of who we are. If you're going to lead other people to walk with Christ, you've got to know what grace is, okay? Just like repentance, which we're going to talk about, is important, and just like prayer is important, we have to have an understanding of what grace is.

Leading yourself in agreement with the Scriptures is a continuation of this foundation. This is the rebar. It's the studs. It's the stuff that most people will not see, but it's integral to the leadership that people will see.

You don't go walking around bragging, "I spent time with the Lord today." You don't go bragging, "I've got ten mentors." You might be missing the point. You don't go telling people, "I meet all the qualifications of someone God would say would be a good leader."

But it's something that quietly goes on beneath the surface that we can build our leadership upon. Does that make sense?

Lead Others

This is our third point. It's the main point tonight. Now we're going to talk about how to lead. We're going to lead other people.

What is leading? It's private faithfulness turned into public faithfulness, leading people from where they are to where they ought to be.

I don't know about you, but I'm tired of living in a world where everybody's content living right where they are, and it's far from Christ. I want my life to be used up for the sake of pointing other people to Jesus, because it's

the only thing that matters.

When I talk about you leading other people, I don't mean what you can bring to the table. I don't mean what makes much of your name. What does it mean to lead biblically? I want to use my life to bring other people into the presence of God.

Do you know Him? Do you walk with Him? I hope you forget my name. I hope you forget everything about me. But I want you, because of my life, to be able to say that you walk closely with the Lord.

Here are three things I would tell you about how to lead.

Lead With Eternity in Mind

First and foremost, you lead with eternity in mind. What does that look like?

It means stop spending time on your phone looking at other people who are being faithful to what God's called them to do, and start spending time in the Word and in prayer. Let God do what He wants to do with your life.

What we do most of the time is try to replicate what we see God use other people to do instead of listening to what He created us to do. You're like, "Man, if I could just replicate what God's done in somebody else's life, if I could just do that thing I saw on that reel, if I could just do that thing I saw on that YouTube video."

You don't need a podcast and a social media following. None of that stuff lasts anyway. It's not the point. We have to lead with eternity in mind.

What's going to stand the test of eternity? I'll tell you this: The people who have those things, the podcast and the following, who are truly walking with the Lord, just got that because they were faithful for a long time, and their leadership grew with what they could be trusted with. You didn't see everything that happened to them behind the scenes to get them ready for that, okay?

What's eternal? We say this every week:

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you.

— Matthew 28:19-20

These are Jesus' words to us, the church. That's the stuff that lasts for eternity, not any of this other stuff we try to get in our lives and hold on to - the money, the status, the following, or the voice that we think will bring us some kind of appreciation or value.

Christ tells us, "Go with your life, with everything that you are." Not on Sunday. Not just on Tuesday night. Go with everything you are, with all that you have, for all of your days, and do these things: Make disciples, baptize them, let them tell the world that they belong to Jesus, and keep on teaching them how to walk with the Lord.

If you want to lead, all you're going to do is teach people how to get to right here. "Man, this is how you spend time with the Lord. This is how you ask a godly mentor to take you into their life and help you walk through the

difficult seasons that are going to come."

Once you've done those things yourself, then you can start showing other people how to do them as well. That's what leading looks like.

Most people will only see this part of your life. "How do you lead? What do you tell other people to do?" But we can't forfeit the rest.

With leadership in a godly way, there's no focus for us on a CEO role, nothing about a certain number of followers, nothing about one of my favorite phrases, "snapping necks and cashing checks," and nothing about making the most of yourself or being the best you you can be today. Does any of that sound familiar?

Biblical leadership has nothing to do with those things. The only things that matter for the Christian leader are the things that will last in eternity.

Ephesians 4 says:

And he gave the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, the shepherds and teachers, to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ.

— Ephesians 4:11-12

That's what you're supposed to do. That's how you lead.

When you die and go face God in eternity, will you be able to look at Him and say, "I was not perfect, but Your grace and Your blood cover me. What I did with my life was equip the saints for the work of ministry, and I built up the body of Christ. I fought for unity. I pointed people to You with everything that I did"?

If you can say yes to that, that's what leadership should look like. That's when you hear, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

First, we have to lead with eternity in mind.

Say Yes to Being Faithful

Secondly, write this down: Say yes to being faithful, no matter how small the assignment may be. Just say yes, no matter how small the assignment may be.

Matthew 25:21 says:

You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much.

— Matthew 25:21

What are you faithful over first? A little bit. Then, if you are faithful with that, God so often will trust you with more.

But many of us want to jump to the final level. We want to jump, on day one at 22 years old, to what someone who walked faithfully with the Lord for longer than we've been alive got at 60 years old. We just see that and

go, "God, I want that."

Do you know what we're called to do? We're not called to sit around waiting for that megachurch pastor to call you and be like, "Can you fill in for me? I'm about to quit." Not going to happen, okay? I love you. It's not going to happen.

What you are called to do is say yes to leading a group of sixth-grade boys on Sunday morning, serving in the kids ministry, or going out in the parking lot and helping direct traffic, or whatever they do. Give the guy who's 75 years old a break, because he's been doing it longer than you've been alive.

You're called to serve and say yes to that thing that's right in front of you right now. You're faithful with that, and the Lord, as God Almighty sees fit, will add to your plate.

But so many of us want the big thing. We want the big stage. We want all the stuff we see that has some glamour and allure to it, and we miss the beauty of doing what God's called us to do.

God has only called us to be faithful. He'll add stuff to our lives, our plates, our ministry, and our leadership. He handles that. We just say yes to what God's put in front of us.

Let other godly people - I'll throw this out there again because I want you to get this - recommend you to a higher place of service, okay? You just be faithful right where you are right now.

Some of you don't even need to start leading yet. You just need to start coming to church. This is great, but you've got to be in the body of Christ. That's all ages. That's everybody in the church, like a Sunday morning gathering. That's important for us to do as the body of Christ.

Let me tell you a story about when I was 22 years old. I had just finished my undergrad, and I don't know how your parents are, but my parents were like, "Hey, dude, the second you're done with college, you've got to figure it out on your own financially."

I was like, "But I thought we were close. We've been through so much together."

I started working at my college well before I graduated, because I was like, "The way my bank account is set up, I am going to starve to death if I don't get a job."

I started working, and the longer I worked there, the more I started to be responsible for. Was your job like this? You got to do more things, and they didn't pay you for a long time? Anybody going to get a witness on that?

I was doing that for a while, and then I was coming up to the finish line of graduating. I was like, "Yo, here's the deal. I love it here. I feel like you like me. I like you." It's kind of like a define-the-relationship talk. "But again, the second I walk that stage with a degree, my parents are like, 'See ya.'"

I took a full-time job at the university making not much, okay? But it paid enough for me to pay the bills. I said yes to it, but I knew I was called to ministry. I knew I was supposed to give my life to doing what I do now, to teaching the Word of God and being with the people of God in the church of God.

I was like, "Well, there's something up here. I'm just going to say yes to this desk job, and I'm going to trust that the Lord will open the door."

While I was working at the school, I started serving - let me point this out - for free. No gas money, no pizza money, and no check at the end of the month. I just started serving at the church of one of my seminary professors. He was a part-time professor. He's still a full-time pastor.

He's at a church where you could fit three of them in this room. Just imagine that. On a big Sunday, there are maybe 200 people in this room.

But do you know what he did? He took me under his wing in my undergrad. He encouraged me. He guided me. He said, "Emory, I know the calling on your life. Come serve with me. I can't pay you a dime, but we'll meet together. I'll teach you how to open God's Word. I'll teach you how to teach God's Word, and we'll keep giving you opportunities."

I just said yes, and I did that for a long time.

Do you know what? One day the phone rang, and it was a full-time job in ministry. I was like, "Hey, let me think about it. I feel like this is God's calling on my life."

I met with my pastor. I said, "Hey, man, I've got a job opportunity." He didn't break a sweat. He didn't waste a moment. He looked me dead in the eye and said, "Emory, you need to take that job."

I said, "But I'm going to leave you."

He said, "We'll figure it out. You need to go be faithful with what God's called you to next because you've been faithful with what you've been called to do here."

He sent me, and he prays for me. Every time I'm in the area, I go to lunch with that man because he poured into my life. He encouraged me, and he told me, "Just keep saying yes to what God puts in front of you."

We are supposed to just say yes to what's in front of us and be faithful with that. God will add to it as He sees fit.

Do the Right Thing Regardless of the Cost

The last thing about how we're going to lead others is this: Do the right thing regardless of the cost, and call others to do the same thing. Do the right thing regardless of what it costs you, and encourage, call, and lead other people to do the same thing.

Let me tell you something, and look up here real quick. If you want to lead in a godly way that advances God's kingdom, it will cost you. Do you hear me? This is something that will cost you. It might cost you everything.

I'm not trying to be over the top here, but there might be a day in your life when it costs you your life to follow Jesus and not apologize for it. Are you ready for that? Are you going to encourage other people to do the same thing, that if following Christ costs you everything, you'll keep doing it?

Jesus says:

Behold, I am sending you out as sheep in the midst of wolves, so be wise as serpents and innocent as doves.

Beware of men, for they will deliver you over to courts and flog you in their synagogues, and you will be dragged before governors and kings for my sake, to bear witness before them and the Gentiles.

When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

— Matthew 10:16-20

It'll cost you. But what do I know? If God's called you to lead for His name's sake, He's never going to abandon you. He'll give you what you need in the moment to be faithful to His calling on your life.

Let me tell you this more than anything: Even if it costs you everything, it's worth it, because this is the kind of thing that lasts for eternity. Not your name, not your brand, and not your following. All that will come and go. The kingdom of God is the only thing that stands.

Jesus says:

The one who endures to the end will be saved.

— Matthew 10:22

I want that to be me, and I want that to be you. We do that as leaders God has called to follow Him and serve Him.

A lot of people get to a place of leadership and start forgetting things. Have you noticed that? Did you see how quickly that came out? Some of y'all are about to start getting nervous. This gives me anxiety, okay?

People get to a place of leadership and forget what got them there in the first place. They go, "Man, I know I'm supposed to follow Christ, but I think I've got it. I think I've done this before. I think I taught a podcast about this. I don't need to consult Scripture or the Holy Spirit before I make a decision."

What you start doing is chipping away at the foundation God called you to build, and you think you graduated from it. Y'all are getting really nervous right now, aren't you?

What happens is that one day, you keep chipping away at what God called you to do, and at some point the whole thing comes tumbling to the ground.

Why? Because you do not graduate from following Jesus. You do not graduate from submitting to His will for your life. You do not graduate from needing other godly believers to speak into your life. You do not graduate from living out the example before you lead other people.

God, by His grace, has given you the opportunity to lead, and we cannot let that go to waste.

Application

Here's what we're going to do as we close. I want you to understand this: Learning how to follow and living out the example are expectations for every believer. This is the bare minimum. Again, this is the stuff below the surface that other people don't see.

Leading is a privilege, an honor, and an opportunity that we should not take lightly. If you stop learning and stop living, you forfeit your right to lead, and your life will look like this.

What I know is that when godly leaders take their eyes off the Lord and start doing things in the flesh, it hurts everybody around them. I hope that's never been part of your testimony. I hope it never is. But the ramifications are far and wide, and they're not easy to clean up.

Now, God can redeem a broken mess. Don't get me wrong. But what if we lived our lives how God called us to, and there wasn't this, but there was a beautiful picture of godly leadership in the young church today? What if? It would change the world.

Here's our application.

First, build a foundation of holiness. Write this down. Write it on your forehead. Build a foundation of holiness that you never leave. You continue to build on that foundation of holiness.

Secondly, say yes to serving. Many of you who have been walking with Jesus for a long time aren't content, and you're looking for more and more and more people to fill you up. But God's called you to pour out and serve. Say yes.

I hope that when I say amen, a bunch of you are in the back talking to somebody about what it looks like for you to say yes to serving. If you don't go here, go back home to your home church and serve there.

If you do go here, I want to see you on Sunday morning in the kids ministry. I want to see you in the parking lot directing traffic. I want to see you at a door holding it open. Smile. Don't forget to smile, okay?

Do these things and pour your life out, and the Lord will give you the next thing. But say yes to serving.

Lastly, just start small. It doesn't have to be huge. Honestly, it's a blessing when it's not. If you can just quietly, humbly serve the Lord and lead other people to do the same thing, there's no greater blessing than that.

Here's our invitation.

One, none of this makes sense if you haven't surrendered your life. That's step one. Some of you tonight, this doesn't make any sense to you because you haven't surrendered your life to Jesus.

Why would you serve and lead in a way that's honoring to Him if He doesn't own you, if everything about you doesn't belong to Him? He's paid the price for your sin, and you're still holding things to yourself. The first thing you've got to do is surrender your life.

But if you've done that, the second step is that you need to be disciplined. You're not going to learn how to lead

other people if nobody's ever taught you how.

For many of you in this room, when I pray here in just a second, you need to go to the back and talk to somebody. "Hey, I need to be disciplined."

There are godly men and women in this church who are 40, 50, 60, 70, and 80 years old who want to give you their time and point you to Jesus. But in humility, we as students have to approach someone and say, "Will you show me what this looks like? I'm reading my Word, but sometimes it doesn't make sense. I don't know how to live."

Be disciplined.

Lastly, start leading. Stop sitting on the couch. Stop saying that's somebody else's job. Stop waiting for somebody else to do what God's called you to do. When we all start saying yes to God's calling on our lives, we'll see some incredible things happen for the kingdom.