



salt&light

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Written by
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Leadership Assignment 1
"Measuring Up to the Master"

Name & Date _____

Are You Plumb?

Introduction

Before you begin your first leadership assignment, I would like to thank you, on behalf of the other Coaches, for participating in the Salt & Light Program. By getting this far in the process, you have already demonstrated both the courage and the desire to do more than just sit on the sidelines and watch life's opportunities pass you by. **You want to make an impact!** You want to lead, and I'm thankful for you. By taking this step, *you have already separated yourself from the masses.* I applaud you.



By this point, you've probably wondered why we give you homework over the summer? Two reasons. First, **to eliminate the weenies.** Typically, wimps, whiners, and weaklings don't want to work for anything; and, complainers, quitters, and cry babies usually stop right here at this assignment. Truthfully, that's okay. We'd rather not have that type of young person in S&L anyway. They don't make good leaders.

The second reason why we give homework over the summer is because **there is no time to waste.** You can begin learning how to lead right now. Besides, after school starts, you won't have time to do extracurricular assignments. So then, would you like to quit or keep going? You decide.

If you decide to keep going, you will be blessed. These three "plumb line assignments" (as we call them) will both challenge you and encourage you, they will stretch you and strengthen you, and they will help you discover more about yourself and how God has made you to lead. But first, I must explain what a plumb line is.

A plumb line is an ancient tool, very simple and yet effective. Technically, the word "plumb" comes from the French word "plon," which is "lead" in English, as in lead metal. Thus, a plumb line is a lead weight attached to a cord and used to measure verticality or depth. In other words, one could stand atop a wall or building, drop a plumb line, and determine how high it is. Or, one could drop a plumb line into water and determine how deep it is.

However, I like the second use for a plumb line. Ancient architects and builders used it to determine how perpendicular a wall was to the ground. What use is a wall if it isn't straight, right? It's going to fall over simply because gravity is working against it. Well, if you drop a plumb line next to a wall, gravity will hold the lead weight steady at the end of the line, and, eventually, it (the string or cord) will represent perfect straightness. Thus, if a wall lined up with the plumb line, then, it was perfectly straight or plumb, as they would say.

Okay, that's interesting, but, what in the world does a plumb line have to do with anything today? Well, let me tell you a story. In the early Church (33-300 AD), there was much confusion about Christianity, its doctrines and beliefs. No one knew for sure what exactly to teach. There were no guidelines. Because of the confusion, several heresies crept into the

Church; contradictory messages were being preached everywhere. Church fathers became concerned that pure Christianity would be lost, unless they somehow took steps to combat these heresies. But, how could they combat them without a standard of right things to teach? They couldn't, and, thus, they found themselves in a dilemma.

By 300 AD, church leaders began to call for a standard of truth to be established, so that everyone would know what to teach about Jesus Christ and His Gospel. The word they used for the standard of truth, by which to measure all doctrines, was the Greek word "canon." In English, the word "canon" is – (the suspense is killing you) -- "plumb line." In other words, Church fathers were asking that a plumb line be developed that would set everyone straight, so that they could take a doctrine that was being taught and hold it up next to this plumb line.

Thus, from 300-400 AD, several Church councils were convened to discover God's standard for right teaching. By the end of that century, they had compiled 66 books that they believed to be inspired by God – authentic, authoritative, and accurate. When they had finished thoroughly investigating these books, they grouped them together into one book. They called this process "canonization," and the book they called the Canon (Greek) or Plumb Line (English). Of course, you and I know this book as the Bible.

Now, Church leaders could take a doctrine, hold it up against the Plumb Line of God's Word and determine whether or not it was truth or a lie. You and I can do the same thing today. *Hold up the philosophies of this culture, the thinking of man, and the ways of the world to the Scriptural plumb line and determine whether or not they are truth or lies.* In fact, all that we do, say, and think should be measured against God's Plumb Line, the Bible.

The most amazing aspect of all of this is that the Bible calls Jesus the "Living Word," which means that the written Plumb Line took on flesh and became a man, and that man is now our standard of measure. **God's Word, modeled in His Son Jesus, is our plumb line.** It is God's goal in our lives that we be conformed to the image of His Son, that *we are plumb*.

So, what exactly does a leader look like? Well, we go to the source. We go to the plumb line and measure leadership next to it. That's the goal of these assignments. Christ is our plumb line in everything. Therefore, it is no surprise that He is also the perfect example of leadership. Thus, the challenge is to see how we measure up!

Ok, well, that's enough yapping. Let's start learning what a good leader looks like.

Caution! I would implore you not to do this entire assignment in one sitting. The goal is not to finish quickly, but to learn what God has for you. Therefore, I would recommend that you take this assignment in parts, perhaps even use it for your quiet time with God for several days. Whatever you do, don't rush through it; slow down and carefully reflect on the truths you run across. It's not a hurdle to get over but a help to start you in the right direction.

Again, I am already impressed with your passion. May you find yourself to be plumb with Christ's example of leadership. May you measure up to the Master.

Measuring Up to the Master

Conforming to the Prototype

I'm sure that you are familiar with these verses, but take a minute to re-read them.

"For those whom God foreknew (that's us), He also predestined to become **conformed to the image of His Son**, so that He would be the **firstborn** among many brethren." *Romans 8:29*

"The Lord makes us more and more like Him, as we are changed into His glorious image." *2 Corinthians 3:18*

"[The Lord] will transform the body of our humble state into **conformity** with His glory, by the exertion of the power that He has to subject all things to Himself." *Philippians 3:27*

From the beginning of time, *it was God's intention that we be like His Son*. In fact, we were created in His image, human and holy (*Genesis 1:27*). However, as you know, sin greatly distorted that image and corrupted man's nature. We are still human, of course, but we are born thoroughly unholy. Yet, the good news is that Jesus Christ, through His death and resurrection, has redeemed us, His followers, from our fallen state. He has also regenerated our wicked hearts and restored our spiritual image to His likeness. So, then, what now?

The word "firstborn" in the phrase, "firstborn among many brethren" (*Romans 8:29, above*), is the word "prototype," which means that Jesus is our example or model. Inventors construct a prototype that functions the way that they intend; then, they produce many more just like it. God has given us His prototype, Jesus Christ, who fulfilled all that His Father intended, and now He has mass produced His image, His mold, in millions of people like you and me.

Our goal, then, is to be like Christ, in all that we say and do. He is the standard by which we measure ourselves. The standard is not our friends or family, our teachers or pastors, or any contemporary American idol. All of those standards fall far short of the Prototype. We are to emulate Christ in all things, especially regarding how we lead others. He has made that possible through the ministry of the Holy Spirit, who was given to enable us to live the Christian life.

There is one setback, though; that is that our reborn, sinless spirits are temporarily trapped in our sinful bodies. Though we will one day be completely conformed to the image of Christ, having a new body like His (*Philippians 3:27, above*), we will, until then, be locked in a conflict between our spirits and our flesh. The Holy Spirit, who lives in us, leads in direct opposition to our passions and desires. Though we have been made new and we long to be like Christ, our sinful flesh naturally hinders us (*Romans 7*).



I say all of that as a disclaimer, because I want to make something clear before we get too far into this assignment. Despite what the Mormons propagate, **we cannot and will not achieve perfection while we are here on earth.** Though it is our aim and sincere desire to imitate Christ, we will never fully be like Him, until we meet Him face to face in heaven, and He gives us a new body, truly conformed to His glory.

Does that mean that we should give up conforming to His image while we are here on earth? No, not at all. Out of gratitude for what Christ has done for us on the cross and because of the command to live in a manner worthy of His calling, we press on and pursue our Prototype. We run in such a way that we may win, adhering to the pattern set before us by our Plumb line, who was, and still is, the greatest leader of all!

Are you ready to begin? Brace yourself. This task will not be easy.

Important Note

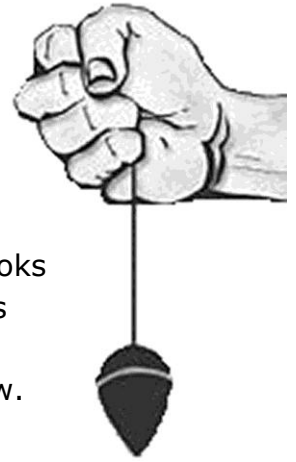
As you plow through this assignment, I would encourage you to underline, highlight, and make any notes as you go. After we check to make sure you've completed all of the questions, we will return this assignment to you, so that you can put it in your S&L notebook. So then, this assignment is yours to mark up as you please.

Stick It to the Stigma

Lesson 1

“Let no one look down on you **because you are young**, but prove yourself an example of those who believe.” *1 Timothy 4:12*

How can I capture Jesus' contribution to leadership in a short assignment like this? I can't, and it's not my intention to do so. A set of a hundred books wouldn't scratch the surface of the leadership skills and lessons that Jesus exemplified while He was here on earth. However, my goal is not to draw out every aspect of Jesus' life and leadership, but rather to point out a few. Thus, in these five lessons, you will find that **Jesus was an exceptional young person**, who set Himself apart from others in more ways than one.



Take a minute to read *Luke 2:39-52*.

Joseph and Mary lived in Galilee, in the town of Nazareth. Jesus grew and became strong and was filled with wisdom; and, the favor of God was upon Him. Now His parents went to Jerusalem every year for the Feast of the Passover. When He was twelve years old, they went according to custom. When the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing Him to be in the group, they went a day's journey; but, then they began to search for Him among their relatives and acquaintances, and when they did not find Him, they returned to Jerusalem and searched for Him there.

After three days, they found Jesus in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions. All who heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. When His parents saw Him, they were astonished. His mother said to Him, "Son, why have you treated us like this? Your father and I have been searching for you in great distress."

Jesus said to them, "Why were you looking for me? Did you not know that I must be in My Father's house?" Joseph and Mary did not understand these words; but, Jesus returned with them to Nazareth and He was submissive to them. His mother treasured up all these things in her heart; and, Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man.

Describe Jesus after observing Him in this passage? What kind of young man was He?

The title of this lesson might have struck you as a little odd – “Stick It to the Stigma.” Let me explain. It seems to me that, in our society today, **there is a stigma** (a negative view) **attached to our teens**. Stereotypically, they are viewed as rebellious, immature, irresponsible, and incapable of doing much. It's true that today's young people are not what they used to be, for example during the founding era of our country when students entered college at the age of twelve; yet, while many (perhaps even the vast majority) of our youth may confirm the stigma, I do not believe it applies to everyone.

What about you? Have you felt slighted at all by adults, in the sense that they look down on you because you are young? Give support for your answer.

One of Paul's partners in the ministry was a young man named Timothy. In a letter to Timothy, Paul wrote the following words. Imagine that he were writing them to you.

“Don’t let anyone think less of you because you are young. Be an example to all believers in what you say, in the way you live, in your love, your faith, and your purity.” *1 Timothy 4:12*

Be brutally honest with yourself for a minute. Have you given the adults in your life any reason to look down on you? How have you confirmed or contradicted the stigma that people have placed on teenagers?

I love the biblical accounts of Jeremiah, Daniel, and Daniel's friends, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego. Here were young men who set the bar high for themselves and others. Read the following verses and write down how they are described.

Jeremiah 1:4-10, 17-19

Daniel 1:17, 18

Daniel 3:8-18

These guys were not your typical teens. They distinguished themselves from others in many ways. Name a friend whom you think contradicts the stigma. What has he or she done to set themselves apart from this negative stereotype?

Imagine walking through the woods and coming up on a snake. The snake is in the way; it's on the path, and there is no way around it. What would you do? You might tip-toe around it, jump over it, or throw rocks at it; but, the wise thing to do would be to find a stick (preferably a long one) and use it to pick up the snake and move it off of the path. Some of you might even beat the snake with the stick! Whatever you do, a stick is long enough to keep you a safe distance from danger; and, once the snake is removed from the path, you can continue on your way.

Your spiritual enemy, Satan, is described in the Bible as a serpent, a snake, and he will regularly stand in your way. He likes to see you come to a stop, to cease making progress in your life. He enjoys it when you are rebellious or disobedient. He smiles when you display self-centered attitudes. He is thrilled when you act your age, or even younger, when you demonstrate laziness, irresponsibility, foolishness, or pride. He wants you to fall under that stigma and be counted with the rest of the young people he has stopped in their paths; but, **you must stick it to him!** Remove him from your path and avoid the danger he represents.

What are some things in your life that you know that the enemy has laid in your path, to hinder or halt any progress?

If you truly desire to be a leader (and I believe that you do), **you must break the stigma** and prove to others that it does not apply to you. But, how do you do that? You strive *to be an example in the way that you live*. To be more specific, you just do what Jesus did, "increase in wisdom and stature and in favor with God and man."

In the next four lessons, we will unpack all of the examples that Jesus gave us in *Luke 2*. Though they are briefly mentioned there, we will discover that He exemplified these same characteristics for the rest of His life. *They will be easy to recognize but difficult to emulate.*

If you are ready for a challenge and are committed to break the stigma, then proceed. But, I must warn you, what you will be challenged to do will stretch you, if you are willing to do what Jesus did.

Increase in Wisdom

Lesson 2

“The errors of youth often proceed from the want of discernment.”

Noah Webster



Before we continue to the four things in which Jesus increased, it's important here to have a basic understanding of the person of Christ. You may not be aware of the fact that this area was (and still is) a point of contention for the opponents of Christianity. They have used passages like *Luke 2:52* and *Mark 13:32* (when Jesus did not know the time of His return), to dispute the deity of Christ, that Jesus was fully God (*Colossians 1:19*).

Their argument goes like this: if Jesus were fully God, then why did He need to increase in anything, especially wisdom and favor with God? Isn't Jesus perfect in every way? If so, then why was He not born with complete wisdom and favor with His Father? Furthermore, in the case of *Mark 13:32*, how is it that Jesus did not know the time of His own return? If Jesus is fully God, then that would mean that He is omniscient, knowing all things. So then, how is it that Jesus does not know this?

These are good observations and curious questions, but, there are answers. First, while we will never fully understand the mystery and miracle of what is called the Hypostatic Union (Jesus as fully God and fully man), we must accept what we can piece together in God's Word. If the Scriptures tell us that this is so, then it is so. Our struggle with the concept cannot be attributed to the Bible, but rather our struggle can be attributed to our own feeble, limited human understanding of it.

Second, what we do know is that Jesus was in heaven and submitted Himself to come to earth, and in so doing, He gave up some of His privileges to embody the limitations of humanity. In other words, when Jesus became a man, He voluntarily restricted the use of some of His divine attributes. For example, Jesus gave up His omnipresence, the ability to be in all places at all times. He also gave up His independent authority, completely surrendering Himself to the will of the Father. Finally, His omniscience (full knowledge) was also restricted, as in the case of *Mark 13:32*.

I say all of that, not to confuse you with theological discussion, but to say that Jesus took on the likeness of men, like you and me, and we would do well to remember that. According to *Luke 2:52*, then, He grew or “increased” physically, intellectually, spiritually, and socially, as we do. Just like us, Jesus progressed in stages. We can, therefore, learn a great deal from Him on how to increase in all of these areas.

First, we will consider how Jesus increased in wisdom. Let's define wisdom. What does it mean to be wise, and how can we increase in this area? Webster's 1828 Dictionary defines wisdom as "the right use of knowledge, to exercise discernment, judgment, discretion, and prudence." Take a few minutes to define these words. [Note: the 1828 is online at 1828.mshaffer.com.]

Discern

Judge

Discretion

Prudence

Look for a pattern within the definitions you found. What do all of them have in common?

When I did my research, I found a common theme among these words, that all of them revolve around distinguishing truth from falsehood, that which is correct and proper from that which is immorality and foolishness. Webster even added this comment to his definition of discernment: "The errors of youth often proceed from the want of discernment." In essence, young people get themselves into all sorts of trouble because of their lack of wisdom. Thus, if a young person could increase his wisdom, he would save himself from the painful consequences of poor choices.

The question begs to be asked, then, how can we increase in wisdom? First, we must ask ourselves, what is the source of wisdom? Where does it come from, and how do we attain it? Read and summarize the following verses.

Jeremiah 10:7, 12

Romans 11:33

Proverbs 2:6

James 1:5; 3:17

Daniel 2:20-23

Proverbs 9:10

Psalm 111:10

I'm not sure if the Bible could be any clearer than it is. *God is all-wise, and He is the giver of wisdom.* The question is how? How does God give man wisdom? Here is where Jesus' examples come in handy. Let's consider how Jesus grew in wisdom.

Example 1: Jesus Was Submissive to His Parents

Notice that Jesus returned to Nazareth with Joseph and Mary, and He was submissive to them (*Luke 2:51*). Take a minute to read this poem entitled, "Bye-Bye Birdies."

Sweet Birdie loved her nest for years
And bid her chicks goodbye through tears.
One made haste to fly his way,
But soon in hunters' hands fell prey.
Another heeded naught at all,
And, thus, his end by tooth and claw.
But one flew straight, as Mama said,
And found her freedom, then, instead.

List the three types of birds described in this poem:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

What about you? Which of the three birds describes your relationship with your parents? Are you the one who rebels against authority and doesn't listen to anything your parents have to say? Are you the one who listens, or pretends to listen, but then does whatever he wants? Or, have you come to the place where you realize that your parents are God's gift to you, that they are there for your good and that they could be a tremendous asset to prepare you for the future? Which of these best describes you? Explain your answer.

God is brilliant, in that He has created a system in which every child has natural teachers already assigned to him — parents. God has given them the important responsibility of teaching you about life and godliness (*Deut. 6:4-9; Prov. 22:6,15; Eph. 6:4*); and, believe me, it is a daunting task. Since what they have to share with you is vital both for your survival and success, it seems to me that it would be wise to respect their authority, submit to their boundaries, and learn from their experience. Unfortunately, that is not the case for most teenagers today.

Read *Exodus 20:12* and *Ephesians 6:1*. How best can you live out these commands?

Example 2: Jesus Sat Among His Teachers

Notice that Mary and Joseph found Jesus "sitting among the teachers, listening to them, and asking questions" (*Luke 2:46*).

What do these three actions suggest about Christ's intentions for visiting the Temple?

Remember, in this account, Jesus was twelve years old. In the Jewish culture, boys become men at thirteen. Perhaps that's why the Bible reveals Jesus' age. We're not sure, but, in our culture, being twelve or thirteen places Jesus in sixth or seventh grade. What are a typical seventh-grader's thoughts about school today? For that matter, what is the typical teenage response to school?

Take a minute to read and summarize *Proverbs 1:7*.

Solomon, the wise King of Israel, noted after all of his years of experience that wisdom begins with one's understanding of, respect for, and submission to God. In your case, God has provided a host of men and women who have invested their lives to teach you about Him and His ways. List some of them here:

How would you describe your attitude towards your teachers? Be truthful.

I was once a child too, and there were many times that I did not want to listen to my parents. Their voices became noisy gongs; I tuned them out. That's why I'm so grateful for the mentors that God provided for me in those critical years, godly men and women who taught me truth and who modeled genuine Christian lives. Thankfully, I took notice of them; and, their combined experience and influence has made me who I am today. I would've been a fool to ignore them.

What about you? Are you ignoring the teachers in your life, or are you sitting among them, soaking up their knowledge? Thank God daily for those whom He has provided to add to the increase of your wisdom.

Other teachers that are often overlooked by today's youth are those found in books. That's right; I used the "B" word. There's a great deal of wisdom to be found in books, but you know what that means. To gain that hidden wisdom, one has to (gasp!) read. While today's teens are keen to use many four-letter words, "read" is not one of them; and, it gets worse.

I recently read that the average person in America reads seven books or less in his adult lifetime. What that means is that after we graduate from school, where we are expected to read, we stop reading. If a person lived to be 75, he would average one book every seven years. Yikes! Those seven books had better be carefully selected if that's all of the education we receive after school.

Why do you think this important skill is fading away in our culture?

Are you guilty of despising the wisdom of books? Describe your attitude towards reading.

Dr. Howard Hendricks, one my favorite authors to read, said that our lives are influenced by the things we read and the people with whom we associate more than any other external factors. I believe that he is correct.

I must admit here a failure of mine as a student. I despised the wisdom of books, because I hated to read and would not read except when I had to. Today, I am constantly reading something, mainly for two reasons: I have a lot of wasted time to make up for, and I've come to realize the value of it. I've recognized how ignorant I am about so many things, and reading helps to fill in many of my gaps. Staying informed about the world around me has paid tremendous dividends. I will never go back to the uneducated state in which I once lived.

Now, I must also submit a word of caution here. You must practice discernment concerning the things you read. I do not recommend reading anything and everything. You do not have the time.

Paul said that all things are lawful but not all things are profitable. What guidelines would you suggest that one use when determining what he should or should not read?

Of course, there is no magic formula for discerning things to read. However, I would suggest sticking to those books, magazines, websites, articles, etc., that will help develop your understanding of God, that will instruct you in a biblical worldview, or that will edify and strengthen your faith. That may not be an exhaustive list of requirements, but it's a place to start.

Reading is a discipline. It takes determined time and effort, yes, but it can be one of the most rewarding activities you will ever undertake. The bottom line is this — **reading is a blessing, not a curse**. It is a precious gift that God has given you, in order to assist your pursuit of wisdom. Don't be a dummy. There is a vast world of knowledge at your finger tips. Be wise and soak it up by reading!

Example 3: Jesus Spent Time Alone

Jesus would oftentimes “slip away into the desert to pray” (*Luke 5:16*).

“In the early morning, while it was still dark, Jesus left the house and went away to a secluded place to pray. Peter and his companions searched for Jesus; and, when they found Him, they said, ‘Everyone is looking for You.’ Jesus said to them, ‘Let us go somewhere else, to the towns nearby, so that I may preach there also; for that is what I came for.’ He went into the synagogues throughout all Galilee, preaching and casting out the demons.” *Mark 1:35-39*

Did you read the verses above? If not, do that before you continue.

One of the greatest leadership lessons that you will ever learn is captured in this example of Jesus. Even the greatest leader in history, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, needed time alone and made it a priority in His life.

How could the fact that Jesus needed and took time out for Himself be evidence of His humanity? Why would He need to be alone?

In your mind, what do you think Jesus was doing when He was alone?

The experts all agree, and the studies more than reveal, that solitude (time alone) is healthy for humans. But, I am convinced that solitude is more than just a healthy habit; it is a necessity for the Christian life, and consistently setting aside time for solitude is a spiritual discipline.

Was Jesus getting away from His whirlwind schedule to get some rest? Absolutely. Was Jesus getting away from the crowds in order to get some peace and quiet? No doubt. However, I believe that those precious moments that He had alone were more than just for sneaking away for a nap. He had a strenuous task before Him; He was constantly teaching, healing, helping, giving of Himself to others, and the multitudes were relentless, pressing around Him night and day. With pressures like that stalking you, who wouldn't need a break from it all?

However, Jesus' times alone were more than coffee breaks. He was tapping into His source of strength, wisdom, and encouragement. What I find encouraging here is that *Jesus' source for these things is our source — our Father in heaven.*

Consistent, unhurried time alone with God is the accelerator for increasing your wisdom, not to mention the life-line for your continued strength and encouragement. If you attempt to lead others in your own strength and wit, you won't last long. You will experience frustration and burn-out. **Before you stand before others or invest effort into their lives, you need to go to the Source!**

Describe your time alone with God. Do you have any? If not, why not? If so, when is it, where is it, how long is it? Is it consistent or haphazard?

Some people have told me that they do not have time in their day to spend alone with God. They are too busy "to waste" time doing that. If that is your attitude, then you have yet to realize the importance of solitude. It is vital to your growth as a Christian and as a leader, so vital that **you cannot afford to miss time with the Lord**. My response to those whose schedules are so crowded is that their use of time reveals the significance (or insignificance) of their activities. Consistent unhurried alone time with the Lord is not a priority for them. If it were a priority, then they would make time for it in their day.

For me, I start my day with solitude. It is my favorite time of the day. I look forward to it; in fact, there are times when I can't wait to get up. I like to get up the same time every day, so that my alone time is a habit, a discipline. Therefore, it is consistent. I first started out with ten minutes a day, and before long, I was arranging for more time. There are days now that I will get up at dark (literally), so that I can have 90 or more minutes alone with God. Therefore, my alone time is unhurried.

What are some things that you should consider doing in your time of solitude? I would encourage you to **remove yourself from distractions**, such as the computer, the cell phone, the television, the iPod, etc. Find somewhere that is comfortable for you and, yet, a place that will not be a hindrance to your ability to focus on the Lord.

I realize that there are many things that you could do in your time of solitude, but two come to mind that are essential. A Christian leader should not go without them. They are Scripture intake and prayer. These things seem so simple that we often take them for granted, but they are the right and left hands which every Christian needs, in order to face the challenges of life and leadership.

Let me first provide some thoughts about Scripture intake. If one of our goals as a leader is to pursue wisdom, there is no better place to look than the Scriptures. *If the Bible was the only book that you read for the remainder of your life, you would gain more wisdom than if you read every book that existed in the world today.*

Read and summarize the following verses.

Psalm 119:105

Proverbs 2:6

2 Timothy 3:16, 17

On a scale from one to ten (10 being outstanding) how would you rate your Scripture intake? Why did you give yourself that rating?

No advice that I could give you regarding leadership would be more important or beneficial than this: **devote yourself to becoming an expert student of the Bible**. Notice that I did not say to become an expert of the Bible; no one can do that. But, you can become an expert student of the Bible. If you do that, God's Word will permeate your words, thoughts, decisions, and actions, and His wisdom will become your own.

While Scripture intake is altogether necessary for the Christian leader, it must be accompanied by Scripture outflow. What is outflow? It is sharing the things you've learned with others. God teaches you things certainly for your own spiritual growth, but His expectations go beyond your personal education. **He teaches you so that you in turn can teach, lead, and encourage others**. A monk who locks himself up in a tower somewhere to read, study, and pray accomplishes nothing, unless he comes in contact with and influences the lives of others. Your spiritual growth is not for you alone. The Lord invests in you so that you can invest in others.

Take a minute to read the unusual account of Jesus and the fig tree in *Matthew 21:18, 19*. Describe what happened here.

A great deal of symbolism is included in this little faith lesson, but the point that I like to highlight is that the Lord had need of the tree (He was hungry) and the tree had nothing to offer Him. You see, the tree was not there to look good but to produce fruit for human food. Without food to eat, the tree was useless and, thus, Jesus cursed it.

Likewise, you are not here to look good. Spiritual growth for spiritual growth's sake is not your purpose. God desires to use you to meet the needs of others. The question is do you have fruit to offer Him? When He comes to your "tree," can you honestly say that you are ready to be used? Or will He find that you have no fruit, nothing to offer for His service? If that is the case, then you have missed your mark and you are useless to the Kingdom of God.

Write down the ways that you are using what God has given or taught you for the good of others. In what ways are you using your fruit for the Lord's work?

Imagine if the disciples, after hanging out with Jesus for three years, never shared what they had witnessed or learned. Imagine if Paul, after spending years in the desert with Jesus, decided to go back to his job and never share what He learned from the Lord. We would not have thirteen books of our New Testament today, except that Paul wrote everything that God had taught him to the Christians of his day. Because his intake became outflow, you and I have benefitted even today.

Read the following verses and record what they have to say about Scripture outflow.

Ezra 7:10

Psalm 1:1-3

Scripture outflow may intimidate you. You may think that you have no special skills to share with someone else. Don't worry. Outflow can be expressed in many different ways; teaching is just one of them. Your outflow may come in the form of writing, sharing what God has taught you in a casual conversation, providing a word of encouragement to a friend or family member, helping someone make a decision, serving others or meeting their needs.

As long as you do not keep God's Word to yourself but rather influence one person by sharing it or doing it, you have offered fruit for the Lord's service. Commit yourself to Scripture intake, but remember that it must be followed by outflow. May your "tree" always have fruit ready for God to meet the needs of others.

Along with consistent Scripture intake and outflow, **a leader must spend time in prayer.** Prayer is simply communicating with God. Prayer is an invaluable privilege that we have in the Christian life. Because of what His Son did on the cross, we can have confidence to approach the Father with our cares and concerns (*Heb. 4:16*). He never promised that life would be easy; in fact, it is full of trials and tribulations. However, He did promise that He would walk beside us through our troubles.

But, most leaders neglect their relationship with the Lord, and, therefore, forfeit the strength, peace, wisdom, and courage that the Lord supplies. Albert Edward Day said, "For the most part, we are an undisciplined people. Therein lies the reason for much of our deficiency of spiritual insight and our serious lack of moral power." **Prayerless leaders undermine their own leadership potential.**

What about you? Describe your prayer life. When do you pray? How do you pray? For whom or what do you pray? How has your time in prayer benefitted your effectiveness as a Christian, as a leader?

Take a minute to read *Colossians 4:2* and *1 Thessalonians 5:17*. What challenge is found here?

Why does the Lord expect us to pray at all times? Is it because He needs to hear from us? No. *Prayer is not for God's sake, it is for our sake.* God the Father does not need prayer. We do. Prayer is a reminder that we are needy people. We are limited, finite, weak, and in need of God's help.

A prayerless leader is a prideful leader, one who simply does not acknowledge his need for the Lord. A prayerless leader is a selfish leader who has his own agenda and intends to fulfill his own desires. By taking the time to pray as leaders, we are submitting ourselves to the Lord, committing our lives to Him, and admitting that we need His help. Prayer is a reminder of whose we are, why we are here, and what we are to be doing. It is not our will but the Lord's will that we must fulfill.

Another mistake that we often make in our prayer lives is that we are impatient. We view prayer as a time only to talk to God; we rarely take time to listen to Him. Remember, prayer is communicating with the Lord. Communicating with someone is a two-way street. You talk and someone else listens; then, he talks and you listen. However, *when it comes to prayer, we do all of the talking.*

A disciplined leader will not only speak to the Lord regularly, but he will also learn to listen to Him. God may not speak to you in an audible voice, but He does speak. What are some ways that the Lord communicates to us today? Are you listening for Him?

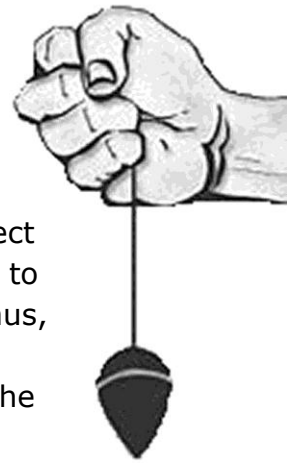
Even Jesus, the greatest leader of all, took time to pray. He didn't come to fulfill His own agenda but His Father's agenda. He recognized the source of His wisdom and strength. It was reliance on His Father that enabled Him to accomplish what He did. Are you willing to spend that kind of time in prayer? In order to lead effectively, you can't live without it.

Increase in Stature

Lesson 3

A man never stands so tall as when he humbles himself.

The Scriptures tell us that Jesus was fully God, though He chose to limit Himself in order to come to earth as a human. His divine nature was perfect and complete from His birth in Bethlehem. However, as a man, Jesus had to progress through the stages of human development like the rest of us. Thus, the Bible declares that, as Jesus grew older, He increased in wisdom and stature. In essence, this description refers to the humanity of Jesus, not the deity of Jesus.



What does Jesus' physical development have to do with your development as a leader? Let's consider three related truths.

A Strong Body Is of Great Benefit

One of the common misconceptions about Jesus today is that He was a wimp. Because He taught His followers to love their enemies, put down their swords, and turn the other cheek, artists often render Jesus as weak and cowardly; but, this picture cannot be further from the truth.

Many overlook the fact that Jesus went toe to toe with the corrupt leaders of His day. He also did not back down from what He knew was right, even if it meant turning over tables in the Temple, grabbing a whip, and expelling the worthless men who disgraced His Father's house. Wimps don't do things like that!

Jesus was actually a very strong man. He had to be. For the first thirty years of His life, He was a carpenter, which some have interpreted as a stone-mason. Then, during His three-year ministry, Jesus walked everywhere that He went. That may not seem impressive, but anyone who has been to Israel knows that Nazareth (Galilee, in the north) is about 90 miles from Jerusalem (in the south), and the terrain is rough and rocky, even mountainous. Those people had to be in shape!

Furthermore, when one considers the end of Jesus' life, all that He endured from His persecutors, it is evident that He was no weakling. He was beaten and abused from the time He was arrested; for nearly 24 hours, Jesus endured physical torture, including punches, kicks, blows to the head and face, whipping, probably caning, flogging, and ultimately the long, exhausting process of crucifixion, all the while having no food, water, or rest. It is a wonder that Jesus didn't die before He reached the cross. His endurance is evidence of His strong heart and body. We could not have endured half as much. **Jesus was not a wimp.**

It is a proven fact that a strong, active body encourages strong, active thinking, while a weak, inactive body undermines mental activities. Don't believe me? Try doing your homework laying on your bed late at night after a long, hard day; you can't focus, because all your mind wants to do is shut off. On the other hand, exercise for ten minutes and then do your homework. You will see a huge difference. That's why experts recommend that you stand up and walk around while you study, so that your brain will retain more. **An active body produces an active mind.**

Describe an example of when you've experienced either the positive or the negative side of this truth.

Part of increasing in stature is to understand how important your body is to the everyday activities of your life, even thinking and leading. The condition of your body must be important to you because "it is the only horse you get to ride" for your entire life. The condition and endurance of that "horse" is in your hands. An inactive body won't be able to lead with the endurance necessary for difficult challenges.

What are some activities in which you currently participate? In what physical activities will you participate in your adult life, in order to stay active and fit?

Glorify God with Your Body

Your body is God's gift to you. What you do with it is in your hands. However, as you increase in stature, you should begin to understand the purpose for your existence. Read the following verses and determine the reason why God made you in the first place.

Isaiah 43:7

1 Corinthians 6:19, 20

1 Corinthians 10:31

Colossians 3:17, 22-24

By now, I hope that you have learned one of life's most important lessons — **life is not about you**. When you were a baby, a toddler, even a young teen, perhaps your thoughts were always of yourself; but, at some point, as you increase in stature, you will come to realize that you are not the center of the universe.

You were made for God's pleasure, to bring glory to Him. While it is true that your body is a gift to you, it is to be used in God's service. Too many people live for themselves, for their own passions and pleasures; they don't see the big picture. In the larger scheme of things, that is a small view of the world.

Life is about God's kingdom, God's plan, and God's purposes, and our role is to be used by Him to accomplish His agenda. **To focus on ourselves is to miss the purpose for our existence.**

When did you recognize that life is not about you? Has that been easy or difficult to accept?

The Lord has given you gifts and abilities to use in His service. With what talents, skills, strengths, and abilities have you been blessed? How are you using them for God's service?

How did Jesus view His own life? What challenge does His example offer to us today?

Philippians 2:5-8

Matthew 26:36-39

When you come to grips with the fact that you are not your own, but you were placed here by God for His purposes, then your view of your body, your skills, your resources, your activities will change. The person who never sees outside of himself will not glorify the Lord nor will he make a difference for His kingdom. See yourself as God sees you — as a vessel in His hands for His good works.

The Bigger You Grow to Be, the Smaller You Must Become

As you increase in stature, the opportunities that will come your way will also increase. You will become more active, more involved, more outspoken, and more exposed to the attention of others. The tendency for young leaders is to allow their egos to swell with pride; but, *pride is the enemy of true leadership and the launch pad for disaster.*

Describe God's view of pride from the following verses.

Proverbs 8:13

Proverbs 29:23

1 Peter 5:5, 6

1 John 2:15, 16

God is opposed to proud people. It was pride that compelled Satan to undermine God's authority in heaven, and it is pride that compels men to reject God today. In my opinion, pride was the first sin, both of men and angels; and pride is at the root of all sin. Therefore, God hates pride.

The answer to this problem of pride is humility. *As the world's view of you increases, your view of yourself must decrease.* As you grow "bigger" in the eyes of others, you must grow "smaller" in your own eyes. Increasing in stature can spell trouble for most people, but it must not be trouble for a Christian leader. Rather than swallow the praise and admiration of others, reflect them to the source of your strength and skill. **Reflect all praise you receive to the Lord, and you will defeat pride.**

Favor with God

Lesson 4

We are placed in God's eternal favor, but let us pursue God's daily fellowship.

Perhaps of the four statements about Christ's earthly life, this one is most perplexing. If Christ is fully God (which He is), then how could He have grown "in favor with God"? Do you see the mystery here?

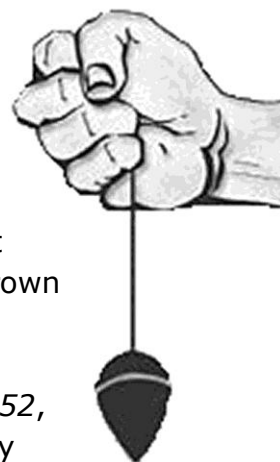
I must keep going back to our original thought. Our key passage, *Luke 2:52*, refers not to Christ's deity (that He was fully God) but to Christ's humanity (that He was fully man). As a part of the Trinity, Christ always had the full favor of God, but as a human, remember, "Christ emptied Himself and took on the form of a man" (*Phil. 2*). In that sense, He had to grow as a human, learn as a human, experience all that humans experience, and prove Himself to be "worthy" of God's favor.

As you know, Christ will prove to be worthy of God's favor, even in His human body. He experienced all that humans experience, even the most intense temptation possible and, yet, without sin. Jesus was pure, without any shortcomings or blemishes. He proved to be holy and righteous, and, as a result, earned God's stamp of approval. That stamp no one else could achieve before Christ or after Him; and that stamp would mean that Christ was eligible to substitute Himself for the lives of sinful people like you and me. Because of His "favor with God," His perfection, God would allow Christ's death to be sufficient for our lives. Christ earned what we could not; His favor with God became our favor with God.

Read these two verses and describe the truth mentioned there.

2 Corinthians 5:21

Romans 5:1



Now, before we consider some important steps that you need to take as a leader, let's get our theology straight regarding this issue. First, *your favor with God began at salvation*. As a sinner, before salvation, you could not please God (*Romans 8:8*), for everything that you did, no matter how "good" in your eyes, was veiled by your sinfulness; it was unworthy in God's eyes. It was only after your acceptance of Christ that God saw you as a new creature (*2 Cor. 5:17*). You cannot have favor with Him before that point.

Second, *after salvation, you have immediate favor with God*, for you have been justified by Him, placed in right standing with Him because of Christ. You cannot earn God's favor before salvation, and you do not have to earn His favor after salvation. You are granted God's favor because of the work of His Son on your behalf. You did not deserve God's favor and you did not earn God's favor; it was given to you as a gift by the blood of Jesus Christ. From now on, **you will always have God's favor, no matter what.**

However, salvation in Christ is not a license to do whatever you want. You are "to walk in a manner worthy of the calling with which you have been called, to please Him in all respects" (*Col. 1:10*). You are no longer at liberty to live the sinful, self-centered life that you did before coming to Christ. He has great expectations for you now, and you must know and fulfill those expectations in your life.

While you will always have God's favor, as one of His children, it is important to retain God's fellowship. In other words, there are things that you can do or not do to displease Him and hinder your daily relationship with Him. As a parent, I will always love my children, no matter what they do. However, that does not guarantee that they will always please me; they may alienate themselves from me.

What are some things that you can do (or have done) that hinder a right relationship with your parents?

Do you see the difference between having favor with God and having fellowship with God? As a young man, the Bible says that Jesus "grew in favor with God." In other words, He avoided those things that would hinder fellowship and instead pursued those things that would help His relationship with God.

Let's consider four basic steps that you, as a young person, can practice to grow in fellowship with God.

Submit to God's Authority

Perhaps the most obvious step you can take to grow in favor with God is to surrender control of your life to Him. Too often, people will give control of their future to Christ but they insist on maintaining "control" of the present. In my opinion, that person was never "saved" in the first place (or he doesn't understand what he has done). If God truly deserves our faith regarding our future destiny, I believe He deserves our trust with what's happening in our lives today.

What do the following verses have to say about this subject?

Luke 9:23

Romans 12:1

Galatians 2:20

In the Old Testament, submitting to God's authority was called "fearing the Lord." Having a healthy fear of or reverence for the Lord is not only the beginning of wisdom, as Solomon says, but it is the beginning of growing in favor with God. So what does it mean to fear the Lord?

Consider the following questions to test whether or not you have a healthy fear of the Lord: Do you know that God is the Creator and that all things are rightly His, even your life? Do you acknowledge that God is sovereign (He's in charge) and that you are not? Do you realize that you are accountable to God, and that you will answer to Him for your actions? Do you understand that God is your judge, that there are consequences for what you do? Do you recognize that God sees everything that you do, even that which is done in secret? Do you understand that God hears everything that you say, even if you say it to yourself? Do you realize that God knows your thoughts, and nothing that you think is hidden from Him?

How did you do? Describe your understanding of the fear of God. Have you submitted to His authority in your life or do you struggle with it?

Practice Obedience

The second step you can take to grow in fellowship with God is to obey His commands. Try rebelling against your parents' authority and disobeying them; you will quickly learn that you will not help but hinder your relationship with them. The same principle applies to God. We've already discussed submitting to His authority; part of submitting to His authority is doing what He expects of you.

Take a minute to read *John 14:21* and *1 John 2:3-6*. Why is obedience so important? What does obedience prove?

Did you notice in *John 14:21*, that Jesus said He would "disclose Himself" (NAS) to those who obey Him? What does that mean? To disclose means "to draw near to in fellowship and share oneself with another." Jesus is saying, "Want to grow closer to Me? Then do what I have asked you to do." **Obedience to God strengthens your relationship with God.** Disobedience hinders your relationship.

When you were growing up, no doubt your parents had rules and guidelines for how to do things in your home. Part of obeying your parents was to know those rules and follow them. No doubt when you were compliant, things went well; on the other hand, I'm sure that you can recall times when you were not compliant and things did not go well.

How is it that you can know what it is that God expects of you? What are the commands that God desires you to follow? Knowing God's commands takes us back to Scripture intake. *You cannot be obedient to God, if you don't know what God expects;* and, you can't know what God expects of you unless you read what God has written to you in His Word. Here's just another good reason for you to establish a consistent, unhurried time with God daily in the Scriptures.

To grow in favor with a teacher, you must learn what that teacher likes and dislikes. To grow in favor with a coach, a boss, or even a friend, you must learn what they like and dislike. So it is with God. *To grow in fellowship with God, you must learn to love what He loves and to hate what He hates.*

What are some things that God loves that you should also love?

Is there anything that God loves that you have a hard time loving? Explain.

What are some things that God hates that you should also hate?

Is there anything that God hates that you enjoy? Explain.

The more that you get know the Lord, the more you will fall in love with Him; and, the more you love the Lord, the more you will desire to please Him. That leads us into our next step.

Do Not Love the World

We are discussing how we can grow in favor or fellowship with the Lord. We just finished talking about loving those things that He loves and hating those things that He hates. One thing that the Lord definitely cautions us against is a love for the world.

Take a minute to read *1 John 2:15-17*, as well as *James 4:4*. What stark challenges does the Bible put forth in these passages?

It seems clear to me that the Bible expresses this truth, that *two opposing, incompatible forces constantly compete for our affection* — **a love for the Lord and a love for the world**. Before we continue, let's identify what it means to love the world and why that's a bad thing.

The "world" is not referring to creation or people; here, the world is referring to the spiritual system that's behind the scenes. Let me explain.

When Lucifer rebelled against God in heaven, the Bible says that he was cast to earth. His name was changed to Satan (meaning "adversary or enemy") and he was given some authority here. In fact, Satan is referred to as the "god of this world" (*1 Cor. 4:4*). The first thing Satan did was ruin the creation and character of man by getting him to rebel against God as well, and by hatching the evil of sin.

Since that terrible moment, Satan has used man's sinful nature in his favor, developing a world system that caters to man's passions and pleasures, anything that would keep him from being reconciled with God (money, power, stuff, sex, religions, convenience, comfort, etc.).

Thus, this world system in which we live today is Satanic; it is hostile towards God. That does not mean that those who love this world hail Satan as their god (at least not out loud); he is much more subtle than that. **To worship Satan and his world system is to worship yourself.**

You are familiar with the holy Trinity — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Satan has an unholy trinity — me, myself, and I. Someone who is in love with the world is in love with himself, which is called *humanism*.

Remember, John lists three things that all humans are suckers for — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life (*1 John 2:16*); all of these temptations are humanistic in nature. All humans love themselves; we love nothing else more. But, God says that we cannot love ourselves and love Him at the same time. Now you understand why these two systems are at odds.

What about you? Do you love this world? Do you love the things of this world? Do you love yourself? Perhaps I should ask if you love yourself most of all? All of us are vulnerable to the attractions of this world, but *to maintain fellowship with God, our love for the world must continue to shrink.*

Read *2 Timothy 4:9, 10*. What does Paul say happened to Demas?

Satan is out to get you. He knows that God does not want you to love his world system, and He will make it extremely hard on you. Satan's plan for your life has two objectives: *to compromise your walk with the Lord and to neutralize your impact on those around you* (especially unbelievers). Satan will wait however long and do whatever it takes to get you off track, and, more than likely, he will do it by seducing you with a love for his world.

In the passage you read, Demas deserted Paul because of a love for "this present world." Your spiritual enemy has aimed everything in his power at you, in order to get you to desert the Lord for this present world. However, desertion does not happen overnight. It occurs in stages, and these stages are oftentimes subtle and undetectable. We rarely realize that it's happening to us.

Here are the five stages of desertion:

Stage 1: *Distraction*

Satan has a lure for every fish. All of us are susceptible to temptation. He uses temptation as bait, to take our eyes off of God and get us wasting our resources.

Stage 2: *Discontentment*

Satan will convince you that the grass is greener on the other side, and, in the process, cause you to lose interest in spiritual things.

Stage 3: *Dabbling*

Next, Satan will get you to flirt with worldliness; soon, you will find yourself smelling and nibbling on his bait. You will find yourself toying with sin longer than usual.

Stage 4: *Devotion*

At this point, you are hooked. Satan's bait has lured you in, grabbed your attention, and trapped you. You might put up a fight for a time, but you are getting reeled in.

Stage 5: *Disqualification*

Eventually, you will give up fighting and ultimately give in to sin. In the end, you will desert the Lord and disqualify yourself from usefulness in His service.

Have you experienced one or more of these stages in your own life? Explain.

You have heard it said that sometimes Christians can be so heavenly-minded that they are no earthly good. I have never met someone like that. In fact, it's just the opposite. I believe that *far too many Christians are too earthly-minded that they are no heavenly good.*

It is obvious that your love for the Lord and your love for this world are at the opposite ends of the spectrum. You are somewhere in between, and you will be in this battle for the rest of your life.

Where would you place yourself on this spectrum? Be honest with yourself. Place an "X."

Love for World ----- Love for God

Neutral is not an option in this battle. Every day, you have opportunities to move towards one love and away from the other. *You will grow to love the world, if you do not take steps to avoid it.*

What are some things you could do to shrink your attraction to or love for the world?

As a Christian, **it is our desire for you to impact the world more than the world impacts you.** Unfortunately, we are finding the opposite to be true. We are watching our Christian youth desert the Church in droves, falling prey to the philosophies and pleasures of this world. We are praying that you will not be one of the casualties. Your parents, teachers, and pastors have invested so much into your life. We are hoping that you will be a good steward of our investment and be used of God to make a difference for Him. But, the responsibility is yours. Don't fall in love with the world!

Love People

The last step (we will mention) that you can take in your pursuit of God's favor or fellowship is to love people. It seems to me that this point was one that Jesus most emphasized and exemplified for His followers. In fact, when asked about the greatest commandments, Jesus only mentioned two — to love God and to love people (*Mark 12:30, 31*).

Read the following verses and write out the principles expressed in them:

Mark 2:14-17

Luke 10:25-37

James 2:1-8

John 13:34, 35; 1 John 4:7-11

God loves people, and He expects His followers to love people; and, we are not just called to love other believers but all people. If you think about it, of all the things that God created, *only people are eternal*. Everything else that God made will be destroyed in time, but the souls of people will live in eternity, some with Him and some apart from Him. Since that is true (people are eternal), then, *what we do in the lives of people will be remembered forever*.

Imagine the things that you do for people here on earth being talked about when you get to heaven. That is exciting! Yet, when you consider what it is that we most spend our time and efforts on during a lifetime, so much of it is not important and certainly not eternal. When we get to heaven, we will not wish that we would've spent more time working on projects or playing; we will wish that we would've spent more time investing in the lives of people.

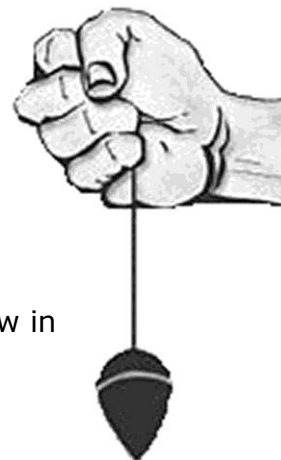
What about you? Do you tend to spend more time on people or projects? Explain.

Jesus was the best at exemplifying the importance of loving people. He constantly looked for ways to encourage others by meeting their physical, emotional, and spiritual needs. Even up to his last night, Jesus spent time with His followers, teaching and training them to the end.

So often we see people as an annoyance and even try to avoid them at times. Can we truly say that we love God and desire His fellowship when that is our attitude towards those that He loves?

Favor with Men

Lesson 5



He who is in favor with God should likewise be in favor with men.

You are nearly done with this assignment! I trust that you've been challenged already. Keep up the good work.

The last description that we get of Jesus as a young man was that He grew in favor with men. Let's consider what that means and how you can practice that as a Christian leader.

First of all, you need to understand two relationships that man has had from the beginning — his *vertical* relationship with God and his *horizontal* relationship with other people. We have spent a good deal of time discussing our vertical relationship with God, pursuing His favor and fellowship. Now, let's consider our horizontal relationship with others.

Before you can grow in your favor with men, you must recognize that it is directly linked to your favor with God. In other words, your horizontal relationships with others are directly connected with your vertical relationship with God.

Simply put, if you are at odds with God, for some reason, it will have an effect on your relationship with people. Likewise, if you are at odds with people, for some reason, it will have an effect on your relationship with God.

How have you seen this truth play out in your life, where one relationship affects the other?

I have noticed this truth in my life. When I have not spent quality time with the Lord, I become irritable and short with people. My relationship with my wife and kids is not what it should be. I do not watch out or care for others as I should.

On the other hand, when there is a conflict between someone else and myself, it undermines my time with God. I cannot think about anything else until that conflict is resolved. When I'm angry with someone, I can't seem to focus on my time with God. I become selfish and neglect my spiritual disciplines. Our vertical and horizontal relationships are forever linked. That's how God intended it to be; so it is vital that we work hard to maintain favor in both areas.

Now, let's turn our attention to what it means to have favor with men. What do you think of when you hear the phrase "to have favor with men"? What does that mean in your mind?

To have favor with men does not mean that you must strive to please everyone. As a leader, pleasing everyone is impossible. Having favor with men does not mean that you necessarily give people what they want or that you must help everyone achieve their goals. What if what they want is not biblical? What if their goals are ungodly?

Growing in favor with men really pertains to *who you are and how you treat people*, not so much about what you do for them. Doing something in order to have favor with people is manipulation, and you don't want to be accused of using people to get what you want. Okay, so what does it mean to grow in favor with men?

To have favor with men means that people regard you with fondness, kindness, goodwill, and respect. People are constantly making judgments about others. They like to label people, depending on their experience with them. Every time that you meet someone new or spend time with someone you know, *you are making an impression on them either positively or negatively*.

Just as you are forming an opinion of him, so is he doing the same about you. So then, what do people think of you, how you look, how you act, what you say and how you say it?

Hopefully, because of Christ, you are kind, respectful, peaceful, patient, trustworthy, responsible, and courteous. Whatever label people give you in their minds follows you wherever you go. It is discussed when you are not present, and it will surface when you return. Is it favor or contempt?

Solomon tells us in *Proverbs 22:1*, that "a good name is to be desired more than great riches." What do you think he meant by a good name?

Your name will follow you for the rest of your life. You can help or hurt your name with every word you say and every deed you do. A good name can benefit you tremendously. A bad name can be a curse.

In your mind, what are some of the benefits of having a good name with people?

In my mind, when you develop a good name for yourself, you are also making a good name for your family, for your church, for your school, even for Christianity. In fact, *the greatest benefit for having a good name with others is that it presents opportunities for you to share the Gospel or minister to someone in Jesus' name.* Because of your good name, people will listen to what you have to say and they will respect your beliefs. Building a poor name becomes a hindrance to the Gospel and a reproach to Christianity.

Take a minute to read *Nehemiah 1:11; Esther 4:16-5:2; Daniel 1:19, 20; and Acts 2:44-47.*

What can do to build a good name or grow in favor with men?

Read the following verses. Write down what the Bible suggests for growing in favor with men.

Matt.7:12; Luke 6:31

Philippians 2:3, 4

Mark 10:43-45

Rom. 14:19

1 Peter 3:8-13

Write out some things that you could do or say that would hurt your good name.

Simply being a kind and courteous person, treating people with respect, and watching out for ways to help or serve others will help you build a good name. If we would just do what Jesus did, treat others the way that we want to be treated, that would go a long way to building a good name.

What are you doing today that is either helping or hurting your name? Commit to memorizing *Proverbs 22:1* and look for ways to grow in favor with men. Use that favor as an opportunity to represent the Lord and eventually influence others for the sake of Christ.

Wrapping Up

There you have it, a glimpse into the leadership of Jesus. As we conclude this assignment, review what He did as a young man to develop His influence in the lives of others.

Jesus Increased in Wisdom

He was submissive to His parents, He learned as much as He could from His teachers, and He spent unhurried alone time with God.

Jesus Increased in Stature

He recognized that a strong body is of great benefit, that He was to glorify God with His body and that the "bigger" He became in others' eyes, the smaller He had to become in His own eyes.

Jesus Grew in Favor with God

He submitted to God's authority in His life, He obeyed God's commands and pursued His expectations, He did not love Satan's world, and He loved people.

Jesus Grew in Favor with Men

By loving others, serving others, meeting the practical, emotional, and spiritual needs of others, Jesus made a good name for Himself.

So then, the question we started this study with was this: **are you plumb?** In other words, *how did you measure up to the Master?* Write the numbers 1-4 next to each category. Rate them from your strongest to your weakest.

Of these categories, which are you doing best? Explain why.

Of these categories, in which do you need most improvement. Explain why.

What are your goals to lead others in the coming year?

To whom will you tell these goals? How will he or she keep you accountable to them?

One last challenge — print or write out *Luke 2:52* and place it somewhere visible, to remind you of the challenges from Jesus' leadership example.

We are hoping that you will allow God to use you to make a difference in the lives of people both in and out of school. Spend time praying towards that end.