

# **DEVELOP PRINCIPLED SPIRITUAL LEADERS**

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## Elements of Basic Leadership

Leaders play a critical part in shaping the present and the future for good or for ill. The number of books and resources about the nature of leadership and how to lead are innumerable. Within the plethora of perspectives and possibilities, our United Methodist camp and retreat ministries help persons grow in a very specific type of leadership.

Before we launch into greater detail, let's turn to basic dictionary definitions of what it means to lead. A summary of dictionary references elicits this description - "To guide others in a way to be followed, especially by going first."

First, all leadership assumes that others will be involved. Leadership training has aspects of personal development for the leader. If, however, the leader fails to engage, inspire, and prepare others to act, all that personal development fails to translate into actual leadership. Leadership, then, serves as a catalyst to rally others. Leadership, also, strengthens a sense of community by showing others ways to unite and move forward together on a new path, which they may not have taken alone.

Second, leaders take the journey, too. They walk with individuals or groups. It is active, experiential learning and guiding. In drawing people to discern and move out in a shared direction that has great potential to lead to a more beneficial future, the leader's willingness to go first to demonstrate the way is a significant spark to ignite the passion of others. One cannot lead if there is no commitment and willingness to pursue the same direction. At the same time, leaders prepare others to lead. David Stone, a well respected trainer of adult and youth leaders, describes it this way. There are three facets to leadership. Show people how and have them watch you. Have them lead while you watch, encourage and help them hone their skills. Then, encourage them to take the lead in the area of their giftedness and you move on to prepare others. This highlights the need for progression, so that people can develop more and more abilities through hands on, experiential learning. As children move to being youth and youth into adulthood, camp and retreat programs and experiences should expand the variety of leadership learning and opportunities commensurate with a person's growing leadership abilities.

Finally, one cannot be considered a true leader for long, if no one trusts and chooses to follow. From the perspective of Stephen Covey, who has authored numerous books on personal effectiveness and leadership effectiveness, being trust worthy is essential. Trustworthiness requires both "integrity and skill". Integrity refers to the congruency between what a leader says and what that leader prioritizes and does. Skill implies a recognized level of ability and experience in effectively guiding groups to launch out on a particular new endeavor together. Perhaps a simple example will bring home the importance of both trustworthiness and skill. Think of a person whom you know,

who without a doubt, cares about you and who is true to his or her word. Even so, if you were going rock climbing, for example, you would not follow the lead of that person if he or she had little experience and no training in rock climbing. It would not be wise to do so, despite his or her kind heart and good intentions.

### Christian Spiritual Leadership

Most faith-based camp and retreat centers provide staff, board members, volunteers and participants with ample opportunities to develop generalized leadership abilities, but if this is all we do then we fall short of our full mission. We seek to nurture a special type of leadership - Christian Spiritual Leadership. Spiritual refers to "God", which indicates that the leader continually seeks the Holy Spirit's guidance and engages the individual or group being led to discern God's purpose when choosing attitudes, direction and action. It is, also, true that those taking on Spiritual leadership are observed constantly for how they respond to situations and model how to lead. Leadership is not something that one can put on and off at a whim, but it requires consistency and the recognition that teachable moments abound and not all these moments are in the plan, program or schedule.

In faith based leadership, spiritual practices become crucially important avenues for listening to the voice of God. We study the scriptures, and intentionally attempt to be sure that every board member, staff person, volunteer and participant has a Bible of their own or is given one. We incorporate prayer, meditation, Christian conversation, visioning, holy communion, loving observation, listening and other spiritual disciplines as ways to discern God's direction in a particular circumstance or endeavor. In addition, our own faith tradition lifts up John Wesley's quadrilateral of Scripture, Experience, Tradition and Reason as windows through which we get a better glimpse of God's desire. These sources of insight and wisdom, also, inform our interactions with and contribution within the wider world.

Lovett Weems, from his book Church Leadership, offers this reminder. – "The task of Spiritual leadership is meaningful change. Leaders inspire others to their best efforts in order to...attain higher purposes." <sup>i</sup>

Christian, of course, refers directly to Jesus Christ. Jesus epitomizes Spiritual leadership, so we focus on his life, ministry and teachings as a guide for faithful living and leadership. Major emphasis is placed on love and grace as foundational to Christian leadership for both clergy and lay persons, as they discover how to apply Christian Spiritual Leadership within their vocations and daily lives both within and beyond the church. United Methodist camp and retreat settings are meant to be very intentional and effective training centers for the development of Christian Spiritual Leaders. These persons, then return to local churches and the wider world much better equipped to guide and support others to bring love and justice where it is most needed. If we falter in this regard, then we lose a dimension of our core purpose and a primary reason for which the

church establishes and supports camp and retreat ministries. With this in mind, let's explore some key aspects of developing Christian Spiritual Leaders that have particular application within camp and retreat settings.

## **Scriptural and Theological Exploration for Camp and Retreat Leaders**

### **A. Teach, model and involve persons in servant leadership:**

Jesus had some radical ideas about leadership. From his perspective, the one who leads is not the one who is served, but the one who serves. This represents a marked departure from many concepts of leadership where greatness is equated with getting others to do what you want them to, often for one's own benefit, or to be seen as successful. Not so with Christian Spiritual Leadership.

We are called to be among those who choose to use their influence and abilities to serve the common good. Only people who are free can choose to serve, rather than being coerced to serve. Making the servant choice requires true inner strength and genuine humility. True inner strength comes from a profound faith and trust that God is with and for us and the whole creation. We do not have to prove our own value; therefore, we are not bound up in drawing attention to ourselves.

Spiritually speaking, humility is not about debasing yourself. It means knowing your infinite worth while simultaneously lifting or honoring the other person. Humility is not an excuse for incompetence, but rather it produces an attitude of openness to learning that leads toward excellence. It means foregoing status, in order to help in ways that are really needed. It, also, incorporates grace and forgiveness toward oneself and others, since inevitably as we take on more complex leadership responsibilities we will from time to time make mistakes and fail. Living as a Christian community within a camp and retreat setting provides a laboratory for learning servant leadership in a graceful way.

**Matthew 20: 25 But Jesus called them to him and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones are tyrants over them. 26 It will not be so among you; but whoever wishes to be great among you must be your servant, 27 and whoever wishes to be first among you must be your slave; 28 just as the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."**

**1 Peter 4: 10 Like good stewards of the manifold grace of God, serve one another with whatever gift each of you has received. 11 Whoever speaks must do so as one speaking the very words of God; whoever serves must**

do so with the strength that God supplies, so that God may be glorified in all things through Jesus Christ. To him belong the glory and the power forever and ever. Amen.

**Mark 9: 33** Then they came to Capernaum; and when he was in the house he asked them, "What were you arguing about on the way?" **34** But they were silent, for on the way they had argued with one another who was the greatest. **35** He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, "Whoever wants to be first must be last of all and servant of all."

**1 Peter 3: 8** Finally, all of you, have unity of spirit, sympathy, love for one another, a tender heart, and a humble mind.

**Philippians 2:1** If then there is any encouragement in Christ, any consolation from love, any sharing in the Spirit, any compassion and sympathy, **2** make my joy complete: be of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. **3** Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. **4** Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. **5** Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, **6** who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, **7** but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form, **8** he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death-- even death on a cross. **9** Therefore God also highly exalted him and gave him the name that is above every name, **10** so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bend, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11** and every tongue should confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

**Proverbs 11: 2** When pride comes, then comes disgrace; but wisdom is with the humble.

**John 13: 12** After Jesus had washed their feet, had put on his robe, and had returned to the table, he said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? **13** You call me Teacher and Lord--and you are right, for that is what I am. **14** So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. **15** For I have set you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you.

## **B. Heighten the Ability to Perceive and to Respond to Teachable Moments:**

Jesus frequently used the unplanned experiences he encountered to draw out spiritual wisdom and reflection. This ability to observe life and then to get

people to consider the deeper meanings of situations is a powerful way to teach and guide. Shared activities at camp or while on retreat become an avenue for reflection and seeking wisdom. Planned programs are certainly beneficial; however, some of the most powerful learning will happen in those moments that are not part of a curriculum. This aspect of Christian Spiritual leadership requires a true grasp of Christian teachings and sensitivity to where people are and what might move them further in their Spiritual journey.

Jesus, also, developed leadership among his disciples and the crowds by animating their imaginations through parables, stories, and the art of asking and responding to questions. Typically, he tried to have the hearers reflect on the meaning of the story or the situation themselves. Occasionally, he would explain the meaning of a parable or story, if sincerely asked to do so.

Another mainstay of Jesus' methods was invitation to actual response and action. It is about seeing what is happening, judging what is needed, and acting to meet true need. He modeled spiritual leadership by being out there doing what he was teaching. He confidently invited others to follow and join him in responding to the situations that arose. He knew it was not always easy to live the way of love and that it requires changes in mindset and overcoming fears, yet he did not shy away from inspiring others toward transformation and action. He showed them the way, sent them on their own to do likewise, and then processed what happened with them.

Nurturing Christian Spiritual leadership improves greatly by utilizing the available teachable moments amid the myriad of happenings and interactions that take place within the world and within our own hearts. Camp and retreat ministry values the potential of shared experience and Christian reflection to stimulate spiritual insight that has application within and beyond the camp and retreat setting. Because of this strong emphasis, it is vital for camp and retreat leaders to be skilled in leading experiential learning and for us to be immersed in Christian faith and practice.

Some may wonder why camp and retreat centers offer the tremendous diversity of activities they do. First and foremost, it is to create the opportunity to learn and care for one another during shared experiences. These common interests bring people together. When we engage persons in ways that pique their interest, their openness to new learning is heightened. Lessons linked to people's passions and new discoveries last much longer, because the activities themselves remind people of the spiritual wisdom connected with them. If we just do the activities and don't use the teachable moments to inspire new journeys of faith, then we may be good leaders but not very effective Spiritual leaders.

Jesus, for example, used fishing metaphors and experiences to draw some of his disciples into Spiritual leadership. Why? Because that is the world they knew and loved, so he used that medium to guide them. Communion is another example. The everyday, common elements of bread and wine are connected deeply to the love of Christ. Every time people sit down to a daily meal that truth and that pathway to God's presence is reinforced.

**Matthew 26: 26** While they were eating, Jesus took a loaf of bread, and after blessing it he broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, "Take, eat; this is my body." **27** Then he took a cup, and after giving thanks he gave it to them, saying, "Drink from it, all of you; **28** for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.

**Matthew 13: 31** He put before them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed that someone took and sowed in his field; **32** it is the smallest of all the seeds, but when it has grown it is the greatest of shrubs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches." **33** He told them another parable: "The kingdom of heaven is like yeast that a woman took and mixed in with three measures of flour until all of it was leavened." **34** Jesus told the crowds all these things in parables...

**Mark 12:41** He sat down opposite the treasury, and watched the crowd putting money into the treasury. Many rich people put in large sums. **42** A poor widow came and put in two small copper coins, which are worth a penny. **43** Then he called his disciples and said to them, "Truly I tell you, this poor widow has put in more than all those who are contributing to the treasury. **44** For all of them have contributed out of their abundance; but she out of her poverty has put in everything she had, all she had to live on."

**John 4: 5** So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. **6** Jacob's well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon. **7** A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink." **8** (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) **9** The Samaritan woman said to him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?" (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) **10** Jesus answered her, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, 'Give me a drink,' you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water." **11** The woman said to him, "Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? **12** Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?" **13** Jesus said to her, "Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, **14** but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life." **15** The woman said to him, "Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water."

**John 8: 5** Now in the law Moses commanded us to stone such women. Now what do you say?" **6** They said this to test him, so that they might have some charge to bring against him. Jesus bent down and wrote with

his finger on the ground. 7 When they kept on questioning him, he straightened up and said to them, "Let anyone among you who is without sin be the first to throw a stone at her." 8 And once again he bent down and wrote on the ground. 9 When they heard it, they went away, one by one, beginning with the elders; and Jesus was left alone with the woman standing before him. 10 Jesus straightened up and said to her, "Woman, where are they? Has no one condemned you?" 11 She said, "No one, sir." And Jesus said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go your way, and from now on do not sin again."

Luke 10:25 Just then a lawyer stood up to test Jesus. "Teacher," he said, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?" 26 He said to him, "What is written in the law? What do you read there?" 27 He answered, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength, and with all your mind; and your neighbor as yourself." 28 And he said to him, "You have given the right answer; do this, and you will live." 29 But wanting to justify himself, he asked Jesus, "And who is my neighbor?" 30 Jesus replied, "A man was going down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell into the hands of robbers, who stripped him, beat him, and went away, leaving him half dead. 31 Now by chance a priest was going down that road; and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. 32 So likewise a Levite, when he came to the place and saw him, passed by on the other side. 33 But a Samaritan while traveling came near him; and when he saw him, he was moved with pity. 34 He went to him and bandaged his wounds, having poured oil and wine on them. Then he put him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him. 35 The next day he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said, 'Take care of him; and when I come back, I will repay you whatever more you spend.' 36 Which of these three, do you think, was a neighbor to the man who fell into the hands of the robbers?" 37 He said, "The one who showed him mercy." Jesus said to him, "Go and do likewise."

### **C. Provide Persons with Opportunities to Grow in Leadership by Actually Leading**

Jesus was cognizant of his leadership role and the fact that others would model their understanding of leadership after his. He accepted that reality. It is important to grasp that the same is true for us when we are participating in the development of others as Spiritual leaders. Consistency is important. It is valuable to admit mistakes and times when our thoughts and behavior might be harmful rather than life-giving. Others will observe the sincerity of seeking forgiveness and getting back on the track of beneficial leadership. Integrity implies congruence between our beliefs, values and actions as Christian leaders.

Modeling is not enough, however, because leaders become leaders by actually leading. It is vital to help prepare and move people into actual

leadership, if they are to grow and have the ability to guide others now and in the future. It, also, helps tremendously to become aware of the particular gifts of a person, so their leadership roles can be matched to their interests, abilities and personalities. The same can be said of matching leadership opportunities to an individual's age level and developmental abilities.

The scriptures, highlight, that all persons are endowed by the Holy Spirit with a unique set of abilities and characteristics which are Spiritual gifts they can share to make a difference for the community of faith and the whole society. This recognition that leader's vary at what they are good at doing calls us to observe and help people discover their giftedness. The Apostle Paul mentions just a few of these gifts, but there are many others that we can see if we are observant. In this way, the leadership roles we ask people to fulfill can be better matched to their strengths, though we are all asked from time to time to serve outside our comfort zones.

Spiritual leadership recognizes and celebrates the different contributions people have to make. God has designed life in such a way that no individual can even come close to doing it all. No one is self sufficient, not anyone. The key, then, is for us to realize our oneness in God. God reinforces that reality by distributing personalities, activities, ways to serve, abilities and other gifts so that we are literally interdependent (this same truth plays out in the whole creation – the interdependency of all of life). All gifts come from God and are beneficial, so boasting or claiming to be better than another makes no sense, nor does wishing to be someone else. There are even different forms of leadership, so leaders are not all the same. There is not a single way to lead.

There are, therefore, a wide variety of leadership roles important to a community and some are more behind the scenes rather than out front doing public speaking. Camp and Retreat experiences are full of opportunities for people to try new faith based leadership roles and then to support them in growing more effective through practice and involvement. It is vital, also, to consider cultural differences that shape how leadership is viewed and carried out. Taking all this into consideration, Christian leaders expand Christian leadership.

**Mark 6: 7 He called the twelve and began to send them out two by two...12 So they went out and proclaimed that all should repent. 13 They cast out many demons, and anointed with oil many who were sick and cured them... 30 The apostles gathered around Jesus, and told him all that they had done and taught. 31 He said to them, "Come away to a deserted place all by yourselves and rest a while." For many were coming and going, and they had no leisure even to eat.**

**Luke 4: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." 20 And he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant, and sat down. The eyes of all in the**

synagogue were fixed on him. 21 Then he began to say to them, "Today this scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing."

**Matthew 27:** .... they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. 56 Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee.

**Mark 1:** 16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea--for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

**Exodus 18:** 17 Moses' father-in-law said to him, "What you are doing is not good. 18 You will surely wear yourself out, both you and these people with you. For the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. 19 Now listen to me. I will give you counsel, and God be with you! You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases before God; 20 teach them the statutes and instructions and make known to them the way they are to go and the things they are to do. 21 You should also look for able ones among all the people, those who fear God, are trustworthy, and hate dishonest gain; set such over them as officers over thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. 22 Let them sit as judges for the people at all times; let them bring every important case to you, but decide every minor case themselves. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this, and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people will go to their home in peace."

**Matthew 28:** 18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 19 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, 20 and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always..."

**1 Timothy 4:** 12 Let no one despise your youth, but set the believers an example in speech and conduct, in love, in faith, in purity.

**Romans 12:** 4 For as in one body we have many members, and not all the members have the same function, 5 so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually we are members one of another. 6 We have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us: prophecy, in proportion to faith; 7 ministry, in ministering; the teacher, in teaching; 8 the exhorter, in

exhortation; the giver, in generosity; the leader, in diligence; the compassionate, in cheerfulness. 9 Let love be genuine; hate what is evil, hold fast to what is good; 10 love one another with mutual affection; outdo one another in showing honor.

1 Corinthians 12: 4 Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; 5 and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; 6 and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone. 7 To each is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good. ...15 If the foot would say, "Because I am not a hand, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 16 And if the ear would say, "Because I am not an eye, I do not belong to the body," that would not make it any less a part of the body. 17 If the whole body were an eye, where would the hearing be? If the whole body were hearing, where would the sense of smell be? 18 But as it is, God arranged the members in the body, each one of them, as he chose. 19 If all were a single member, where would the body be? 20 As it is, there are many members, yet one body...26 If one member suffers, all suffer together with it; if one member is honored, all rejoice together with it. 27 Now you are the body of Christ and individually members of it.

Ephesians 4: 11 The gifts he gave were that some would be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, some pastors and teachers, 12 to equip the saints for the work of ministry, for building up the body of Christ, 13 until all of us come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to maturity, to the measure of the full stature of Christ.

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<sup>i</sup> *Church Leadership: Vision, Team, Culture and Integrity* by Lovett H. Weems, Jr (Abingdon Press: Nashville, September 1993), p 11 ISBN: 0687133416