

A Letter from an Emerging Leader (How Leaders Are Built)

I am an emerging leader. You are an existing leader. I'm so grateful that God has placed you in my life. I really need you!

First, please teach me the Word of God – because the Truth is life. The Truth can change my thinking. It can transform my life. But I need you to teach me with the anointing and conviction of the Holy Spirit; not only with words, but with conviction and power.

However, please don't simply teach me; I need you to share your life with me. Don't teach me only theoretical ideas; be transparent with your life. Tell me about your experiences of God, about the victories you have seen, and about the failures you have had. Your hopes, your disappointments, your joys, your frustrations – share it all with me.

In addition to instructing me, please genuinely engage with me in my life. I need to know that you really care about me, that your intention is not merely to train me to do certain things and then send me out as a foot-soldier in your army. Please don't use me. I need to know that you love me and are committed to me. Express this commitment to me in variety of ways. When I do things well, affirm me. When I make errors, hold me accountable; with love and gentleness, correct me.

Please give me responsibilities; responsibilities that are appropriate to my maturity. Some should be mundane tasks to build servanthood in my life. But also give me important things that increase my vision and help clarify my calling. Carefully design these responsibilities so they stretch me and force me to learn, to grow, and to look to God for success.

As I fulfill those responsibilities, don't leave me alone; be with me and encourage me. And not only you; please build other relationships around my life. Encourage other mature brothers and sisters in the church to embrace me as their spiritual son.

Help them know how to engage with me in practical and meaningful ways in my life. In their lives I'll see what it means to be a mature believer. I'll see it. Not only will you teach me about it; I'm also going to see it. I've got to see it!

I need to see marriages that, while not perfect, are healthy. In a little while I'm going to be married. I need to know what it means and how it works. You taught me that the husband should love his wife as Christ loves His church. Because of the Presence of the Spirit upon your teaching, I was moved and touched by it; I was so moved I wept when I saw this in the Scriptures. But I still need to see it in life. I must see it. I've got to see it in lives around me.

I need those people also to walk with me in life. As I'm going through experiences, responsibilities and pressures, I must know that I'm not doing it by myself, but there are others who are with me, committed to me, affirming me, encouraging me, and praying for me. In their lives I will see how to endure. I know I need to endure; you taught me this well. But I need to see it. I need to be with you when you go through some terrible fiery sufferings. I'll watch you endure. That's how I'm going to remember. That's how I will really get it.

So please take me with you sometimes. Let me watch you as you do leadership stuff. I love your teaching, but I need to see you actually do it!

As I walk with you and as we do things together, I will learn more deeply what it means to be a leader. I will watch you as you make difficult decisions in hard situations. I will watch you as you pray

for the people you are serving, and when you weep for them. I will be with you when you are patient with people. I will be with you when you correct those who are wrong. That's how I will learn to do it myself.

As you look at my life, help me see the purpose of God for me and give me assignments. Continually look for opportunities to put me to work. Never allow me to be passive. Don't let me sit at a distance and be quiet. Draw me out saying, "Hey, come on my son! Look at the vision of God. Look at what God's doing, and what you can be and do in Him. Come on!" Affirm the calling I've got on my life. Affirm that God has given me a wonderful purpose. Always be in front of me, saying, "Come on! You can do it!" When I respond, "No I can't," tell me, "Yes, you can." Affirm me. Challenge me. Then send me off to go and do it, with others around me.

Please intentionally connect me with others around me – with ministry partners and teams. Wisely connect me with other people who complement how God made me. Sometimes you should intentionally connect me with people with whom you know I will have conflicts. And we'll start to get into little disagreements, and some sparks will fly. And then I'll feel bad. I'll notice that you have been watching me during these conflicts, and I'll feel as if I have let you down. But then I will see that you are not upset. You will reach out to me with care and love. You'll say, "Hey, come on! Let's dig into this. There are some bad things in your life, aren't there? And this relationship, this circumstance, has brought up the worst. So, let's dig it out now."

In the past, I was afraid to let anyone touch those deep inner things, but you've built a strong relationship. I know you are for me, I know you are committed to me. So, cautiously, I will open up a little bit. And you'll pray with me and look over some of the pains in my life. We'll face it together. Gently you'll encourage me to forgive those who have wronged me. You'll lead me through the releasing of bitterness and pain. You'll help me understand this conflict that I had in the relationship – that the relationship didn't cause the issues in my heart; it simply gave them an opportunity to be exposed. As you work with me through this, I will understand more how God deals with me in the struggles of life. He allows me to go through the fire. I'll remember that you taught me about this from Peter's first letter; now I know it in my life. Other spiritual mothers and fathers will gently nurture this transparency and honesty in my life.

In dealing with all this, submitting myself to Truth, submitting myself to God, through these deep, nurturing, caring, accountable relationships, in the midst of the challenges, complexities and pressures of life, God will change me. I'll find myself freer. I'll realize that I'm learning the true nature of the Christian life. I'm learning what the nature of leadership is. Not just the doctrine. Not just some "eight points" that someone says is important. But I'm really getting it. I'm seeing it. I'm being changed. I'm being changed by the Truth of the Word, in the power of the Spirit, in the midst of a loving, nurturing, accountable family, going through the deep, challenging experiences of life. I'm finding God.

I'll see Him in your life, and in the lives of the others who are around me, committed to me. I'll learn how to pray, because I watch you pray. I'll watch you worship God. In this way I'll learn what it means to worship God. I'll see in the Word the wonderful revelation of how I'm made just to worship Him. I will understand this. And then I'll do it, because you will encourage me to do it. I'll know how to do it because I have seen you do it.

As I do it, I'll be changed even more by the Spirit. I'll come to know Him. I'll learn how to turn my heart to Him, to find Him, to see Him, to know Him. I'll know God. And I'll have good doctrine about God too. I'll learn what it means to be a friend because I have friends. They will love me and remain committed to me even when I act ugly.

They will always be there for me. They won't reject me. You will be there for me. Then I'll start to realize what you've been teaching me, that God says He will never reject me. What you taught me about Hosea will start to make sense to me – that even though Hosea's wife was not faithful, he remained faithful to her. And God said to His people, "That's how I treat you. I will never abandon you." I will remember when you taught me – at that time my heart rejoiced, and again there was such a beautiful presence of God that I wept in the teaching. But now I'll see it more clearly, more richly, because I see you do it. I understood the Scripture, but I wasn't sure what it looked like in life. How would it work? I had many questions. But now you have answered my questions, not just in your teaching but in your life. Because I see it, now I know. I thought I knew it, and in a way I did. But now I really know it. It has changed me.

In all the difficult times, I will not be alone; you will be there with me. I know that I only need to give you a call. If I come over and knock on your door, you'll be there for me. And not only when I come after you, but you will come after me too, and hold me accountable. Even at times when I want to run, when I want to hide, you won't let me. Not in a dominating way, but with affirmation, you will reach out to me. You'll say, "Come on! Let's face the issues, let's face this stuff together. You can rise above it. Together let's cry out to God. In the midst of the difficulty and pressure, together let's look to God, to see His hand in your life."

I will learn what it means to work with people, by watching you. I'll learn how to work with nice people. I'll learn how to work with difficult people. I'll learn what it means to have a healthy marriage, because you will intentionally invite me to see what really happens in marriages. And when I think I have found my wife, you will help us. You will also connect us with mature couples, and they will share their lives and struggles transparently with us.

I'll find that all the junk and worldliness that used to be in my life will drop off. I'll be changed by the Truth. I'll be changed by the work of the Spirit. I'll be changed in this loving community around me, as we walk together in the experiences, sufferings and challenges of life. God will build true holiness in my life, making me a man of integrity – not merely someone who knows the right things to say, not merely someone who knows how to act properly when others are watching, but a man of true integrity – because you have worked deeply with my life. You were not content with superficial things. You created experiences for me that gave me the opportunities to show what was really in my heart. Then when all that was there came out, you were there for me, helping me to understand it according to the Truth of the Word of God, helping me to submit to Him, to give it to the Lord, and genuinely receive His grace – not just know about His grace, but actually receive it. Something changed in me; inwardly, in my heart, genuine integrity was born. I know I'm not perfect. I know I'm not going to be perfect, because when I look at you I don't see perfection. So I know it's going to be no different for me. But I know I'm going to do well, because I have seen it in your life.

I want to be like you. As I see the way that you seek God for your purpose and the destiny of the church, as I watch you do that, my heart will be gripped, because I see your heart gripped. I'll see your passion, your vision. As I see the sacrifice of your life – as I see that – that will bring forth my willingness to sacrifice. As I see your passion for the lost, reflecting Jesus' heart, my heart will be changed.

I'll watch as you look at all the complicated things around you, all of the complexity of what's happening in your life and ministry. I'll see you are not overwhelmed. But you respond to this complexity with brokenness and a deeper looking at the Face of God. I'll see you do that. I'll be watching you. I will see how you are able to look at all that complicated murky stuff and then make a decision and say, "Here is where we are going to go." By the leading of the Spirit, you establish a clear direction. That will affect me. I'll remember that for the rest of my life. I will learn how to do the same thing myself, without even realizing that I'm learning this. I will find myself in complicated situations and my first response will be to look to God – because that's what you did. I've seen you do it many times. So without even thinking about it, I will do the same thing. Somehow your abilities to think strategically and make decisions will have rubbed off on me. I'll have developed this capacity to think. Not only to think, but also to act. I'll have seen you do it. I'll have watched you so many times where a lesser man or woman would have been paralyzed with indecision. But you took the responsibility. You didn't take the easy way out. You took the responsibility in spite of the complexity and, at times, the cost. I'll have seen you do that numerous times. I didn't realize that as I was watching you, somehow it affected me too. Now I'll do the same thing, because through your teaching you have changed me. By bringing me to God again and again in so many different ways, you have changed me. By your example and your interaction, you have changed me, as you walked with me through the difficulties and challenges of my life.

Then I will notice that you've given me opportunities where I can serve others in the same way – where I can be to them what you have been to me.

One day, suddenly, I will realize that people are looking to me for leadership. And I will recognize that God has been raising me up to lead and serve His people. Through other lives around me, through His Presence, by His Word, in the experiences of life, God has changed me, prepared me, built me. I know I'll never be perfect, but now I can do it. I can lead. I've been built – well built.

FURTHER INFORMATION

For our complete models, please see: *Healthy Leaders: SpiritBuilt Leadership #2* and *Building Leaders: SpiritBuilt Leadership #4* by Malcolm Webber.

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