



KINGDOM LEADERS

Essential Lessons for Christian Leaders

BRUCE ZACHARY

Eccl. 12:12-14 And further, my son, be admonished by these. Of making many books there is no end, and much study is wearisome to the flesh. Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is man's all. For God will bring every work into judgment, including every secret thing, whether good or evil.

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380 Mobil Avenue

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Phone (805) 384-1182

Electronic Mail: info@ccpnetwork.org

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Introduction:

One of the greatest needs in the Church today is for Kingdom leaders. Church leaders' desire to build up the local church is certainly noble and critical to mission. However, it's critical not to focus on our immediate community to the extent that it overshadows God's greater Kingdom. The purpose of this book is not to swing the pendulum from one extreme to another, but to move towards a healthier balance between the local church and the broader Kingdom.

Have you ever met a church leader who seems focused on building the local church? Of course you have. Almost all of us have a desire to equip and edify the local church. **Have you ever considered how the focus on the development of the local church could potentially cause us to neglect the greater Kingdom?** Over focus on the local church is an obstacle to healthy advancement of Christ's Kingdom when resources are heavily allocated to, what is essentially our small piece of the puzzle, forgetting the big, Kingdom picture. Kingdom initiatives that seem to transcend the local church include, but are not limited to: global missions, church planting, para-church ministries, engaging or reaching unreached people groups, developing leaders for Kingdom service beyond the local church and benevolence, especially beyond the local church. Anecdotally, the percentage of resources (time talent and treasure) that are used for these Kingdom initiatives in the typical local church is often very small.

We need to realize that the tendency of church leaders to focus on developing the local church can cause us to neglect the greater Kingdom. Next we need to move the pendulum towards a healthier balance by moving towards Kingdom leadership. So if you were to seek to cultivate a manageable list of principles to guide your ministry experience towards Kingdom leadership as opposed to local church leadership what list would you develop? The following is a list of principles I'm seeking to live in order to experience Kingdom leadership:

You Will Do Greater Works Than I
He Must Increase and I Must Decrease
Treat Those on Christ's Side as Friends not Foes
The Kingdom Belongs to God
Generosity with Resources and People
God Can Promote Whomever Whenever
Encourage New Works Where the Grace of God is Evident
Live to Glorify the Father

Note: the terms "church leaders" and "personal kingdom leaders" are used here to contrast the concept of Kingdom leaders.

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Principle 1: You Will Do Greater Works Than I

Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father. Jn. 14:12

You've got the right stuff ...

My teenage son and I were driving back from a retreat we attended together. It had been one of those memorable father-son experiences, the kind you know you will remember for the rest of your life. During the afternoon, we had gone for a hike up a mountain and talked along the way about life, God, hopes, dreams, etc. As we left the retreat center and drove home we talked together, and I sensed God's desire for me to "bless" my son. This was something very different than a simple pronouncement after a sneeze, or merely saying, "You're a blessing to me son" or even something along the lines of, "Here's some money I just want to bless you." No, this was something of Biblical proportion.

Allow me to briefly digress. I was raised as an observant Jew and came to faith in Jesus as Messiah as an adult. I had experienced Bar Mitzvah as a rite of passage. Our sons similarly experienced this rite of passage as I their father rabbi and pastor led them through Deuteronomy 6:4-9 and explained they were now men before God, sons of a New Covenant with God and sons of God's blessings. Yet the day that I drove home with my son from the retreat I sensed that God wanted me to bless my son again for a new season in his life ... a new blessing to prepare for a new passage.

This might seem a novel concept in a New Testament context, but consider that presumably Jesus experienced Bar Mitzvah in the Hebrew tradition. Yet as He began his earthly ministry – a rite of passage – His Father pronounced a blessing over the Son, *This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased* [Matt. 3:17]. Then later at the Mount of Transfiguration Jesus prepared Peter James and John before the quest to the cross at Jerusalem – another rite of passage. The disciples would be encouraged by the discovery of His glory. Jesus was far greater than their understanding of Messiah as declared at Caesarea Philippi [Matt. 16:16]. The blessing of the Father would also encourage the Son, *This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*. [Matt. 17:5].

The concept of the father's blessing was critical to the patriarchs. The yearning for the blessing caused Jacob to scheme in attempt to secure his father Isaac's blessing (although God had assured him of the blessing), and caused Esau to lament the loss of something that he had previously neglected. The importance of the blessing caused Joseph to attempt to guide his elderly father Jacob to pronounce a blessing over Joseph's oldest son when Jacob was directing the greater blessing of God upon his younger grandson. The twelve sons of Jacob gathered at their elderly father Jacob's bed as the patriarch pronounced blessings that foretold the destiny of each of these twelve tribes of Israel. The blessing of a father is a critical event to help prepare for the passage into adulthood and for various seasons of passage in life ministry and discovery and fulfillment of calling.

As I drove with my son from that retreat I too sensed that I was to bless my son. Then the words came forth, "I believe that God wants me to encourage you and bless you that you will do greater works than I ever have or will do." These were words that I had never previously spoken to my son. They were words of great weight and were spoken with conviction. The experience was profound.

A father is a source of great influence for his children. When they become adults, he is to be a mentor as he continues to train equip and encourage them for the seasons they encounter and prepare them for the ones that lie ahead. He is to assure them that they have the right stuff! **The blessing, "In whom I am well pleased" is not conditioned upon perfection or performance but flows from the relationship of father and son or a mentor and disciple.**

It's only natural for parents to want their children to have a good life, but to want them to truly do greater things, especially greater Kingdom work, is supernatural. Unfortunately, that blessing can be impeded by a father's competitive nature. A father who competes with his adolescent son in sports, resisting the son's desire to beat (do greater than) his father, might find it difficult to yearn for his son to do greater than he has done. The difficulty pronouncing that blessing might say more about the nature of the father than the nature of the son.

Nevertheless, **that blessing apparently flowed easily from the lips of Jesus as He prepared the disciples for their rite of passage in the Upper Room when He declared, *Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father [Jn. 14:12]***. Imagine the disciples hearing those words in the Upper Room. They were being prepared to continue the Kingdom work Jesus had groomed them for. The work would continue through them, and this was the time for their rite of passage. Certainly they would be confounded by the idea that they could possibly do greater works than Jesus. They had witnessed miracles performed by Jesus. As they considered their own frailties and insecurities they likely could not imagine these encouraging words as an actual declaration of prophetic truth. But true were the Savior's words. For indeed the scope magnitude and influence of Christ's disciples would in some respects be greater works. In the span of about fifty days, two thousand [2,000] converts would enter the Kingdom at Pentecost in response to Peter's anointed proclamation of the gospel. This sum would represent more than all of the recorded converts in Jesus' entire earthly ministry. Soon thereafter, the number of converts would measure five thousand. Today the total is estimated at 2.2 billion [<http://www.pewforum.org/2011/12/19/global-christianity-exec/>], a far greater number than the 120 who gathered in the Upper Room awaiting the gift of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Similarly Jesus' earthly ministry was essentially within a thirty-mile radius of His home at Galilee. The Book of Acts records the spread of the gospel to the known world, and today the four corners of the globe.

Jesus' declaration that they would do greater works is the outpouring of the blessing of a Kingdom leader to prepare Kingdom leaders. He was letting them know in no uncertain terms that they had the right stuff because they were His disciples [*he who believes in Me*]. He not only blessed them to prepare them for their calling, but He would help and strengthen them for that work by sending forth the Holy Spirit who would be with them just as Jesus had been with them.

Church leaders who are focused on developing their personal kingdom are generally more like the competitive dad with his adolescent son. They are okay with their disciples doing good, and maybe even great, but are reluctant to bless encourage and help their disciples to do greater than their mentor. Again, this dynamic may speak more in regard to the nature of the church leader as opposed to the disciple. **Kingdom leadership requires a transition from the competitive mentor to the blessing mentor who truly desires his disciples to do greater works.**

Here is an interesting concept that can help motivate church leaders towards Kingdom leadership: **the success of the disciple enhances the reputation of the mentor.** For example, the success of Joshua in regard to bringing God's people across the Jordan River and leading the conquest of the Promised Land actually enhances Moses' reputation. Similarly, the many miracles of Elisha are connected to his mentor Elijah. Certainly the works of the twelve elevate the reputation of Jesus. Although this principle is true and may motivate us to act more like Kingdom leaders, **the best motive is a heart to bless like Jesus. This attitude flows from an understanding of the Kingdom and the need for greater works to be done to accomplish Christ's commission.**

The desire to bless Kingdom leaders to do greater works than their mentors leads to action in regard to the allocation of resources. Time talent and treasure are focused on emerging Kingdom leaders to equip encourage and empower them to do "greater works."

I began to seek to live this principle during the last few years in the context of training teachers and preparing church planters. I began intentional training with a group of men who had Kingdom

potential as Bible teachers and church planters. It required a couple of hours a week of my time and theirs. I encouraged them as their growth as teachers and leaders became evident during the course of training. Furthermore each of them sought to discern their calling for the next season of ministry in the Kingdom. Some of them went on to plant churches, some were called to significant teaching and leading roles at our local church, but all of them were blessed with the words, "I pray that you will do greater works than I have ever done or will ever do." Presently, I have committed time talent and treasure resources to continue to coach these men and support the work God has called them to. And I've discovered the wonderful experience and contentment of yearning to see these men whom I disciple do greater works than me, their mentor.

Lifework:

1. Who in your sphere of influence do you see as having Kingdom potential [the right stuff]?
2. How can you encourage prepare and assist them to walk in their Kingdom calling?
3. How can you communicate blessing to encourage them that they will do greater works than you and that you desire to assist them to do so?

Principle 2: He Must Increase and I Must Decrease

He must increase, but I must decrease. Jn. 3:30

It's all about You it's not about me ...

A few years ago we sang a worship song called "Jesus lover of my soul" and the chorus declared, "It's all about You it's not about me ..." Inevitably in churches throughout the land soloists wrestled with the great fear of inadvertently singing *It's all about me* ... Of course it happened and the embarrassment was short-lived but the idea is provocative to revisit. Church leaders declare repeatedly, "It's all about Jesus it's not about me." Yet, there is undoubtedly a little part of us as church leaders that contemplates "I'm The Guy" or Gal as the case may be. It's difficult to decrease and let Jesus completely be The Guy.

Not too long ago our local church was growing and we were reaching the functional capacity of our space. There are only so many service times on a weekend that really seem to be effective. So what could we do? Some of the Board suggested developing a larger property and building a larger sanctuary to accommodate a very large church, but I was very reluctant to the idea. I did not want to foster the development of what I affectionately referred to as "The Pastor Bruce Show." As an alternative, we wanted to focus on developing more Kingdom leaders by creating a second campus in town (that would offer our community a free youth center) and developing a teaching team. By establishing a second sanctuary with five hundred chairs (rather than a thousand or more) the level of teaching (skill) required to be effective in the assembly would be easier to attain. Thus more teachers could be developed. The plan was to avoid using a video feed of my teaching into the alternate campus and to rely on live teaching at each venue.

Our strategic plan depended on me working with and developing a group of teachers (mostly younger, next-generation guys) every week for close to two years. Some would go out to plant churches, some would be part of the teaching rotation, and some would become more effective teachers in youth ministry, with young adults, and other services such as a weekend evening service or a Spanish language church service. During this period, I taught four services between the two campuses as we transitioned to a multi-site church. Part of the reason for me teaching all four services was to continue offering live teaching as opposed to video, and the perception that the quality of teaching that I offered was necessary for an effective transition to one church at multiple campuses.

After almost two years of preparation we were ready to begin our teaching team rotation. The plan was for me to teach at one campus one week and the other campus the following week. One of the four other pastor-teachers would be teaching in a rotation at the alternate campus. The leadership held our collective breath as we waited to see what God would do. Ideally, we expected many people would identify with their campus and embrace and receive from whomever taught there. We knew some would follow me (at least for awhile) to whichever campus I would be at, since many had been taught by me for years. We knew some would leave our church, as they presumably felt disconnected from the person they perceived as their pastor. But we also believed God would bring others who would be drawn to the vision of different pastors at the same church, teaching the same passage of Scripture but with varied styles. We *knew* that God would use this approach to develop more Kingdom leaders.

Here is my confession: there is part of me that likes being "The Guy" [by the way I'm aware that I used the present tense *likes* rather than the past *liked*, but I'm confessing]. I knew people connected to their campus and embracing other gifted teachers would be great for the church. I was also aware that their following me that it would be good for my ego. Then the Lord reminded me ***He must increase, but I must decrease [Jn. 3:30].***

John 3 records when Jesus came to Judea, multitudes received Him and were baptized. John the Baptist's ministry was established and thriving, but now people were going to Jesus rather than

John. John's disciples were concerned. From their perspective John was The Guy. John, however, knew he wasn't The Guy. John's mission was to proclaim and point to Jesus who is the Christ – **The Guy**. John realized the ministry success he experienced was the result of God's blessing and not anything inherent to himself, "*A man can receive nothing unless it has been given to him from heaven*" [27]. John likened himself to the best man at a wedding (in this case the marriage of Jesus and His Church) who understands that the groom is to be blessed, and that the best man's joy flows from helping to bring the bride to the groom and the groom's contentment [29]

Then John declared the Kingdom principle, "*He must increase, but I must decrease*" [30]. The reason for this principle flows from John's next declaration, "*He who comes from above is above all ...*" [31]. The reason Christ must be preeminent or exalted is because He is above all or has all authority. **This all seems very reasonable to us as church leaders – He must increase. The stumbling block is the condition "I must decrease." For us to be Kingdom leaders we need to become less visible or prominent.**

In contrast to the short-lived embarrassment of mistakenly singing, "*It's all about me*" **the consequences of failing to decrease are truly significant.** First, as a church leader, you compromise experiencing the joy John the Baptist discovered. **The formula: He must increase and I can increase too – does not produce lasting joy,** only intermittent glimpses of happiness that are connected to the church leader's perception of ministry success or prominence. Second, but more important, is the negative Kingdom impact. **Failing to decrease hinders the growth and development of other Kingdom leaders.** The longer we continue to hold onto the illusion that we are The Guy or Gal, the longer we keep others from being used by the King for His Kingdom purposes. Third, and most important, **our failure to decrease hinders the contentment of Jesus.** When the best man or friend of the Bridegroom fails to graciously take their rightful place in the background Jesus' contentment is impacted for Christ and His glory are obscured.

When we decide to live the principle *He must increase, but I must decrease* we are declaring our belief that He truly has all authority. That step of faith is likely to be tested. When we made the transition to a teaching rotation, some people who had been part of our church for years left for other local churches. Of course our leadership was concerned, and some expressed that we should leverage my teaching to correct the decline. Nevertheless we determined to stay true to the conviction that developing Kingdom leaders was what we were called to do. At the end of the first year the average attendance was the same as the preceding year [actually a one person variance]. God was gracious indeed as He brought people who were blessed by the vision of a teaching team and the development of Kingdom leaders.

Again, in the second year when the growth of the church appeared stagnant, some urged me to become more prominent in the teaching ministry and leverage the gifts God had given me. I recognized if I returned to a more prominent role I would not, in fact decrease, as I believe God called me to do. So we remain committed to a course of developing Kingdom leaders and God has graciously blessed our transition towards being a more Kingdom minded local church.

The transition to Kingdom leader development requires a commitment to live the principle *He must increase, but I must decrease* that will inevitably be a challenge of faith and a struggle for church leaders. For example, imagine a plan to develop multiple worship leaders and teams. The best worship leader and team are clearly ready for the big room – or Sunday morning gathering. On the other hand the other leaders and teams are gifted and anointed but clearly not as capable as the best. Putting the B-team on the platform is likely to be perceived as a potential risk to the local church. You can imagine the concerns: people won't be attracted to the church, or people will leave. Those concerns tend to put a chilling effect on developing Kingdom leaders because of presumed threats to the "personal kingdom." Nevertheless, you can't develop Kingdom leaders without choosing to decrease and trusting God.

If it's all about Christ and not about you, choose to decrease so that He can increase. Come to grips with your own desire to be The Guy or Gal. Purpose to discover an area where you can decrease, then develop, share and implement a plan to live the principle.

Lifework:

1. Describe an area of your ministry influence where you enjoy being The Guy or Gal?
2. How might you decrease in that area so that Christ could increase?
3. Since Jesus must increase and you must decrease what is your plan to decrease?
 - a. Share your plan with another Kingdom leader, and ask them to hold you accountable (and perhaps even assist) with the transition.

Principle 3: Treat Those on Christ's Side as Friends not Foes

For he who is not against us is on our side. Mk. 9:40

We have our own recipe for Shepherd's pie ...

We have a wonderful Irish restaurant in our town [when writing to a Christian audience it seems prudent to call the place a restaurant rather than a tavern or pub]. They serve tasty traditional fare and one of my favorites is the shepherd's pie. The dish is lined with mashed potatoes, filled with savory gravy, vegetables and ground beef topped off with even more mashed potatoes. Now although it's truly delicious, I would generally refer to the above-described delicacy as "cottage pie" rather than a "shepherd's pie" because their principle ingredient is beef. It seems axiomatic that a shepherd's pie should have lamb as the primary ingredient. Nonetheless today the term "shepherd's pie" can acceptably refer to a dish prepared with either beef or lamb. In other words, beef or lamb are both considered orthodox.

If I wanted to learn to prepare a shepherd's pie, I would want to use lamb. It just seems right to my sense of values. I'm sure the cooks at my local Irish restaurant could teach me quite a bit about their savory gravy, mashed potato and vegetable ensemble. I just don't want them to substitute beef for lamb. For me, lamb is an essential. It just seems like lamb is how we would do shepherd's pie in "my" tribe.

Every tribe has their own sense of identity and values they treasure and make them special and arguably unique. In Christ's Church there are numerous "tribes" whether they are a denomination, network, association, non-denominational or independent. Assuming they meet the essentials of orthodoxy then they are part of His Church and presumably interdependent of one another. This appears to be a self-evident Kingdom principle as articulated by Jesus in His commencement address to the disciples in the Upper Room [John 17].

The twelve tribes of Israel were interdependent. The two reasons they came together were worship and warfare. They had a common God whom they were to worship together, and they were to oppose common enemies of their God who threatened the welfare of the Kingdom as a whole. They were, ideally, not to be engaged in a civil war unless one of the tribes truly posed a threat to the Kingdom. They were all part of a whole Theocracy or Kingdom. Yet they were also independent with a unique sense of identity. Each tribe presumably thought they were special.

The Tribe of Benjamin was the smallest tribe, yet they could boast of their famed left-handed slingers, bravery and fierceness in battle and how they had withstood attacks of the other tribes. Saul, Israel's first king, as well as Esther and Mordecai were part of this tribe. The people of Benjamin later opposed idolatry as part of the kingdom of Judah. The great apostle Paul pointed to his heritage as part of the tribe of Benjamin when asserting a lofty spiritual pedigree. Paul also realized God's Kingdom would include other tribes – the Gentiles – whom he would not only teach, but receive from. The tribe of Benjamin was part of a greater whole.

Because of our tendency to focus on our tribe rather than Christ's Kingdom, we sometimes view other tribes with suspicion, as competitors, or even as foes. **Kingdom leaders treat those on Christ's side as friends not foes. This principle was revealed to the disciples as recorded in Mark 9:38-42.** The apostle John reported to Jesus how the disciples had observed someone from outside their group casting out demons in Christ's authority. As if to assure Jesus, John told Him how the disciples had stopped this outsider from engaging in unauthorized Kingdom work. Perhaps Jesus' disciples were upset another follower of Christ, from outside their group, was successful in casting out demons when they had just failed [Mk. 9:18]. To their surprise, Jesus wasn't pleased with the report.

Instead He told them, “Do not forbid him, for no one who works a miracle in My name can soon afterward speak evil of Me. For he who is not against us is on our side.”

Kingdom leaders have a sense of unity with other tribes that are a legitimate part of Christ’s Kingdom without being cliquish elitist or competitive. Christ’s Kingdom likely includes far more “tribes” than most church leaders are comfortable embracing. Yet they are friends not foes.

Consider the parable of the shepherd’s pie. You can almost imagine those of the lamb shepherd’s pie tribe wailing in dismay that another tribe has prepared a pie with beef and still called it a shepherd’s pie! Those of the lamb shepherd’s pie tribe would likely declare their heritage of faithfulness to the original recipe and traditions with a certain sense of superiority over the upstart beef and, worse yet, ground beef clan. There would be a subtle competition between the proponents of the various recipes, all claiming to preserve the true recipe or to reach a whole new contingent of consumers of shepherd’s pie. It’s not too difficult to imagine the lamb pie clan discouraging their disciples from attending cooking conferences hosted by the beef clan or vice versa. There may be some reluctance to invite a noted chef from the other clan to speak at their conference on meat pies, because even though he was asked to speak about how to prepare vegetables, he might propagate his meat preference and contaminate our young chefs who know not the dangers of succumbing to this charismatic chef’s meat agenda. You get the point ...

In light of the call to kingdom unity and the reasonable desire to maintain the unique characteristics of the relevant tribes in the Kingdom, how do we develop a Kingdom-leader attitude towards other tribes? In an effort to live this principle, I’m suggesting the following four-fold process: **culturalization, collaboration, communication and cooperation.**

Culturalization: one of the obstacles to Kingdom unity is the fear that members of your tribe, especially the chronologically younger or spiritually less mature, shall be negatively influenced by the values of other tribes that are in conflict with your own. One way to avoid the perceived contamination is ensuring your tribe’s younger members *know* the values of your tribe (theology and philosophy of ministry). When your tribe’s members understand their values and embrace them as their own, they have developed in their culture. Once developed, they are less likely to be negatively influenced by exposure to other tribes.

Collaboration: as noted, the twelve tribes of Israel came together for worship and warfare. This may provide a model for collaboration. One aspect of *warfare can be seen in prayer*. In our community, fifteen to twenty evangelical church leaders gather weekly for prayer. As we pray together for the spiritual health and welfare of our community and the advancement of God’s Kingdom we are in effect engaged in warfare together. Similarly a National Day of Prayer event hosted by multiple evangelical churches displays the united Church engaged in our common spiritual battle. Another example of warfare collaboration relates to *community service projects*. Joint projects involving multiple evangelical churches can leverage significant Kingdom resources to minister to needs, present the gospel, and advance the Kingdom.

The *worship element* is displayed when evangelical churches come together for times of worship and praise. An assembly of local churches hosted a common Sunday morning service at an outdoor venue to display the united Church. These Kingdom leaders cancelled their typical weekend services to gather together as the Body of Christ. We’ve also had gatherings where each church provides a team to help lead praise and worship among the assembled from multiple churches.

As an aside, I’m not suggesting collaboration by various tribes for the purpose of church planting. My personal belief is that combining tribes in that way tends to dilute the theological and philosophy of ministry values, diminishing their effectiveness in reaching the lost making disciples and developing leaders.

Communication: What can you learn from Kingdom leaders from other tribes? What lessons

can you impart to leaders from other tribes to help them to advance God's Kingdom? Church leaders, especially those with a very strong affinity for their tribe, tend to be reluctant to receive from or share with leaders from other tribes. I occasionally meet with pastors from other tribes because I respect them as godly men and Kingdom leaders. I appreciate that I can learn from them as well as learning from other leaders from my own tribe. Perhaps attending a conference hosted by another tribe or hearing a speaker from another tribe will stimulate development. Consider an opportunity to invite someone who is part of another tribe to partake in a gathering of your tribe. I've discovered that simply attending a service at a church outside of my tribe can expose me to new ideas and perspectives, helping me to grow and be more effective as a Kingdom leader. Again, this presumes maintaining the essential values of my tribe.

Cooperation: resources are limited, and it's not unreasonable to generally prioritize investing in Kingdom efforts aligned with your tribe. Presumably you value your tribe and its unique place in the Kingdom. However, do you view other tribes with suspicion? Do you perceive them as competitors? In essence, do you see them as friends or foes? How do you feel when you learn a different tribe is planting a church in your community? I must confess, my first reaction when receiving requests for resources from other tribes has often been to disregard it (as long as I'm confessing, I'll admit I'm sometimes offended they're asking for my support, rather than limiting request to their own tribe). I'm convicted that in order to move towards a Kingdom attitude, I need to prayerfully consider how I can cooperate in their Kingdom initiative. Perhaps some measure of support is called for such as prayer, finances, providing excess equipment, or even counsel. This type of support encourages the Kingdom value of unity.

Lifework:

1. Describe your current experiences praying with and gathering to worship with Kingdom leaders from other tribes.
2. What have you learned from Kingdom leaders from other tribes? What lessons have you shared with leaders from other tribes to help them to advance God's Kingdom?
3. Describe ways that you've viewed other tribes as foes? How have you learned to treat other tribes as friends?

Principle 4: The Kingdom Belongs to God

But now your kingdom shall not continue. 1Sam. 13:14

Perceived kingdoms are difficult to relinquish ...

It's the tendency of church leaders who seek to establish and develop their personal kingdoms to struggle with letting go of their claim. So it was with Saul, Israel's first king, and perhaps with church leaders generally. I know this reality personally, and I've observed this struggle in countless church leaders who I would describe as good men. It's the nature of kings and kingdoms. Men like Saul don't have a monopoly, and men like David are not immune. The above quoted words of Samuel to Saul are presumably familiar as is the immediate context of Saul's offering of a sacrifice in violation of the law in preparation for war with the Philistines. It's the back-story that we should revisit.

When Samuel reached the winter of his life, he sought to establish his sons as rulers (judges) over Israel. This was inappropriate because Samuel's sons were corrupt [1 Sam. 8:1-5], and the authority was not Samuel's to give. Samuel has a generally sparkling record before God and man as a godly, reverent leader, despite his corrupt sons. Yet, even Samuel discovered perceived kingdoms are difficult to relinquish.

God's ideal was a theocracy where He would rule over his people unlike any other nation. They would be a kingdom of priests, a holy nation where God would speak guidance through His word and prophets. Judges were raised up by God to temporarily lead in times of crisis, but were not called to rule a kingdom, much less pass one on to their sons. Thus Gideon declared that neither he, nor his son, would rule over Israel for the Lord was to rule over them [Judges 8:23].

Israel rejected Samuel's corrupt sons and declared its desire for a king like the other nations [1Sam. 8:5]. It's understandable why the people did not want Samuel's sons to rule and it may even appear reasonable why they asked for a king, but it was wrong. **Not only was it wrong in the sense that they sought a monarchy that would be inferior to the theocracy, but also the nation acted as if the right to rule the kingdom was theirs to decide.** They did not say, "We don't want your sons! We want God to rule over us!" Their declaration that they were entitled to a king was a claim to authority over the Kingdom [Theocracy]. **We recognize that the people were acting carnally in rejecting God, but we may not understand that the carnality of the people was a catalyst for the carnality of the king and reinforced his claim to something that belonged to God.**

God was willing to give the people over to the desire of their hearts and provide a king, but first Samuel would warn them of the behavior of the king(s) who would rule over them [1Sam. 8:7-18]. **The essence of the extended warning is this: kings are interested in their kingdoms and misappropriate resources that God intended for His Kingdom to benefit His people.** This warning applies to all kings – it's the nature of a personal kingdom. Arguably, some kings are better than others in their role as stewards of God's resources because they are more sensitive to God's voice. **Nevertheless all kings take resources, because it's the nature of kingdoms for two obvious reasons. First, kingdoms require a bureaucracy that usually requires significant resource to support, unlike a theocracy. Second, kings seek to establish develop and preserve a legacy.** A king wants to provide a great legacy for his heirs to rule and expand. After all, the greater the legacy, the greater the king, right? This dynamic creates pressure to accumulate and maintain resources for our kingdom, making assets unavailable for God's Kingdom. We are stewards of God's resources, not kings.

Despite the prophetic warnings the people rejected God [the theocracy] and He gave them what they wanted a king - and that is what they got – a king like all the other nations. A man not submitted to God. Saul started well but relatively soon the above noted indictment came, *But now your kingdom shall not continue* [1Sam. 13:14]. Then the indictment would issue again for Saul's failure to

submit to God regarding the judgment of the Amalekites – *He has rejected you from being king*. Samuel reiterated *the Lord has rejected you from being king over Israel* [1Sam. 15:23, 26]. Finally the prophet declared, *The Lord has torn the kingdom of Israel from you today, and has given it to a neighbor of yours, better than you* [1Sam. 15:29] (emphasis added).

Although the kingdom had been taken from Saul that day he continued to cling and refused to relinquish his perceived kingdom for about thirty years until his death. As it became clear that David was a rival to the throne – that David was the anointed one of whom Samuel spoke – Saul continued to cling. Saul even attempted to murder his rival on multiple occasions. Perceived kingdoms are difficult to relinquish. Putting aside that Saul was willing to murder to cling to something that belonged to God, don't miss the underlying principle. Despite repeated admonitions that the Kingdom did not belong to him Saul refused to relinquish his claim to authority over God's resources. Saul went to his grave clinging and refused to learn the lesson that the Kingdom belongs to God.

How can church leaders be like kings who are interested in their kingdoms and misappropriate resources that God intended for His Kingdom to benefit His people? For example consider the desire for a permanent building for the local church to gather in. Let me preface my comments by noting that there is nothing wrong with having a permanent home and it can be a very good initiative. But consider some of the usual dynamics involved in the process. There is a sense among many church leaders that more people will be attracted to the local church if there is a permanent home, and the nicer the building the more attractive it will be. In many parts of the globe, and especially in developed countries, immense sums are paid for building projects. These often include relatively huge sums for technology including lighting, sound systems, projection systems, video, computers, transmitting and recording equipment, etc. Suffice it to say that we have really just scratched the surface of the furniture, fixtures, and equipment costs related to these facilities. People are needed to oversee the systems, facilities, and operation of the church building. In addition the facilities must be maintained. This "kingdom" requires a **bureaucracy** to support the infrastructure. The associated expenses needed to maintain the kingdom typically escalate significantly.

Then the new church building does attract more people and the legacy expands. **Generally there is a desire to develop the legacy and then ensure that it's maintained.** This dynamic creates pressure to accumulate and maintain resources that are consolidated and thus arguably unavailable for the people of the Kingdom. Just as the people were acting carnally in rejecting God [exchanging the theocracy for a monarchy] they may be acting carnally in seeking (requiring) a luxurious campus to gather for the purpose of worshiping God. And the carnality of the people can be a catalyst for the carnality of church leaders since it tends to reinforce their claim to something that belongs to God (His Kingdom resources). Perceived kingdoms are difficult to relinquish.

Again there is certainly nothing wrong with a church building per se or a nice campus. The problem is arguably the extent, the consolidation, and the assumption that church leaders have a claim to God's resources to the degree that they often assert. The same issues arise when programs are established developed and expanded independent of building projects. Buildings are not the problem in and of themselves. The root of the problem relates to the wrong attitude towards God's resources. **A transition to Kingdom leadership would appear to require the reallocation of resources towards greater Kingdom availability. This transition flows from applying the principle that the Kingdom belongs to God.** It's only the genuine understanding of this principle that allows us to relinquish the kingdom to the rightful King.

Jonathan never asserted a claim to a kingdom and consistently lived the principle that the Kingdom belonged to God. Jonathan was Saul's firstborn son and thus the likely successor to his father's throne and kingdom. He is a man of courage and valor noted for his military accomplishments [1Sam. 13-14]. His faith in God is reflected in his first recorded words, *Come let us go over to the Philistine's garrison that is on the other side ... it may be that the Lord will work for us for nothing restrains the Lord from*

saving by many or by few [1Sam. 14:6]. Jonathan's resolve to live the truth that the Kingdom belonged to God was demonstrated by his last recorded words, *Then Jonathan, Saul's son, arose and went to David in the woods and strengthened his hand in God. And he said to him, "Do not fear, for the hand of Saul my father shall not find you. You shall be king over Israel, and I shall be next to you. Even my father Saul knows that* [1Sam. 23:16-17].

Saul recognized that Jonathan had chosen to loyally support David as God's appointed leader and rebuked his son for not taking his kingdom *Do I not know that you are choosing the son of Jesse to your own shame and the shame of your mother's nakedness? For as long as a son of Jesse lives on this earth, neither you nor your kingdom will be established* [1Sam. 20:30-31]. But Jonathan resisted Saul's carnal urgings and the temptations of his own flesh; and refused to assert a claim to the throne because he understood that he could not establish his kingdom in contravention to God's Kingdom. Jonathan is an ideal example because he never asserted a claim over God's Kingdom resources.

Lord willing you discover and live this lesson before you try to establish your personal kingdom. Yet for many of us we have established and developed a personal kingdom and are struggling to relinquish our claim. We may have had good and seemingly noble motives but now we find ourselves supporting a bureaucracy and attempting to preserve a legacy that keeps us clinging to Kingdom resources. **What is the antidote for this dilemma? We must choose to receive the admonishment but now your kingdom shall not continue. We recognize that we are stewards of God's resources and not kings.** The steward relationship requires us to allocate God's resources consistent with His declared values.

How does the church (or individual) allocate resources? Most church budgets commit a very large percentage of financial resources to personnel (e.g. payroll, taxes, benefits) and facilities (e.g. rent mortgage or outright purchase, utilities, maintenance). It's not unusual in my experience to see these costs at over seventy-five percent of the budget. In addition the cost to operate various programs consume a considerable portion of the typical church budget. These include but are not limited to children's ministry, youth ministry, outreach to support the local church, and supplies. Unfortunately, these budget allocations result in a scarcity of resources available for Kingdom initiatives that are focused beyond the local church.

Another way that resources can become unavailable for Kingdom initiatives relates to church leaders' pet projects. Every church leader has a sense of certain ministry projects activities or goals that they feel called to or are a personal favorite. Developing a skate park to reach teens, a youth center, or a pregnancy center are all good initiatives that arguably align completely with Kingdom leader values. Nevertheless, **Kingdom leadership requires leaders to count the cost. Consider how the proposed initiative consolidates resources so that they are no longer available for other Kingdom uses. Then determine whether the initiative is justified in light of the impact on the Kingdom.**

For example consider **how much resource has been allocated and prioritized for Kingdom initiatives** such as: global missions, benevolence, church planting, building a Christian school or orphanage in a developing country, para-church organizations, or reaching unengaged or unreached people groups (think e.g. 10/40 window not evangelism at the nearby college campus). **Kingdom leaders choose to relinquish their hold on God's resources and reallocate them increasingly towards Kingdom initiatives.** It will require abdicating your personal kingdom, and making Kingdom choices regarding resources. Then you will need to follow through to ensure those choices result in Kingdom actions.

Lifework:

1. How can church leaders be like kings who are interested in their kingdoms and misappropriate resources that God intended for His Kingdom to benefit His people?
2. How are you presently allocating resources (time talent and treasure) that God has called you to steward? Review your budget as part of this exercise.
3. How can you reallocate your resources to reflect Kingdom values? How will you prioritize those Kingdom choices to ensure resources are actually used consistent with Kingdom values?

Principle 5: Generosity with Resources and People

Nor was there anyone among them who lacked ... Ac. 4:34

Generosity: noun

1. The quality of being kind, understanding, and not selfish: the quality of being generous; especially: willingness to give money and other valuable things to others

Hoard: noun

1. A stock or store of money or valued objects, typically one that is secret or carefully guarded.

When our local church sought to support the building of a Christian school in a developing country and church planting initiatives we knew that it would involve an allocation of resources and people. As our leaders prayed we sensed that God had called us to support these kingdom initiatives. We shared the vision with the church and received special offerings designated for these causes. What we did not expect was the generous outpouring of funds. Similarly we did not expect the diminished giving to the general fund. So we found ourselves moving towards the end of the year with a significant deficit in our operations budget and an abundance of resource earmarked for Kingdom works beyond the local church. Being generous can be challenging because it always involves a sacrifice. How would our plan to implement generosity be impacted by the perceived deficit? Would we follow-through and be generous, and if so how would God provide for the local church?

Kingdom leaders respond to God's love with generosity. Their primary motives are to love honor and bless God. Mary of Bethany responded to God's love with a generous extravagant outpouring of fragrant costly oil to prepare Jesus for his burial [John 12:1-8]. Mary's expression of worship is a model of generosity because she blessed Jesus by her selfless devotion. It appears that Judas was the first to criticize Mary when he remarked that the very expensive oil could have been sold for the equivalent of a laborer's annual salary and the proceeds given to the poor. Then the other disciples similarly commented on the virtue of generosity by sharply criticizing Mary for not selling the oil and giving to the poor [Jn. 12:1-6, Mk. 14:1-5].

Judas' motive was to personally benefit from Mary's generosity. He was the treasurer and planned to appropriate a portion of the proceeds. The disciples on the other hand are presumed to be noble in their call for Mary's generosity to benefit the poor. Observe how easily the disciples can encourage generosity with Mary's resources. **Church leaders encourage those they influence to be generous with resources but Kingdom leaders are generous (as well as encouraging generosity).**

Jesus defends Mary and her good work and then remarks *For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good ...* [Mk. 14:7]. "Whenever you wish you may do the poor good" is such a simple expression but such profound truth. In essence you can do good for those in need whenever you are moved to be generous. Rather than simply urging others to be generous or criticizing their apparent lack of generosity – be generous! Nevertheless the call to generosity is linked with the statement *the poor you have with you always*. Are Jesus' words simply intended to contrast His imminent departure or is there something more? Perhaps they were prophetic words describing the problem of poverty during the church age, or possibly a subtle rebuke of selfishness – even among the regenerate. **The problem is not the extent of resources but the allocation of them.** Unfortunately it appears that this would be the general condition during the church age.

Yet there is a light of hope in the history of the church when the Holy Spirit empowered and led in a marvelous way and we see the impact of generosity *Nor was there anyone among*

them who lacked ... [Ac. 4:34]. Luke's commentary on the period of unparalleled generosity of the multitude of believers in the early church is recorded in Ac. 4:32-37. Luke's brief paragraph records an actual Christian community in practice; and what Plato had described as an ideal but had never seen realized despite all of the wealth intellect and grandeur of the great Greek world. Christians were sharing their resources with great generosity such that people even sold homes and property and provided the resources to the apostles to distribute to those in need. Luke singles out one person from the multitudes, a Kingdom leader named Jose who we more commonly refer to by his nickname given by the apostles, Barnabas (which is translated Son of Encouragement). We will discover together in greater detail in the chapters to follow that Barnabas was an extremely influential Kingdom leader. But his first reference in the Scriptures exalts the virtue of generosity. In essence the Kingdom value of generosity had primacy in the record of Barnabas' role as a Kingdom leader.

Generosity is required to advance God's Kingdom. It's necessary to reallocate resources to reach the lost make disciples and develop leaders. The effective and efficient use of resources to minister to people and advance the gospel is a fundamental Kingdom value. Generosity was displayed when God the Father gave God the Son to save the world [Jn. 3:16]. Generosity was demonstrated in the early church as the Spirit moved, the gospel spread, and needs were cared for [Ac. 4:32-37]. Nevertheless most church leaders lament the apparent lack of generosity among the assembled at their local church. Research compiled by the Barna Group notes that Christians are only giving 2.5% of their per capita income, 80% of Americans give only 2% of their income, and only 5% of the U.S. tithes [www.barna.org].

What would happen if believers were to increase their giving to a minimum of, let's say, 10 percent? There would be an additional \$165 billion for potential Kingdom use. The global impact would be phenomenal. Here's just a few things the Church could do with that kind of money:

- \$25 billion could relieve global hunger, starvation and deaths from preventable diseases in five years.
- \$12 billion could eliminate illiteracy in five years.
- \$15 billion could solve the world's water and sanitation issues, specifically at places in the world where 1 billion people live on less than \$1 per day.
- \$1 billion could fully fund all overseas mission work.
- \$100 – \$110 billion would still be left over for additional ministry expansion.

Read more at <http://www.relevantmagazine.com/god/church/what-would-happen-if-church-tithed#LsVKXtbLD71R9yxg.99>

Church leaders consider the apparent wealth of the assembly, and often think, "These people should be honoring God. They have more than they need. To whom much is given much is required ..."
Church leaders encourage those they influence to be generous and criticize the lack of generosity, but may not be generous personally nor in regard to the allocation of church budgets (resources) towards Kingdom initiatives. In order to transition to Kingdom leaders we need to honestly assess our attitudes and behaviors in regard to the allocation of resources and the practice of generosity.

What are some obstacles to generosity? In His great Kingdom manifesto Jesus described **fear and worry** as obstacles to generosity and Kingdom life [Matt. 6:19-34]. In the parable of the Prodigal Son Jesus revealed that **selfishness, spiritual immaturity, and carnality** waste Kingdom resources [Lu. 15:13]. Similarly Jesus showed how **hoarding** was an obstacle in the life of the rich young ruler [Matt. 19:16-22] and the parable of the foolish farmer who sought to build bigger barns [Lu. 12:16-21]. Paul observed that the **love of money** promoted evil and greed contrary to the Kingdom [1Tim. 6:10].

Similarly **impure motives** are an obstacle to true generosity. Jesus instructed us that our charitable deeds should not be done for the praise of men, but for the praise of God [Matt. 6:1-4]. It appears that the sin of Ananias and Sapphira flowed from their desire for recognition for charity [Ac. 5:1-

11]. The account of their actions is set in contrast to the pure Spirit-prompted giving of the early church recorded in the preceding paragraph [Ac. 4:32-37].

How can we learn to practice generosity? Consider the examples of the churches of Macedonia and Antioch. The Macedonian churches (Thessalonica, Philippi, and Berea) were experiencing great poverty but God enabled them to assist other destitute believers that they did not know [2 Cor. 8:1-9]. They freely gave beyond their ability [2-3]. It wasn't that they were reckless but they considered what they could "afford to give" and went beyond. **Generosity is not determined by wealth as much as it's determined by personal sacrifices.** One need not be wealthy to be generous. The Macedonians **gave themselves to Christ first** and that is how they were able to give generously to Paul and others [5].

The example of the Macedonians' generosity was intended to provoke the Corinthians (and us) to Kingdom generosity. The Kingdom principle *whoever sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously* [2Cor. 9:6] applies to churches as well as individuals. A farmer who fears that he won't have sufficient seed or that the harvest will be inadequate is likely to sow sparingly. However God assures church leaders that if they sow generously for the Kingdom they will reap abundantly. The church at Corinth was assured that God would enrich them so that they could be generous which would cause gratitude and glory to God [2Cor. 9:11]. The gospel would advance and the needs of God's people would be met.

The Corinthians were instructed to **establish a plan for generosity**. *Each man should give what he has decided in his heart to give not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver* [2Cor.9:7] (emphasis added). Determine the needs that you are called to support and determine the amount that you are called to give, and then **implement generous giving**. The Corinthians had been eager to give and declared their intentions to be generous but had not actually given generously [2Cor. 8:11]. More than good intentions we must actually do it. Failure to be generous prolongs unmet needs and keeps us from truly being Kingdom leaders.

In addition to financial resources let us consider **the example of the church at Antioch and generosity with people**. The church at Antioch was a Kingdom focused church. It's noted as the first Gentile church and the place where believers were first called Christians [Ac. 11:20-21, 19-26]. It was also the epicenter of the early church's effort to reach the world with the gospel. The church was noted to have five noteworthy prophets and teachers, and as the Spirit led the church sent Barnabas and Saul (later known as Paul) for the Kingdom work that God had called them to [Ac. 13:1-5]. As a church leader at Antioch I would find it very challenging to send "forty percent" of the leadership team, especially leaders like Barnabas and Paul, to serve the Kingdom beyond the local church. There would likely be fear and anxiety about the adverse impact upon the local church. Yet Kingdom leaders can be encouraged that not only were Kingdom objectives accomplished but also the local church continued to thrive. Paul returned at the end of his first and second missionary journeys and departed from Antioch on his third campaign [Ac. 14:26, 15:36, 18:22-23]. God provided for the church at Antioch.

How do you feel about sending some of your best people and financial resources to accomplish Kingdom objectives beyond the local church? To transition from church to Kingdom leaders we need to develop and implement a culture of Kingdom generosity with resources including money and people.

So what did our local church do when faced with the conflict between Kingdom initiatives and apparent financial needs in the local church? We determined to honor God's call to support Kingdom initiatives. There were some changes made to our budget to prepare to deal with the deficit (and some were difficult and challenging to make). God was gracious to provide resources to care for the operation of the local church. And we made the transition from a local to a Kingdom focus. Finally we discovered we were simply responding to God's love by learning to honor love and bless Him with generous giving.

Lifework:

1. How does your culture encourage you to accumulate wealth rather than cultivate generosity?
2. Establish a plan for generosity. Consider the question, "If we had enough resource what Kingdom initiatives would we support?" Determine the Kingdom needs that you are called to support and determine the amount that you are called to give. Your goal should be to work toward the day when your giving toward Kingdom initiatives exceeds the tithe.
3. What steps need to be taken to implement the plan for generous giving? What obstacles exist and what will you do to overcome those obstacles?

Principle 6: God Can Promote Whomever Whenever

For exaltation comes neither from the east nor from the west nor from the south. But God is the Judge: He puts down one and exalts another. Ps.75:6-7

Sometimes it can be difficult to discern whether one man is seeking to exalt himself, and whether another man is seeking to suppress God's promotion of a man. I'm blessed to serve with many young men who have a heart to serve the Lord. There are some who are interns, some who are going to or have graduated a Bible college and some who are on staff serving youth or college students. Some of these men feel called to be lead pastors and church planters one day. Some feel that they are ready to be a lead pastor or planter today. And as you might imagine I would tend to agree with some and recognize that they are ripe ready and raised up by God. On the other hand there are some who I would tend to view as trying to promote themselves who haven't been truly raised up by God, or at least are not ripe or ready at this time. These divergent views of whether God has promoted create Kingdom tension.

Another scenario where this conflict is likely to arise relates to the expanding influence of a local church in a particular community. In every community there is a sense among the various church leaders as to who are the "big fish." In other words the largest church or churches in that area. It's inevitable that the scope of influence is temporal. It will change over a course of time whether relatively near or far it will certainly change. Another church will gain influence. Then other church leaders in the community may be likely to ponder whether the promotion is from God or merely man-driven striving for exaltation.

Here is a third example, the case where a ministry assistant is gifted, growing and getting noticed by the leader and others. As a ministry leader you need to determine whether to promote them to greater opportunities responsibility and influence. Or perhaps you need to pull back on the reins and restrain a maverick from running wild. In essence is the woman seeking to promote herself or is God exalting her for such a time as this?

Have you ever felt that a church leader was suppressing your God-given promotion? Have you ever wondered whether you were suppressing another?

I've experienced both. There have been times in my near quarter century of ministry experience where I felt God was promoting me but a church leader suppressed my advancement. I assumed that they were well intentioned but nevertheless they were failing to recognize what other godly leaders had seen and confirmed. I sought to be patient and to recognize that God was ultimately in control but at times I felt resentment and frustration towards those that I perceived as holding me back from the Kingdom work that God had called me to. On the other hand, there have been aspiring leaders that I regarded as perhaps not ripe or not even called that I assume felt suppressed by me. Was I right in my assessment or had I inadvertently restrained someone that God was promoting?

Have you also experienced Kingdom leaders opening lanes for you to be promoted far earlier than you would have perceived yourself as ready for promotion? I know I have. I was asked to teach a home Bible study when I had only been a believer for six months, and was asked to teach at a Bible school after only walking with the Lord for about a year and a half. I don't think that I would likely have recognized me as ripe at that time. However other godly leaders recognized that God had promoted me and allowed me to discover my calling and grow as a Kingdom leader.

The tension between one's impressions of a person as either seeking to self-promote or being wrongfully suppressed can create a conflict in the Kingdom. It seems that conflicts like these are common among church leaders. The challenge is to navigate the issues in such a way that the Kingdom is enhanced. So how can we navigate these issues for the glory of the King? **First, we**

need to remember the principle that God can (and will) promote whomever He pleases whenever He pleases. The psalmist Asaph expresses thanksgiving for God's righteous judgment and a solemn warning against self-promotion. No true promotion can come from man apart from God's exaltation. *But God is the Judge: He puts down one and exalts another [Ps.75:6-7].* **If we receive this admonition and resist the temptation to promote ourselves many of these Kingdom conflicts would be eliminated or at the least minimized.** Unfortunately even if there were literally no self-exaltation there would still be some church leaders who would be suspicious of the Kingdom leader(s) God was raising up.

We need to transition to Kingdom leaders who are able to recognize those that God has raised up who are ripe and ready without suppressing them. Consider the case of Barnabas and Saul. Barnabas was a leader at the church of Jerusalem and was a character witness for Saul regarding his conversion. It was Barnabas who later brought Saul from Tarsus to Antioch to assist in the work of making disciples and developing leaders there [Ac. 11:25-26]. Saul's gifting was abundant and obvious, and Barnabas and Saul did in fact reach the lost, make disciples and develop leaders at Antioch. So the church grew and matured. Then the church at Antioch sent Barnabas and Saul on their first missionary journey. Midway through their journey Saul's name was changed to Paul to reflect his calling to a Gentile world.

For many years they advanced the Kingdom together and the duo was referred to as "Barnabas and Saul" [Ac. 11:30; 12:25; 13:2, 7]. The Scriptures list Barnabas first because presumably he was the primary leader. But then we read, "Paul and Barnabas" [Ac. 13:43, 46, 50; 14:20; 15:2, 22, 35]. Paul had become the primary leader. With the exception of their relationship to the Jerusalem church [Ac. 14:14; 15:12] Paul is listed in the first position. Remarkably, there is no hint of any conflict between Barnabas and Paul as God exalted Paul to the primary leadership role.

As they began their missionary trip we read that Barnabas and Saul were both preaching the word of God in the synagogues. But then Paul became the primary teacher [Ac.13:16] and the team is referred to as "Paul and his party." Also the people of Lystra associated Paul with Hermes presumably because he was the primary speaker [Ac. 14:8-18]. So it seems that along the way as Paul is getting greater opportunities to teach and preach that his influence is increasing and he is thus being promoted. Now Barnabas as the senior leader apparently could have reduced Paul's opportunities to proclaim the gospel and thereby attempted to suppress Paul's exaltation but he doesn't.

Why does Barnabas graciously allow Paul to be exalted while his own influence would appear to diminish? **Barnabas recognized that it was God who was promoting Paul and he wisely chose not to attempt to suppress God's work. How did Barnabas know? Barnabas was described as a good man full of the Holy Spirit and faith** [Ac.11:24]. Barnabas sought to please God, was controlled by the Spirit and trusted God. So when Barnabas began to appreciate Paul's Kingdom gifts could be used for greater Kingdom purposes he graciously supports rather than seeking to suppress.

In contrast to Barnabas and Saul, consider Haman and Mordecai. Haman is seen throughout the narrative as trying to exalt himself. Despite promotion from the Persian king Haman is never satisfied. So when Mordecai would not bow down to Haman he was sorely vexed. Haman even conspires to destroy all the Jews because Mordecai will not pay homage. Haman is further grieved when Mordecai receives honor from the king that Haman so greatly longs for. In the end poetic justice is served as Haman is hung from the seventy-five foot gallows that he had constructed to hang Mordecai. And as God intended, not only are the Jews preserved but also Mordecai is exalted in the kingdom to second to King Ahasuerus. **The moral of the story: seeking to exalt oneself and suppress others that God is promoting leads to destruction.**

How can we determine if a leader that we are evaluating is seeking to self-promote or whether God is promoting him so that we can discover whether to support or suppress? Ideally you like Barnabas will be *a good man full of the Holy Spirit and faith*. Nevertheless as a means of assuring

that the right conclusions are being drawn consider the counsel of others. Imagine a five-person panel of qualified spiritually mature leaders. If four of them were of the opinion that the person has been raised up by God and is ripe and ready for recognition and you are the sole dissenter then it would be wise to assume that you may be suppressing God's work. Perhaps consider whether you are truly threatened, insecure, or desiring to hold onto a perceived position when God is apparently exalting another. Remember He can promote whomever He pleases whenever He pleases. On the other hand, when four out of five discern the person is not ripe ready or raised up by God then you would most likely want to suppress that person from promoting himself. Even if it's someone that you feel should be recognized.

What are some of the reasons why people strive for self-promotion? In my discussions with various mentors several reasons get mentioned. Some perceived reasons appear to be pure of heart. These include: a desire to advance God's kingdom, a yearning to reach the lost as soon as possible, and a burden to see healthy ministries established in places where they are rare. As you likely anticipated many mentors also believe more common reasons are seemingly impure. These include the desire for affirmation, pride, and pursuit of position and power.

What are some of the reasons why church leaders suppress those that God is promoting? Similarly when you ask aspiring leaders why some church leaders seem to suppress there are several reasons mentioned. Some appear pure such as a genuine desire to protect the kingdom, a desire to ensure that leaders are properly prepared, and the need to care for aspiring leaders by urging patience. Again many aspiring leaders also believe the more common reasons are seemingly impure. These include fear of losing control or power, the belief that the aspiring leader poses a threat because she may be more gifted than the mentor, and a lack of understanding of the need to build-up leaders. Also noted was an unwillingness to invest time energy and resources to develop leaders and the failure to generally recognize and develop gifts.

What are some ways that Kingdom leaders can support those that God is promoting? Seek to create a culture in the local church to enable promotion of called leaders. Encourage and foster opportunities to assume greater Kingdom responsibility as ministry assistants, leaders, deacons, elders, church planters and missionaries. Give authority with responsibility. Give platform time to aspiring leaders. Grant opportunities to use and display their gifts on the platform (stage) in front of the congregation in the main gatherings of the church. This will likely include Bible teachers, worship leaders and other gifts as well. Take steps of faith and foster a culture where aspiring leaders perceive open lanes as opposed to closed doors. Those steps of faith and open lanes are the characteristics of Kingdom leaders.

Lifework:

1. Prepare a list of people that God might be raising up presently or in the not too distant future.
2. In regard to each person why do you believe they are or are not ripe and ready to be recognized for promotion?
 - a. Consider interim steps that the person may be ready for. For example, they may not be ripe to plant a church today, but they are ripe to teach regularly in the main service.
3. Identify a group of qualified leaders who can review your list and your evaluation and can provide input based on their knowledge of the potential Kingdom leaders you've listed.

Principle 7: Encourage New Works Where the Grace of God is Evident

When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. Ac. 11:23

Church leaders and Kingdom leaders have different reactions to new works. During twenty plus years of ministry I've had the opportunity to discover a few things about God ministry and myself. I've discovered some attitudes and behaviors that were not God honoring and even been blessed to experience some growth in Christ-likeness in these areas. One issue relates to my attitude towards new works. I must confess that in my past I was unlikely to support or encourage church planting efforts either from our local church or into our community.

I vaguely remember planting our church almost twenty years ago in Camarillo, California. I remember being encouraged by some other pastors in the Calvary Chapel movement from neighboring communities that there was a need for a strong Bible teaching church with a balanced view of the present work of the Holy Spirit in my soon to be new town. My wife Karen our son Josh and I embarked on a pioneer effort to plant the church without knowing a single person in the community. I remember meeting some of the evangelical pastors in the city. They are good godly men who have endeavored to and maintained a unity of the Spirit throughout my ministry experience in our fair city. I don't recall any of them expressing any negative comments or emotions or seeking to suppress the church plant vision in any way. Nor were any offering to take us under their wing and support the new work or my family and I in any way that I recall. The meetings with pastors in our town were pretty neutral – like vanilla – nothing unpleasant and similarly nothing so remarkable as to remember two decades later.

I also vaguely remember meeting with pastors in my own movement from neighboring cities and sharing the vision. There some of the responses were memorable. Most were polite and made an encouraging comment or two and declined to attempt to create any roadblock to discourage ... essentially vanilla. One was memorable for his apparent anger about the situation. I remember traveling with another pastor friend to meet this pastor at his church office. When the pastor met us for a few minutes in the waiting area his hostility was so evident that my friend and I both were taken aback. I recall telling my friend, "If the bells stop ringing just pull me out of his office by the cord around my ankles. Spare yourself and don't go in."

The other pastor, and his wife, were memorable for taking my wife and I under their wings. They invited us to come to their church BBQ and attend their mid-week service so we could be spiritually fed. They genuinely cared for us as a church planting couple with an infant son and all of the challenges inherent in that calling. They served at a relatively small church a little further away geographically and presumably were not threatened in any way by our vision. Most importantly as they took the time to get to know us they sensed what we were doing was ultimately inspired by God and not of man.

Suffice it to say there are a host of reactions leaders can display to new works. The most common communicated response I've seen in my personal experience as a church planter, as well as numerous encounters as a director of a church-planting network, is what I've previously described as polite indifference. This is the neutral vanilla-esque reaction akin to, "That's great, good for you, we'll be praying for you." It's not hostile nor is there really any effort to meaningfully support in deed as well as words.

The second most common reaction, and thank God it appears to be a very distant second, is the reaction of anger or hostility. First, it's important to realize this reaction may not be verbalized directly

to the parties involved in the new work. In other words the angry leader may internalize the thoughts and feelings, communicate them as gossip or slander to others he serves with in his local church, or even publish his opinions to other leaders in the community. The reaction of hostility or anger likely flows from perceived threat, fear, or unhealthy perspective of the Kingdom. In essence forgetting the Kingdom belongs to God and we have no right to assert authority or control. The first two reactions are likely among church leaders.

The third most common reaction I'm aware of is *meaningful* encouragement of the new work. In my experience this response is about as common as the reaction of anger. Nevertheless, I believe anecdotally that the response of true support is actually increasing. **Furthermore, truly encouraging new works where the grace of God is evident reflects the attitude and behavior of a Kingdom leader.** Certainly no leader is likely to, or required to support every new work. So how do you discern which new works to support? **How do we transition from church leaders to Kingdom leaders in regard to new works arising from our local church such as church plants, para-church efforts, or mission's initiatives, as well as new church plants entering our community?**

Let's consider the case study of Barnabas at Antioch as recorded in Acts 11:19-26. News had come to the church in Jerusalem that a great number believed and turned to the Lord at Antioch. So the church leaders sent Barnabas, apparently to investigate the phenomena of this new work where Jews and Gentiles were coming to the Lord together at the church of Antioch [19-22].

What were some of the characteristics of Barnabas that made him right for this mission as a Kingdom leader? He was **generous** [Ac. 4:36-37] and was **able to discern the true work of God** as evident in his character witness on behalf of Paul's conversion [Ac. 9:27-28]. And as noted in this text **he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith** [24]. Furthermore we discover he was **willing**. Willing to go and to invest himself – his time energy and effort if necessary to support a new work of God.

What did Barnabas do? The text reads, *when he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord* [23]. Barnabas actually **made the effort to investigate and discover whether this new work was of God**. Without assuming this new work was not of God. Barnabas discerned *the hand of the Lord was with them* [21] *and that God's blessing was upon the work – he had seen the grace of God*. Once Barnabas was convinced the work in Antioch was of God he was led to support the work. He *encouraged them with all purpose of heart to continue with the Lord*. Barnabas **provided words of comfort and exhortation and then intentional mentoring** he gave (later along with Paul [v.25-26]) for longer than a year. In essence Barnabas was passionate and focused to develop disciples and leaders for the Kingdom. The result of the support of this new work where the grace of God was evident: *great many people were added to the Lord* [24]. More than a great multitude being added to the church at Antioch, they were added to the Lord and His Kingdom. This is the goal of Kingdom leader!

I must confess in the near twenty years since we planted our local church I have been until recently reluctant to truly encourage the subsequent new works in our community. There have likely been about fifteen new churches started in the town since we planted. Although I meet with pastors in our community for prayer, and have prayed with leaders from these new church plants, I generally did not go the extra mile to spend time to discover whether the new works were of God. I've usually been polite, offered encouraging words, and recall only a couple angry thoughts about a new church plant in our community ... essentially vanilla. Unfortunately until recently I was reluctant or apathetic to invest the needed time to discover whether the work was likely of God. In some cases based on perceived circumstances and other assumptions I even determined the works were not of God without really taking the time to know what was going on. As I reflect on this there is a sense of smallness, pettiness, and shame for what I realize now was an attitude contrary to Christ's Kingdom.

Recently, I have sought make the effort to investigate and discover whether a new work is

of God. Perhaps over a meal or coffee you can learn a person's story their vision and begin to seek to discern God's fingerprints on the plan. I've discovered it's a blessing to truly seek to provide meaningful comfort or exhortation, or even offer to meet to mentor or counsel as needed. Also providing tangible support to church plants has been a new but rewarding experience. In essence I'm seeking to transition from a local church leader to a Kingdom leader, and I've discovered it requires encouraging new works where the grace of God is evident. As a result, I like Barnabas am glad when I can discern the grace of God and encourage in word and in deed.

Lifework:

1. When you hear of a new work you did not initiate arising in your local church or in your community what is your typical first reaction (attitude)? Ask a couple of people who know you well to confirm or rebut your perceived attitude towards new works?
2. Make a list of new works or proposed initiatives in your local church such as missions, church planting or para-church activity; and also consider new works in your area but outside of your local church such as a new church started by another tribe. Make the effort to meet with leaders of the initiatives in an effort to discover whether the work is of God.
3. Assuming you discern the grace of God is evident how will you provide meaningful words of encouragement and intentional support such as mentoring or other tangible support?

Principle 8: Live to Glorify the Father

And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it? 1Cor. 4:7

There's a secret every church leader knows ...

It was 5:00 a.m. when the alarm sounded, but I could not get out of bed. I'd been playing sports the day before and twisted my back. And now Sunday – church day, and I literally could not get out of bed. I was stuck with back spasms, and despite forty-five minutes of concerted effort I could not get up. That's when I knew one of the other pastors would have to teach for me. Not an ideal situation, but certainly not the end of the world so why am I bothering to tell you this?

For twenty-three years I had not missed a single day of work. Never missed a day in my tent-making marketplace career nor my calling work in ministry. I had never missed a scheduled teaching time. I was proud of my perfect attendance badge; even if it wasn't a real badge but simply something I wore symbolically on my chest. There was a certain measure of bravado to the badge that somehow declared, "I am better than because I'm faithful to show-up unless I'm bleeding from both ears." Now at 5:45 a.m. the streak was snapped, and God was humbling me. Lying in bed, unable to move God was exposing my vanity and pride, and the desire for some measure of glory that I loathe to admit. This thorn in the flesh was a tool to remind me His grace is sufficient and in my weakness His strength is manifest.

Here is a secret every church leader knows: we all struggle with our flesh and the desire for personal glory. We affirm the theological truth that our fleshly human nature is never sanctified. But do we really *understand* that it's just as sinful as it was before we were regenerated and born of the Spirit as followers of Christ? True we now have the Holy Spirit, and by yielding to the Spirit we can overcome the flesh. This was Paul's detailed exhortation for a victorious Christian life. That genuine yearning to be an über-Christian – the glorious, victorious, sanctified saint without a hint of odor – the stink of ego pride and vainglory keeps "the secret" secret. No one who is identified as a church leader wants to admit the extent of his or her personal struggle with insecurity, pride and ego.

Presumably at this point you are resisting this self-evident truth. We are likely to defend justify or rationalize. The process goes something like this: first, you rejoice that you have overcome and don't have those kind of pitiful struggles. Second, you realize the sheer vanity of those thoughts, so your fallback defense is along the lines of, "Sure I have a little bit of struggle with that, but my ego is submitted to God's Spirit like it should be." You think you've got your flesh all under control, but there's that still small voice that whispers that the idea that you've arrived is simply pride. Third we deflect the truth with sweeping generalizations. Something like, "Well everybody struggles with pride a little bit and I do too. But I thank God that I'm better than most." Did you hear the pride alarm just go off? Fourth, we accept the reality of our vanity as some nebulous, intangible truth, but refuse to identify and confess the specifics. No church leader really wants to admit their vanity and desire for glory. Christians know that the attitude is wrong.

Here is a universal struggle for church leaders that illustrates the principle: the number of people church leaders feel they have influenced for Christ impacts their sense of identity and worth. The more people attending services, the better you are – right? Less people means less significance. I have never met a church leader who wasn't impacted to some degree by the numbers. Think about it for a minute and get real although you may not be striving for bigger numbers, haven't you been impacted by them?

At this point you may be thinking "what's the problem if while advancing God's Kingdom your influence and reputation are also expanding". **Here is the dilemma: whenever you become interested**

in your influence and glory, it creates a conflict with God's influence and glory. The allocation of resources [time talent and treasure] is impacted by a greater interest in developing the personal kingdom vs. the Kingdom.

There are countless ways this conflict is demonstrated among church leaders. An area near to my heart where I've seen the conflict revealed is church planting. I've interacted with numerous local church pastors who indicated when their local church reaches a certain numerical threshold they want to start planting churches. For example, "When we reach 2,000 then we're going to start planting churches." Now, I can understand the threshold logic when you are struggling with viability (survival) as in the context of a very young or very small church. It seems reasonable that you would struggle with the idea of allocating significant resources outside of the local church. But when the pastor of a large church is waiting to reach the mega-church threshold before allocating resources for church planting, the reasonability becomes more questionable and the appearance of a desire for personal glory becomes more suspect. Of course, the church leaders in these scenarios all have very noble stated motives for God's glory including, "This is the vision that the Lord gave our church" and "The local church is the key to Christ's kingdom" and "This is our Jerusalem where God has called us to focus before trying to reach the world." Yet you can see the potential conflict. It may be more challenging to see when you look in the mirror. For example, how you allocate resources for world missions, or your reaction to a new church starting in your community, or the request from a fellow-laborer who is in need of a worship leader when you have more than one.

This conflict between man's glory and God's glory is arguably paralyzing the advancement of the Kingdom. Consider the local church with an average attendance of 500. The church leaders have determined when the church reaches 750 they will be more focused on Kingdom initiatives such as church planting and global missions. Gallup's 2010 research reveals 59% of churches in America are less than 100, and that an additional 35% are less than 499 [http://hirr.hartsem.edu/research/fastfacts/fast_facts.html#sizecong]. Thus a church of 500 is larger than 94% of American churches, and still the desire to reach the next attendance threshold hinders the allocation of Kingdom resources, and paralyzes Kingdom initiatives.

The recognition of the conflict between a church leader's desire for some measure of glory and God's glory is the first step towards transitioning to Kingdom leaders. Church leaders allocate resources (time, talent, treasure) to enhance God's name *and their own reputation*. In contrast **Kingdom leaders seek to advance God's Kingdom without seeking to advance their own name.** The need to resist any claim to glory is reinforced by God's warning that He will not share His glory [Is. 42:8]. We are also reminded that we have no reason to boast in regard to any perceived success or gift for all true good is from God, *And what do you have that you did not receive? Now if you did indeed receive it, why do you boast as if you had not received it?* [1Cor. 4:7]. *Nevertheless we all struggle with our desire for a measure of glory.*

Jesus addressed this struggle at the beginning and end of His earthly ministry. The first time God is referenced as our Father is Jesus' Kingdom manifesto, *Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven* [Matt. 5:16]. Jesus connects our role and effectiveness in His Kingdom with a relationship with the Father that is characterized by God receiving the glory for good works, not man. This principle is so contrary to our flesh that, despite its elementary nature, it continues to be a struggle to our Kingdom calling. This reality is demonstrated by the commencement address given to the eleven after approximately three years of intentional preparation for their Kingdom calling. *By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples* [Jn. 15:8]. The test of true disciples is that they bear fruit that brings glory to the Father. The fruit displayed should bring glory to God not to the one who bears the fruit, nor to those who helped to cultivate the fruit.

In light of the conflict between a leader's glory and God's glory **how can we live to glorify the Father so that we can transition to Kingdom leaders?**

1. **Acknowledge a desire for glory.** I'm amazed how many leaders struggle to admit they have a desire for some measure of glory. Trust me each of us can relate to the struggle. The "secret" is not really secret.
2. **Realize that this struggle never goes away.** The nature of the struggle will change. We can respond to the struggle in a way that minimizes the conflict and manages the choices we make so that God is glorified but we must be vigilant. Until we go to be with Christ or he comes for us there will be a conflict for glory.
3. **You must choose to live to glorify the Father.** As cliché as it may sound, we must choose to live to glorify the Father. **So what does it mean to live to glorify the Father?** My life should be lived to please Him and advance His Kingdom for His glory. I must be sensitive to the conviction of the Spirit when God is seeking to reveal my desire to share a portion of that glory. Rather than quench or grieve the Spirit, I need to confess to God and repent. That's the secret every church leader knows ...

Lifework:

1. What are some of the areas where you believe church leaders struggle with a desire for glory?
2. Describe three areas where you struggle.
3. Share your list with another [note: if you are struggling with the idea of sharing your list please consider how that may be related to vanity].

Epilogue: Rejoice with Those who Rejoice, Christ Will Build His Church

Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Rom. 12:15

Sometimes it is easier to “weep with those who weep” than to “rejoice with those who rejoice”.

Annual pastors’ conferences can be interesting gatherings for a host of reasons. Pastors often travel great distances to be refreshed equipped and encouraged. The speakers are often excellent there are practical workshops, and of course the chance to see friends. Inevitably the question is asked, “So how many are you running now?” The more gracious inquiry is something along the lines of, “So how have things been at the church the last year?” For those pastors who have been experiencing struggles in ministry, they may dread these questions.

When a pastor shares the pain of struggles: decreased attendance, decreased offerings, staff and leadership issues, a church split, marriage and family struggles, it is generally easy to get a compassionate and sympathetic ear. Church leaders are generally up for the task of “weeping with those who weep”. Some of us can empathize because we’ve had common struggles and all of us can at least imagine how painful those issues can be. Thus compassion and empathy seem to be abundant for the struggling pastor who weeps.

On the other hand it may be more difficult to “rejoice with those who rejoice”. Imagine your friend recounting the amazing things that God is doing at the church: attendance is up, they are adding another service and thinking about a new campus, the offerings are up, leadership is strong, yet another year and the church has never split, his marriage continues to be fantastic, and their son is now a youth pastor at the church and his daughter is on her way to Bible college before going on the mission field. There are so many emotions associated with that experience. It can be like opening the Christmas card with the newsletter from “that family” the one that tells you all the amazing things that happened the past year like their fifteen year old getting admitted to Harvard, and their eighteen year old finding a cure to cancer, and that they vacationed in Europe again this summer for two months.

Generally we express the right words of affirmation and encouragement, “Praise the Lord” (meaning to imply, it is God’s doing, so don’t take any credit), and “That’s great! I couldn’t be happier for you”, (which may not mean that you are happy at all, but simply stating that you can’t be any happier). It may be difficult to actually rejoice with your brother. Siblings tend to be rivals, complete with all the jealousy, envy, and ugly comparisons. Church leaders tend to think thoughts like, “I work harder, am a better teacher and this guy doesn’t really know theology” or “I bet if I served in that part of the country our church would be blessed like that too.” And of course the inevitable fleeting thought of, “Why Lord? You know that I’ve been faithful and have served you all these years and labored diligently and zealously for you. When is it my turn to be blessed like him?” Or “Why Lord have you blessed him and not me? He doesn’t seem as worthy as me.”

Kingdom leaders on the other hand actually rejoice that their fellow laborers have stormed the gates of Hades and reclaimed territory from the enemy of men’s souls. Kingdom leaders have come to truly believe and accept that the Church belongs to the Lord and that He will build it (Matt. 16:18). Since the Kingdom is Christ’s, they have come to accept that He as the Sovereign can choose to build it, as He chooses. We are merely subjects of the King and for His good pleasure we serve Him. So if He chooses to bless another person in this season then we shall choose to rejoice in Christ and for our fellow laborer. Christ will bless us in due time, but it is more important for us to discover that when we truly rejoice with others, that we have transitioned from being church leaders to being Kingdom leaders.