

Developing Your Inner Circle of Leaders

Nick Sellers | February 2022 Small Group Leader Training at Vida Springs Church in Gainesville, Florida

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1 *Nick Sellers*

2 00:00

3 ...plays a role, in a sense, but you can find that you end up in the friend zone and can't
4 actually move people from A to B. Leadership is not just character refinement and
5 development. We'll look at the whole chapter of Mark 9 and most of it, and look at some
6 different principles we can observe from Jesus' leading, and character development and
7 help with them is part of it. But it's not a bull's-eye, it's not an isolated thing in and of
8 itself. It's not just kind of "how do I pick at the next thing that a person needs to get fine-
9 tuned in?" It is a kind of "along the way." Leadership is not just being a life coach and
10 talking people through every life step.

11 Do any of you guys have people in your group where you feel like if you don't check in
12 with them every five minutes, like "do I need to check my phone right now?", they're just
13 going to blow the lid on the whole thing?

14 You can kind of find yourself just being a life coach where you in a sense become Jesus
15 to them and you're talking them through every decision and everything.

16 You can do that. It works as long as you are constantly on it, but if you let off, it
17 collapses.

18 We say, if you have a life coach—my wife, by the way, ironically, is actually a life coach
19 who certifies other people to be life coaches. So she kind of stumbled into that through
20 helping out with the foster care, social work, kind of thing at Western, that took off, and
21 now she makes bookoo bucks, and I'm gonna retire and just live out of an RV in a couple
22 of years. Find somebody to hand it off to.

23 The last thing I'd say is leadership is not counseling. That might be a part of what ends up
24 happening, but it's not just— the leadership question— is not just who's struggling, who's
25 hurting, and where is help needed. There's a kind of forward-looking to leadership that's
26 not just kind of "who's struggling to keep up?" And there's certainly a component of that,
27 but we're not counselors primarily. It's not what we are intending to do, is to just kind of
28 talk people through everything that's ever hurt. Leading is taking people from A to B with
29 intention.

30 2:00

31 I'm not sure if you've heard Tony talk about it in a way similar to that, but leadership is,
32 by definition, taking people from A to B with intention. So, "where are we at now, A, and
33 where are we going, B, and how do we get there?"

34 And there are all kinds of tools that I hope as we look at the example of Jesus, all kinds of
35 tools that help influence from A to B. And so I hope to kind of put a couple more tools in
36 your tool belt tonight. But leadership is, “where's the person at, A?” And, “where are we
37 going, B?” And, “how do I get them there?” How do I use the God-given influence
38 entrusted to me to help with that?

39 It's true on a micro level of an individual, and it's also true on a macro level of the entire
40 group or discipleship community. Those of you guys that are pastors that you're entrusted
41 with.

42 We're going to look at Mark 9. We're going to go quickly looking at kind of four different
43 things, I think. Some of the principles I'll be looking at, I suppose, they really could
44 probably appear in all kinds of places throughout the gospels. There are other things we
45 could learn about Jesus's leading, too, but I like some of the key components I think are
46 really present here. And so, let me go and pray for us first, actually. Because it's a longer
47 stretch of verses, rather than reading that and you guys all getting up and grabbing your
48 coffees and spacing out, let me pray for us first and then we'll look at these verses and
49 learn from Jesus.

50 So Jesus, I do thank you for each person here that you've called to lead. Thank you for
51 their willingness to say yes and serve your people.

52 I pray that in any place where vision has gone dry that you would awaken something
53 within them. Any place where love for people's eroded, I pray that their hearts would
54 grow tender again. For any that feel like they struggle to lead or wonder if they're very
55 effective, God, I thank you that you use unlikely people all the time.

56 4:00

57 And I pray that you would equip and empower this weekend. Equip and empower. I pray
58 that you would do both. I love to think about what you could do with a weekend like this,
59 even as short as it is. Times where you show up with your spirit and really change things
60 forever. I pray it would be a weekend like that for many here. And that the real fruit of it
61 would be measured not just in what we experience, but in the real fruit that lasts and
62 disciples made. I pray that things would change and that Vida Springs Church would look
63 different a year from now. I thank you that these are the men and women that you intend
64 to use. So come and have your way, open our hearts before you and we want to learn
65 from you, Jesus. Amen.

66 It is a sobering thing leading, by the way, right? You kind of don't really know what
67 you're getting yourself in for. I think I was talking to one of you guys who just started
68 leading a month ago. The first month it's really just—we've got a guy too, Sam just

69 started leading about a month ago—and the first month it's really just kind of, “how do I
70 not screw the night up?” and then “what questions that will get people talking?” There's
71 kind of, like, layers to learning to lead. It's kind of overwhelming. But there's a lot Jesus
72 has entrusted.

73 I remember one time I was doing a landscaping project in my front yard... no, I was
74 power-washing. I bought a cheap one from Harbor Freight, so it didn't work very well.
75 That was a mistake. I listened on audio to all of First Kings and about half of Second
76 Kings in one sitting. Big deck, bad power washer, took it all off. And, really, the book of
77 First and Second Kings reads like this: “this king did what was right in the sight of the
78 Lord, and the nation of Israel did well. This king didn't, and the nation tanked.” It really
79 is that as leaders go, nations go, and churches go. There's a lot that he's entrusted to us.

80 6:00

81 As Vida Spring goes, it will be through you guys right here. And it's a pretty fun thing to
82 get an opportunity to see what God will do this weekend.

83 But the first thing we're going to look at here is the transfiguration of all things. There's
84 not really an equivalent of that tonight, right? Holy Spirit, come with Elijah and Moses.
85 But let's read verses 2 through 8, Mark 9:2-8.

86 It says, "And after six days, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John, and he led
87 them up a high mountain by themselves. He was transfigured before them, and his clothes
88 became radiant, intensely white, as no one on earth could bleach them. And there
89 appeared to them Elijah with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. And Peter said to
90 Jesus, 'Rabbi, it's good that we are here. Let us make three tents, one for you, one for
91 Moses, and one for Elijah.' For he did not know what to say, for they were terrified. And
92 a cloud overshadowed them, and a voice came out of the cloud, 'This is my beloved Son;
93 listen to him.' And suddenly, looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but
94 Jesus only."

95 And so here, this is Jesus, he's traveling up a mountain to have this crazy encounter with
96 God. This transfiguration, a glorification, God's presence coming upon him and making
97 his appearance different, an appearance of God. And he brings a couple of guys with him
98 - Peter, James, and John. There was relational leadership. I'm sure you guys have heard
99 that term before: “relational leadership.” There's time spent together. They go up the
100 mountain together. I don't know if any of you guys have been backpacking or in the
101 mountains, but maybe they even had their terrible, dehydrated meals and all that kind of
102 stuff. But they go up the mountain together. They're spending time together, and when

103 you spend time together, disciples grow. Now, it's not just any kind of time. This right
104 here is very intentional time. It is time to try to get into the presence of God together.

105 8:00

106 We spend time with people. If I had to guess, your calendars are quite full. But what kind
107 of time are we spending? That's a really important question. You can have full calendars
108 but very little fruit, and we don't want that. It's not just coffee, it's not just football, it's not
109 just dinner.

110 I said in the intro, I think that the friend zone danger is a very real one where we spend all
111 of our time thinking that we have to watch the Super Bowl and hang out at their house,
112 watching another football game, and go play something else with them. And have all
113 these kind of get-to-know-you sort of deals. And we roll that out so long that by the time
114 you actually try to lead anything or do anything meaningful, it's actually kind of
115 awkward.

116 Jesus was pretty down to business and the time that he spent with them, was intentional
117 kinds of time. Here, he's bringing them into the presence of God together. And this is
118 what I really want to focus on out of this passage, is that a lot of our job as leaders is
119 being people that know how to get into the presence of God ourselves, and help other
120 people get to God. That is a massive part of our job description. Without it, we lead
121 "Bible studies." And Bible studies have a great purpose, they really do. And yet it falls
122 short. A big part of our job is helping to bring people along in experiencing God together.
123 People have to encounter God.

124 Here's what encountering God does: look at verse 6. It says that "he", being Peter, "did
125 not know what to say, for they were terrified." See, when we experience the presence of
126 God, this "terrify" here is a reverence and awe. A kind of head and heart bowed, a life
127 surrendered. I think a lot of times we bump up against people and wonder why they won't
128 surrender their lives, why they don't feel more grief over sin, why they won't fight it
129 harder or confess more quickly. Are they are terrified of God? Do they have a right and
130 healthy fear of God? Have they experienced the presence of God?

131 10:00

132 When I started going to Vine as a sophomore in college, I was coming out of all kinds of
133 sin. All kinds of sin; a mess of a life. I went to SIU, Southern Illinois University, because
134 it was the party school in Illinois. That's why I went there. And in the emptiness, and,
135 man, there has to be more to life than this. There was one person I knew that was a
136 Christian, and he went to Vine. And to this day, I still can't remember exactly what the
137 teaching series was when I started coming, but I remember what the songs were. I

138 remember the experience of the presence of God. I remember Jeremy Riddle's *Sweetly*
139 *Broken* and thinking, "Yes, that's me. I'm a mess."

140 Some of that's more old school for some of you guys, but... I remember *Came to My*
141 *Rescue*, the kind of realizing I needed Jesus to come and intervene into my life. I
142 remember sobbing and bawling a lot of tears. I hadn't cried in eight, ten years. And yet it
143 was the presence of God coming and changing things forever. Jesus here is bringing them
144 along to encounter God with him, and they were terrified. It produced a healthy fear and
145 healthy awe. It is so hard to move people without an experience of the Holy Spirit's
146 presence. It is so hard to move people.

147 They have to experience God. They have to.

148 It says in verse 8, "Suddenly looking around, they no longer saw anyone with them but
149 Jesus only." Don't you love even the language of that? It's like everything else just
150 stopped. Mountain views, yeah, cool, but they only see Jesus only. All they saw was only
151 Jesus.

152 Does it feel like, for us ourselves, for the people that we lead, we're terribly distracted?
153 Have you noticed that? It feels like we have stretches where we run after Jesus, where
154 we're zealous for him. We want to be about the kingdom, someone might start serving in
155 a given area, and then a couple of months later, they kind of punk out. Or, "Man, I'm
156 going to come to group every single week," "Man, that retreat was amazing," or whatever
157 it is, or some kind of resolve to follow Jesus, and then it fizzles out.

158 12:00

159 There's something about the presence of God, really experiencing the presence of God
160 that allows us, perhaps forces us, to fix our eyes on Jesus in a way that we can't look
161 away. That we have sole focus on him. That he captures everything. Everything. Where
162 all of our lives, all of our gifts, all of our abilities, everything he's made us to be, we long
163 that it would be used for Him. I hope that for you guys. I hope that the gifts and abilities
164 that he's given you, aren't getting wasted on a whole bunch of things of the world that
165 don't matter. That your gifts and abilities are being poured out for his kingdom and things
166 that will matter for eternity. I hope for the people that we lead, that they experience God
167 in a way that produces fear and awe and fixes their eyes on Jesus alone.

168 We see this all throughout the bible. This kind of pattern of the people that make a huge
169 impact in the kingdom of God has encountered God. They've encountered the living God.
170 You can look at Samuel and Eli, God moving on from a prophet on to a new one, and
171 here he is as a boy, hearing the voice of God. Wouldn't that be fun if that was any of our
172 kids, hearing the voice of God? That's who God used. You can look at Elijah and Elisha

173 and the transfer that happened there, well, what made them so effective? The power and
174 presence of God on them.

175 There's one I want you to flip to, Exodus 33. Exodus 33, verses 7-11. This is when God
176 was speaking to Israel through Moses, and Moses was going to something called the tent
177 of meeting, and God would speak to him and then he'd come out and he told the nation of
178 Israel what God said. We don't live in those times anymore. It's nice that we have an
179 authoritative bible where God speaks, but also we all have access to the presence of God.
180 But look at this.

181 14:00

182 Verse 7, "Now Moses used to take the tent and pitch it outside the camp far off from the
183 camp and he called it "the tent of meeting" and everyone who sought the Lord would go
184 to the tent of meeting, which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went out to the
185 tent, all the people would rise up and each would stand at his tent door and watch Moses
186 until he had gone into the tent. When Moses entered the tent, the pillar of clouds would
187 descend and stand at the entrance of the tent and the Lord would speak with Moses.
188 When the people saw the pillar of clouds standing at the entrance, the people would rise
189 up and worship, each at his tent door. Thus, the Lord would speak to Moses, face to face
190 as a man speaks to his friend."

191 So Moses is encountering God dramatically in these moments, God is revealing himself
192 to Moses.

193 Look at the next verse. If you want to see leader development in a verse, here it is. "When
194 Moses turned again into the camp, his assistant, Joshua, son of Nun, a young man, would
195 not depart from the tent."

196 You have a young guy, the future successor. At this point, he's just a guy and he is with
197 Moses, as Moses is encountering God. And when Moses sleeps, Joshua—just picture him
198 face down on the carpet, not wanting to go anywhere because he loves the presence of
199 God so much. He can't stand to lift his head. He doesn't want to go anywhere else. There
200 he's being shaped and formed in the presence of God.

201 I think a lot of what we've got to experience while planting a church is because of this.
202 Oh, Tony got to be there for a weekend for a pretty dramatic one but I feel so grateful to
203 get this constantly, it feels like. I was actually reading this passage a couple of years ago.
204 I think it was a couple of months after we'd had a pretty crazy retreat. I'm not sure if Tony
205 talked about it or you guys heard.

206 16:00

207 But months later, things have died down and returned back to normal in some sense. We
208 still had a ton of deliverance stuff happening... and maybe that was a different year. I
209 don't know. We've kind of had a number of crazy things happen. We've been a bit of a
210 bipolar church plant, by the way, with some high highs and low lows.

211 But I was reading this passage and I felt like God said that He was going to mold and
212 shape leaders in his presence like this. That was right around the time where Tytus was
213 not yet a worship leader. Seamus, our pastor, who is now dating Rachel's sister—did I
214 just call you the right name? Right. They look a lot alike. But that was right around the
215 time where Tytus was not yet our worship leader; Seamus, our now pastor, another DC
216 pastor that we have, he was really just starting to come around at the time. Once before
217 that, I actually really didn't like him. I've told him that, I've told our church that, we joke
218 about it now, but when he first started coming around, I really legitimately didn't like
219 him. He just kind of seemed abrasive and punchy and, I mean, truthfully that was the
220 scouting report on me a dozen years ago, so perhaps I should have been more gracious
221 about it, I don't know.

222 But I grabbed lunch with him one time at the college campus and he really just kind of
223 talked the whole time. I was miserably sick. I'm sick like half the winter. I hate winters in
224 Michigan. But anyway, I felt terrible, I wanted to cancel but I thought, man, he's new, I
225 can't cancel. He just talked about himself the whole time and I was like, "I just can't do
226 this." And so, after he was talking for a while, I said, "Do you have a bible app on your
227 phone?" He's like, "Yeah, I do." I was like, "Why don't you open up to Isaiah 66:2?" And
228 he turns to it, and the verse is, "But this is the one to whom I will look. He who was
229 humble and contrite in spirit and trembles at my word," and I said, so, humble, right?
230 Contrite in spirit like broken over sin. Trembles at my word - fears God. And I told him,
231 "What do you notice isn't on that list? Gifting."

232 18:00)

233 "It doesn't matter how impressive you are, God doesn't need ya."

234 "Why don't you chew on this for a bit? What do you think about this?" And that was
235 about how we left it. I mean, it was a little bit more elaborated on than that but that was
236 about how we left it. Anyway, I walked away thinking, "I don't know if this guy's ever
237 coming back." He was really involved in a campus ministry. They're much nicer than I
238 am. They just kind of play games the whole time and did a little Bible essay at the end.

239 Well, anyway, he kept coming back, kind of being shaped by the Bible, the Holy Spirit
240 working. But this kind of Joshua, son of Nun kind of thing... I really think God did an
241 equivalent of that in Seamus. I had to joke around with him — the kind of amount of

242 Holy Spirit power, exposure sort of things that he got to see and be a part of — I joked
243 around with him about a year in, I was like, "Man, Seamus, at some point, all this stuff's
244 going to die down, and you're going to wake up and it's going to feel like you got married
245 and your spouse has put on a whole lot of weight because you're eating a bunch of meals,
246 you got to like, you know..." I'm sorry if that's kind of too abrupt, I don't know, but I was
247 like, "Someday, you're going to wake up and realize, 'oh, shoot, I'm already neck-deep
248 and committed. I can't get out. But this isn't what I signed up for.'"

249 But God really moves and shapes and he forms in his presence.

250 I remember a retreat where Seamus had a snotsicle all the way down to the carpet. There
251 was a men's clinic that I had where there were multiple weeks of just crazy Holy Spirit
252 power kind of stuff happening. And what God does in His presence is He changes people.
253 He changes people.

254 We work really hard, I'm certain you guys do, but He just swings a bigger hammer. We
255 need His presence.

256 This past Sunday, teaching on worship, I taught 2 Corinthians 3, which isn't inherently
257 about worship, but it's about being changed in the presence of God, referring to Moses
258 wearing the veil when he came down from the Ten Commandments.

259 2 Corinthians 3 says this: "That we all, with unveiled face, beholding the glory of God,
260 are being transformed from one degree of Glory to another. The Lord is spirit and where
261 the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom."

262 20:00

263 So we're being transformed from one degree of Glory to another. The bible's kind of
264 tactful way of saying "not very impressive, to still not very impressive, but more like
265 Jesus." He uses his presence to make us more like him. There's freedom in his presence.
266 Even when you think about: who are the people you lead that there's kind of more
267 growth, there's more life, there's things happening?

268 Even a couple of the guys that are here, Isaac and Sam... I remember Isaac, there's kind
269 of an ongoing struggle generally with anxiousness. Is that okay to say? He just kind of,
270 he'd get in his head a lot. About ten months ago or something like that, we had a team
271 meeting where I talked about the Holy Spirit, and I just shared a bunch of stories. We've
272 grown with a lot of new people, some of it was through relational evangelism inviting,
273 but a lot of what happens is you get more established as a church as you grow with a lot
274 more church people. Which isn't always a bad thing, you just got to make sure they're
275 becoming us.

276 So we talked about the Holy Spirit, I shared a whole bunch of Holy Spirit stories, and the
277 Holy Spirit ended up moving as much as I'd ever seen at a team meeting, at least in the
278 six years we've been at church. Probably up there in terms of even what I can remember
279 at Vine. And Isaac wasn't even getting a prayer, he was just having faith and being
280 outward-focused and praying for someone else. And God's presence was on him as he
281 was praying for someone else, and that area has been different since. How does that
282 work? Didn't even get prayer about it.

283 Sometimes it feels like: ok, someone who struggles with anxiousness, let's get together
284 every other week for 2 to 3 hours. Our calendars are full, we're exhausted and
285 overwhelmed, things move so slowly, and then the Holy Spirit, just in a moment, makes
286 things different.

287 22:00

288 Sam, I remember when Jesus saved him maybe I think. It might have been there, it might
289 have not. He's trying to work that out and figure out when exactly the moment was.

290 But he started coming around out of a party scene, a similar story to me, and for whatever
291 reason, he came to a Team Meeting a year ago. And he was in the very, very back
292 seeming emotional, and I went back and prayed for him and tried to figure out what was
293 going on. And he said he was feeling a lot of conviction of sin, and as I was talking to
294 him about "Man, do you believe in Jesus? Offer up your life to him, repent the best you
295 can, tell him you're sorry the best you can," and we're kind of praying together through all
296 of that and... they're leading small groups and they're here.

297 And they're in process every bit as much as you're in process, every bit as much as Tony
298 and I are in process.

299 We're all being transformed from one degree of glory to another.

300 But I can think about guys in our church that have been around longer than them. There is
301 a guy that... they both multiplied out of Tytus' group. I can think of a guy that — Tytus
302 has been banging his head against the wall. Josh, for years, a gifted aviation student, a
303 real neat kid, Christian home. I think he's a Christian. A handsome guy, tender heart,
304 seems really gifted. There's no life.

305 He's been around longer than either of those guys, he'll serve now and then for a little bit.
306 He's been to a couple of Team Meetings and there are times where, if I feel God's
307 presence moving in a room, I'm like, all right, where's Josh? And I go pray and I can't
308 make anything happen. How does that work? We can't do anything more than what the

309 Father is doing, and our own ability and effort. We got to be faithful with our gift, right?
310 Our time and our leading.

311 But He just swings a bigger hammer. He shows up and moves and things change.

312 So we have to be people like Moses, like Samuel, like Elijah, like Paul with Timothy, like
313 Jesus with the disciples: that we, as leaders, know how to get to God, we're bringing
314 people with us.

315 24:00

316 We're helping them to experience God through the laying on of our hands, through
317 identifying what's happening with them in worship, to just talking to them about it, to
318 getting them to things where God's moving. But we have to be people that know how to
319 get to God and bring people with us.

320 Not only that but think about, in this passage, who does he bring? So, back to the very
321 first verse there, too.

322 So, kind of another principle here, I want to point out in Jesus' leading, beyond helping
323 people experience God, is: Who does he spend his time with? How does he distinguish
324 between people? This is a big thing for us. You aim at everything, you hit nothing, right?

325 So, it says, "After six days, Jesus took with him Peter and James and John." And so this
326 crazy moment of the transfiguration, this wonderful thing that happens, how does it all go
327 down? Who does he bring with? Only three guys.

328 Here you've got God in flesh about to be transfigured, and he only brings three guys.
329 Why? Limited seats? Tickets are too expensive like the Super Bowl? Think about it. He
330 could have brought the whole nation. I don't know how big the mountain was. Some of
331 you guys who are more historical might be able to kind of fact-check that, but he could
332 have brought at least the 12, could he not? And yet, he only brought three. Why?

333 See, there's this thing in leadership that we see with Jesus where he spent a
334 disproportionate amount of his time with Peter, James, and John. He spent less time than
335 with those guys, but more than the rest, with the 12. There was kind of another layer that
336 might have stretched to about 15 to 20 — Mary and Martha and Lazarus. There are a few
337 others that kind of... but beyond that everybody else was a pretty light touch. And I think
338 that's a big deal for us to learn how to think about where we spend time to distinguish
339 between people, and to not run ourselves into the ground.

340 26:00

341 Years ago, there was a group leader retreat, I think that our network of churches might
342 have been — I was a staff pastor at Vine — we might have been like eight churches or
343 something like that. And so, a whole network together for a group leader retreat, and one
344 of the sessions was on relational leadership. And so having people in your home, doing
345 life together, all this kind of stuff. I'm one year into being a pastor, leading two DCs, ten
346 small groups something like that, Vine trying to keep up with growth. That's kind of how
347 North Pines has been, too.

348 But, anyway, I go home with Mallory and we try to come up with a list of who do we
349 want to have over to the house. And we came up with a list of, I think 15-ish, 20, I don't
350 know, on a whiteboard, on our refrigerator. And you know what we did for the next
351 couple of weeks? We have literally nobody over. Do you know why? It was so
352 paralyzing. It was so overwhelming. We come back from a retreat on relational
353 leadership, and make a list of people who we'll have over, and we didn't have anybody
354 over for a month. Because it was paralyzing. It was overwhelming.

355 In a sense... we had a service... we've kind of been between 350 and 400 for this
356 semester. On Sundays when we're 400 I feel like I wouldn't mind running off about 50.
357 We're healthy for 350. We're healthy for 350, we're out for 400. In a sense, I lead 400
358 people. In another sense, I lead 8 to 12. Really, though, I lead about 2 to 3.

359 Is that weird to think about?

360 Jesus spent a disproportionate time with Peter, James, and John. I spend a
361 disproportionate time with Tytus, Seamus, and our two non-staff overseers Will and
362 Andrew, and not even always at the same time. And it kind of changes a little bit
363 sometimes. Sometimes there's a particular person that God's moving a lot in and you're
364 trying to be more intentional with, and all of those kinds of things.

365 28:00

366 But in some ways, the groups that you guys lead, it might feel like you lead 8, or 12, or
367 20 — any of you guys 20 and up. Okay? Well good. I was going to tell Tony; you got to
368 get that multiplied. But we might, too, so don't fact-check me on that. Don't pull out the
369 spreadsheet, Tytus! But we're doing all right, keeping up on the group leader front.

370 Anyway, in one sense, it feels like you lead 8, 10, and 12, but in another sense, you really
371 lead about 2 to 3. I think we have a pretty limited capacity on how to impact, and the
372 model that Jesus shows here, I think is imitable pace, and it is maximum effect. I am not
373 worried at all about the health of our small group structure. We've got myself and Seamus
374 as pastors. We've got 20 small group leaders and 350 to 400 people. But the thing that I

375 am not worried about at all, is our small group leaders. We have really, really healthy,
376 alive, faithful solid group leaders that I love like crazy.

377 Now, I didn't feel like that a year ago coming out of COVID. Any of you guys felt like
378 that too?

379 And what I had to do was, with about one or two at a time, just start digging out all the
380 mess. Just kind of poke it.

381 You guys got older kids where it's kind of like that? Stuff will kind of knotted up, built
382 up in them. You got to poke, poke, poke until you get what's out. It was kind of like that.
383 "Okay, this guy's knotted up. I got to work, and I need to do about one at a time. Okay."

384 But you can't tackle it all at once. In a sense, Jesus, kind of light-touched the whole
385 nation. He'd spend a little bit of time with anybody, but he spent more time with the 12,
386 and a disproportionate time with two or three. I think that's a sustainable pace for us.

387 So how do you distinguish between people, and where to spend your time? Is it the ones
388 that are the most put together? Well, let's look at context. You know this little part here in
389 verse 5, Peter said, "Rabbi, it's good that we're here. Let us make three tents, one for you,
390 one for Moses, and Elijah," because he didn't know what to say.

391 30:00

392 So, here in our equivalent would be like, I pray here at the end, the Holy Spirit comes, the
393 Holy Spirit's falling like crazy, darn it, near as close as we can get to Moses and Elijah
394 showing up, and then one of you guys just starts talking about something real random
395 because you don't know what to do with it. Like that's actually Peter.

396 Like, literally, in the moment — and Jesus has for-knowledge. And so, he says, "Peter,
397 James, and John, come up the mountain with me," and kind of the in-parentheses is, if
398 you had a play script that shows the guy's thoughts — and Jesus knew Peter was about to
399 ruin the moment. So he invited the guy that's going to ruin the moment.

400 Not only that. Look even more in context, Chapter 8, Verse 33. This is 31 to 33, "He,"
401 being Jesus, "began to teach them that the son of man must suffer many things and be
402 rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed and after three days, rise
403 again. And he said this plainly, and Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. But
404 turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said, get behind me, Satan. For
405 you're not setting your mind on things of God, but on the things of man."

406 So literally, in context... How does Jesus decide, “yes, this is the guy I’m going to bring
407 up the mountain with me?” He literally just called him Satan, he invites him up knowing
408 he’s gonna ruin the moment. And he still does. Why? Because he could see Peter, not for
409 where he was at, but where he was going to be. And that is a big thing we have to be able
410 to do as leaders: is to say “here’s where a person is at, but what has God made him to
411 be?”

412 For me, I think about it like this — what’s the cleaned-up version of this person look like?
413 What’s the cleaned-up version of this person look like, Or if there’s no visible struggle
414 kind of stuff, what would it look like if all of this person’s gifts and abilities were poured
415 out for God’s kingdom? And I feel a kind of righteous jealousy. I think that’s the closest I
416 can get to understanding God’s jealousy.

417 32:00

418 I think any other kind of form of jealousy we have, it’s kind of like insecure or sinful.
419 That’s the only kind of jealousy I can think of — being jealous that it’s sunny here: sinful.
420 Right? It’s not okay. But being jealous that a guy’s gifts and abilities be poured out for the
421 kingdom of God, that’s a right jealousy.

422 See, for Jesus, he knew that Peter, even though he was going to ruin the moment and just
423 got called Satan, is also going to be the one preaching in Acts 2.

424 And so, if you don’t do this... if you can’t look and see what’s the “all-in for Jesus”
425 version of this person look like, what the cleaned-up version of this person looks like.

426 If you don’t do that, you’ll spend your time with church people. And you’ll find
427 yourself leading a group that you hate. Because, you know who’s already the most
428 cleaned up? Previously church people.

429 They come in, they know, “I should get a small group.” They know how to participate in
430 the discussion. They already know the Bible. They’re not bothering you with big sin
431 struggles. It’s easy. You spend your time there, consistently and always — and I’m not
432 saying anything against that. I’m sure, a number of you here, already church, already
433 Christians found your way into Vida Springs Church.

434 But if you can’t think like this, you’ll find yourself leading a group you hate. It’ll feel
435 churchy, it’ll feel religious-y, it’ll feel stiff. So you have to look at where is the person at,
436 and what God’s made him be, and distinguish between people.

437 One caveat on this real quick: for some of you where your gifts and abilities are more
438 mercy and shepherding type, that is a great and God-given gifting, but sometimes there

439 can be a bit of a recoil that says, "No, no, I need to treat all people with the same amount
440 of kind time and effort and attention. And I would, one, point us to the Bible that says,
441 this kind of shows an example of Jesus where he does not do that. It is not a sinful thing,
442 you can't overlook people. You really do have to lead all in a sense, but don't
443 underestimate an intentional five minutes. Don't underestimate the impact of praying for
444 somebody at the end of service on Sunday.

445 34:00

446 Don't underestimate the real significance of a five-minutem before service starts, an
447 actual, "Hey, how are you doing?" rather than just small talk.

448 And so, the bigger the church has got for me, the more I've learned I just have to learn
449 how to have a lot of really impactful one or two-minute moments, five-minute moments,
450 because I can't spend all my time with all people equally. If you do that, you will
451 personally feel overwhelmed.

452 The only group leader we've had in five and a half years that had a moral reason that had
453 to shut the group down, I'll be vague because our guys don't even know it or need to
454 know the details of the situation or the person, at least. But it's the guy that out of all the
455 years showed the most resistance on this particular topic when I would train on it.

456 He was kind of feeling like, "no, no, no, all people have to get all the same amount of
457 time" and he found himself in a group that he hated. Mercy shepherding kind of thing,
458 but always just kind of caregiving people through hurts, didn't distinguish between people
459 and just ended up with a whole bunch of hurting people that just want to talk to him about
460 how much they hated their job, and all of their hurts, and all their problems. And the
461 group wasn't going anywhere. He wasn't leading people as individuals anywhere.

462 The moral failure that happened was during COVID. He ended up most nights, he'd
463 sneak off to the garage. His wife was pregnant so she'd go to bed earlier, he'd sneak off
464 to the garage, and he'd smoke weed. And he went weeks, months actually, without
465 confessing and a lot of it was just kind of wanting to escape. It was COVID, I mean, that
466 was a really hard stretch of loneliness and isolation, but a lot of it was just hating the
467 responsibility that he had and wanting to escape it.

468 You can hit it from all kinds of different angles, but I think it probably exhausts the point
469 enough to say, I think Jesus gives us here an example that is imitate-able that we ought to
470 pay attention to. In a sense you lead 8, in a sense you lead 12, but really, you probably
471 lead two to three.

472 36:00

473 So who are those two to three? Who are those two to three?

474 And sometimes, I've told our leaders, "Man, there's no next leader," or, "Man, there is not
475 anybody I'm excited about." And I'll say, "so the people you are supposed to be spending
476 the most time with aren't in your group yet. So start playing basketball at the rec, or
477 whatever it is that you do." All of us have different things to connect with people. Fly
478 drones with people that fly drones.

479 Whatever it is that you do, do what you do to meet people, but if you find yourself in a
480 group that you don't even yourself like, or have people you are excited about, then the
481 people you're supposed to be spending your time with the most aren't even in your group
482 at all.

483 Go the next month without spending time with anybody in your group and I mean, I
484 mean in a "longer" sense.

485 But the light touch kind of stuff still happened. Jesus would pray for anybody. He'd heal
486 all who were sick. Meaningful interactions galore, but disproportionate time with a few.
487 If you do that, you can lead a group that grows with health and effect.

488 You could say more on that but we'll keep moving to Verse 14. Chapter 9, Verse 14. It
489 says, "When they came to the disciples," so nine stayed back at the base of the mountain.
490 Jesus and the three, they come back down and they see a crowd had gathered around
491 them; the other nine and the scribes arguing with them. "And immediately, all the crowds
492 when they saw Him, were greatly amazed and ran up to Him and greeted Him. He,"
493 being Jesus, "asked, 'What are you arguing about with them?' And someone from the
494 crowd answered Him, 'Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a spirit that makes
495 him mute,'" by "to you," meaning "your disciples, your other nine." "And whenever it
496 seizes him, it throws him down, and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid. So
497 I asked your disciples to cast it out and they were not able.' And He answered them, 'Oh,
498 faithless generation. How long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you?
499 Bring him to me.'

500 "And they brought the boy to Him. And when the spirit saw him, immediately it
501 convulsed the boy. And he fell on the ground and rolled about foaming at the mouth. And
502 Jesus asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, "From
503 childhood, and it's often cast him into fire and into the water to destroy him.'"

504 38:00

505 “‘But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.’ And Jesus said to him,
506 ‘If you can — all things are possible for one who believes.’ And immediately the father
507 of the child cried out and said, ‘I believe. Help my own belief.’”

508 Have you ever prayed that before? All the time.

509 “And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, He rebuked the unclean spirit,
510 saying to it, ‘You mute and deaf, spirit, I command you, come out of him and never enter
511 him again.’ And after crying out and convulsing terribly, it came out. The boy was like a
512 corpse so that most of them said he’s dead. But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him
513 up and he rose. And when He had entered the house, the disciples asked Him privately,
514 ‘Why could we not cast it out?’ And He said to them, ‘This kind cannot be driven out by
515 anything but prayer.’”

516 So what I want to point out, really in this section here is something that we could kind of
517 just call apprentice-style leading.

518 There's this pattern in Jesus's leading where He was regularly equipping and teaching the
519 disciples how to make other disciples. And He did this in a bit of a sequence. Up to this
520 point, they had personally seen Jesus work, and that's usually where a person has to start.

521 They have to get prayed for themselves. They have to watch it happen. They have to hear
522 other people answer questions to your discussion so they don't say anything dumb or do
523 something out of line and then say, “Okay, this is how we're talking about it. I get it.”
524 And they know how to talk.

525 But at this point, they've personally seen Jesus's work. He'd given them authority, He'd
526 sent them out, and they'd returned. So they're not going at this blind, even though they
527 have a failed attempt. Here, it seems like Peter, James, and John up on the mountain, they
528 come back down.

529 The rest of the disciples were the ones taking a hack at this. The guy's son with a demon,
530 the other nine could not kick it out.

531 40:00

532 And so this isn't that they'd never done it before, because they'd already come back,
533 “Hey, even the demons listen to us.” And Jesus says, “Yeah, sure, I saw Satan...” It's like,
534 man, come on, way to kill the buzz there, right?

535 But, “Man, yeah, I saw Satan cast out from heaven, fell like lightning. Rejoice that your
536 names are in the book of life.”

537 And so they'd already experienced this before, but they run into one that's a bit big for
538 their britches, and they can't kick it out. Jesus comes and, admittedly, this isn't the
539 most... you can't say it's not gracious because He's Jesus and He does all things perfectly.
540 This might not be the most verbatim replicable model where if somebody's not doing
541 something well in your small group, you probably shouldn't say, "How long should I stay
542 with you, oh, faithless generation?"

543 We can't call it not gracious because He's perfect in all of His ways. Yet I would
544 suggest... Tony probably would not want you talking to people you lead like that.

545 He then kicks the demon out and they talk about it afterwards. So they're released to do,
546 they can't, and then they talk about it after: "Here's how you do it."

547 And so what we see generally with Jesus is this pattern in His leading where they're
548 outward-focused together. It starts with them, but it doesn't stay with them. They are
549 outward-focused together, and He is teaching them, as they do "ministry." I know we
550 don't use that word a ton, but as they are doing "ministry" together, side by side.

551 I think most of us fall into a trap without thinking about it. Those of you that are more
552 evangelism, gifting types are probably immune from this. But the rest of us are tempted
553 to fall into a pattern where our leading is primarily face-to-face. It's one-on-one. And
554 leading does start there, and occasionally has to circle back there. But what I mean by one
555 on one is, "Hey, you want to go grab coffee? Let's talk about your life."

556 "Hey, do you want to come over for dinner? How are you guys doing?" And we make
557 each other the end goal of the leadership game.

558 42:00

559 But us, as each other, are not the end goal of the leadership game. We ought to love each
560 other. We ought to confess our sins to one another. We ought to help each other grow.
561 We ought to speak into each other's life. Jesus circles back to address something in Peter.
562 We'll see Him leading the disciples in individual things here in a moment as our last
563 kind of thing before we wrap up. But Jesus's common practice in leading was: an awful
564 lot of light touch with shoulder-to-shoulder.

565 There's kind of face-to-face leading, and there's shoulder-to-shoulder leading. If I had to
566 guess, most of our leading is face-to-face with the person that we lead as the end goal, the
567 destination.

568 What I have realized happens a lot, whenever there's a potential leader or an equivalent in
569 a small group, and I say, "Hey, who are you spending most of your time with, in a

570 group?" Do you know what they say? "You guys." Well, not "you" guys, "our leaders."
571 But you get the deal. If I were to kind of, who's the person you're most excited about in a
572 group that you think is, I don't know, kind of functioning the most healthy and mature as
573 a disciple? And you thought right now, okay, who are they spending most of their time
574 with? I'll bet the answer is you.

575 Now, how is that time being spent? My guess is it's one-to-one. It's face-to-face. And yet
576 what Jesus did was, "Hey, let's come shoulder to shoulder and tag team this together."

577 And the progression was, typically: Jesus does, they watch. Then: they do it together.
578 Then: they do; Jesus watches. And then: He sends them out.

579 And that is a leadership progression. That's how we develop people in their gifts and in
580 their abilities.

581 If we don't do this, we end up with people where a group leader will say, "Man, I think
582 this guy, I think he could lead a group anytime soon."

583 Like, "Yeah, he only spends time with you. He's not leading everybody. Well, what did
584 you do to prepare him to lead?"

585 "Well, he's led a discussion every now and then," — and you should clear that with your
586 DC pastor first. But we think preparing somebody to lead is getting them prepping
587 discussions, and yet they're not leading anybody in group.

588 So what do you got to do? You've got to get people accountable for people in the group.

589 Well, now that whole "only spending time with two or three people" thing makes a little
590 bit more sense, because if those two or three people spend time with two or three people,
591 then everybody's covered.

592 44:00

593 See, there's this kind of... you're leading together alongside, equipping people how to do
594 it in this apprentice-style leadership, this kind of side shoulder-to-shoulder kind of thing.
595 We do it with most areas, not all, but most.

596 Teaching people how to pray. In year two, I had to lead two small groups on top of a
597 church. And that was actually the most exciting thing that I like. Tytus was starting to
598 come around. He played tennis at a college in town, a liberal arts school, D3. I couldn't
599 get him into a normal small group for the life of me, and there were one or two other guys
600 that were also athletes at this D3 school.

601 I couldn't get him in a small group but I found out that they would get together Monday
602 night at 10 o'clock in the basement of a chapel at a very liberal, liberal arts college. I don't
603 know how they even had a chapel. I don't know how the thing hadn't been turned into a
604 gym or something.

605 But anyway, so I actually hijacked, and I said, “Man, if you guys ever wanted to not have
606 to prep anything, and just have somebody...” — I didn't think they were prepping
607 anything. So, anyway, the guy Matt, who was my original in, he ended up transferring to
608 the Navy before anything materialized. But he was my original in that I was most
609 connected with, and I hijacked this small group.

610 The very first night I show up and I heard from Matt, “Yeah, there's this guy, Tytus. He's
611 got a really good voice. He brings his guitar, we do some worship.” And I thought, “Oh,
612 great, an 18-year-old guy with a guitar. This is going to be miserable.” And it was. It was
613 every bit of it.

614 I could play guitar better than him at the time. He's got a beautiful voice. To lead
615 worship, he has to sing multiple octaves lower than what's natural; there, he was singing
616 probably higher than what was natural. If you think Chris Tomlin got a high voice, like,
617 whoa, buddy, he was up there.

618 In between songs, he would tell people what the next song was. They would all Google it
619 on their phones, and then kind of pull it back up. Terribly, terribly awkward.

620 46:00

621 So talk about seeing a guy — but after that, I went to Will Miller, a non-staff overseer
622 who was leading worship, and I said, “Will, I think we found our next worship leader.”

623 “Now, here's where things are at, so this might be a years-out kind of thing.”

624 So, talking about seeing people in the raw, the big thing I noticed, by the way, was the
625 tender heart and the sense of God's presence on him, even super raw. But anyway, so I
626 hijacked a small group, and they're doing it kind of more like a... they would just actually
627 take turns reading. They'd pick a chapter of the Bible, and they'd just take turns reading,
628 like by paragraph or verse, or something like that. And so I'm trying to do it the way that
629 we do it. And it took some steering it there. The week two, I moved it to my house, I was
630 like, “Guys, what do you think about kind of just saving me the drive, and I'll get food
631 and snacks for you?” And so they end up starting to come to my house.

632

633 But anyway, so I'd leave my small group from seven to nine and then I'd leave and go
634 there from ten to midnight or 9:30 to 11:30, something like that, and lead a second small
635 group, and that was life planting. Not anymore.

636 But, anyway, teaching them to pray. Nobody knew how to pray. How do you do that?
637 How do you get that functioning in a way that works and that's healthy? We got there in
638 about two weeks. If any of you guys feel like, man, I don't like the prayer ministry culture
639 in my small group, here's what we did.

640 At first, I noticed that what they wanted to do is the kind of circle-up sort of thing, and
641 you put your hand on each other's lower back, and it's terribly uncomfortable. And there's
642 always like the one weird person that wants to like massage. Let's stop that, you know?

643 And, anyway, so that was how they naturally wanted to do it. I was like, "Okay, hey,
644 guys, let's do this real quick." We had a topic. I was like, "Ok, let's go ahead and pray
645 for..." — it might have even been you — anyway, I picked the person we were going to
646 pray for, and all five of us kind of huddled around, and I just let them pray first, and I
647 waited. And then I prayed. And then — I think it might have been Tytus — because tears
648 started to come.

649 48:00

650 We had a little sense of God's presence, a little gentle sense of God's presence. And they
651 all had their eyes open. They were praying real churchy. It's all they knew. A couple of
652 them weren't even Christians.

653 And I interrupted, and I said, "So I know all you guys have your eyes closed right now.
654 But why don't you open them real quick, don't be creepy about it. But do you notice? Can
655 you notice something happening to him spiritually? Okay, that's God, moving. And the
656 temptation can be to overlook that and just keep talking. What you got to do when you
657 see God moving is to say, okay, that's something God's doing, we got to pray on that
658 longer. So, guys, let's stay on that. And let's pray longer."

659 Sometimes we see people going off on all kinds of tangents and we just feel internally
660 frustrated, just interrupt the moment. Peter did, right? Biblical precedent for it, right?

661 But anyway, just interrupt the moment, coach them, talk them through it. I was talking to
662 one of you, guys, trainer, right? You do that all the time in teaching people a motion,
663 right? Interrupt what's happening and coach them and talk to them how to do it, and then
664 afterwards, "Hey, what was that like? Did you guys notice that?" And you do that.

665 And then we prayed for the one, I said, “Okay, let's keep praying for this one guy, but,
666 okay, I think that God's doing something in you. Can a couple of you guys go pray for...”
667 — the other one might have been Skyler. He’s leading a — we got two group leaders,
668 one of them is a worship leader, out of it. So, it was a good small group.

669 But it started out with: nobody knew how to pray. And then a couple of weeks, the whole
670 group knew how to pray, except for the one or two that weren't Christians. That's a little
671 bit of a harder challenge. You just got to make Christians first.

672 With evangelism. This, too. Mallory is fantastic about, when she’s out at parks in town
673 — half a year ago when it was nice enough to — when she's out at parks in town, inviting
674 people to church, telling people about Jesus, those kinds of things. And she'll initially
675 start with another woman in the church, “Hey, do you want to take our kids out to the
676 park?”

677 But the face-to-face isn't the end-all-be-all.

678 It's not, “ignore all of the non-Christians and just tell me all of your problems.” It’s “hey
679 let’s go make some stinking disciples together,” right? And so she'll actually just kind of
680 like stop in an interaction sometimes, with someone from our church to talk to a mom
681 that's there.

682 50:00

683 And as they're doing it, that person is watching what it looks like to do evangelism. So is
684 she ignoring that person, or is she leading that person? She's leading that person. By
685 doing evangelism, and ignoring the person from our church for a moment, she's teaching
686 that person evangelism.

687 And this has happened a number of times.

688 There's a mom’s playgroup that had lots of other moms that had met in parks, not
689 Christians, that were starting to come. Through the winter, it's mostly just been
690 homeschooled people, so I told her to kill it a couple of weeks ago. So, she'll have to do
691 an underground one that she'll start up here in a couple of weeks again. But when you just
692 make kind of face-to-face the end-all-be-all, that is a form of leading, but it's not the end-
693 all-be-all. There is a shoulder-to-shoulder, outward focus together, teaching people as
694 they observe from you with how to lead.

695

696 You can't just throw somebody into the water and assume they're going to learn how to
697 swim. People have to watch you lead.

698 I've had people sit in on meetings. Actually, with Isaac and Sam, I met with both of them
699 at the same time just trying to get efficient from a time standpoint, they both lead a small
700 group in my Tuesday DC, and so I lead Isaac with Sam there, sitting and watching, and I
701 lead Sam with Isaac sitting there watching, helping them on their discussions. And they're
702 learning a couple of things: the leadership things I'm talking about on the small group,
703 but also, if they're paying attention, to how to actually lead and speak into something.

704 I've done that with Seamus, as a pastor. "Why don't you sit in on this meeting that I'm
705 having?" Sometimes it doesn't work out and it's not the easiest, but at times that you can
706 do that, man, it's helpful for someone to get to watch.

707 How do you pray through somebody's past? Man, that's a hard one to do. How many of
708 you guys would say you feel comfortable praying through someone's past? After
709 Freedom, "Hey, can I do the follow-up? Let's pray it all through."

710 Right? That's a hard one to just "here's how to do it." You know what's helpful? Coming
711 alongside.

712 52:00

713 With that sometimes you run into some demons. Will Miller, one of our — didn't have
714 something kicked out of him although a third of our group leaders at this point have at
715 some point in the last number of years. Will Miller, he'd been around Vine longer than
716 me. He actually was a group leader to my roommate as a new Christian. My roommate
717 was in his small group.

718 Some of you guys know Will, but he'd never really run into much with demonic
719 oppression. There was one of our leaders who was getting into a bit of a tough spot. I
720 could feel stuff knotting up in him, and I was kind of poking trying to get an in, and I felt
721 like I knew where it came from in his past, stuff from growing up. And anyway, he
722 finally got a willingness to talk and work it through. And I said, "What would you think
723 about me actually having Will join in as we do that? Would that be okay?" as we prayed
724 through. And he was kind of, "Yeah, sure. That's fine. That's okay."

725 As we do, and we start praying through and working through his past and some really
726 painful moments that caused distrust. I mean, he had a stepdad — dad wasn't in his life
727 — he had a stepdad literally punch him in the face in a fight over his mom. He walked
728 out of there saying, "I'm never going to trust another man in my life."

729 Do you think that plays out into health and adulthood? As we're praying through that and
730 a couple of other moments, I think another time he got kicked down a flight of stairs by
731 his stepdad. Just painful stuff.

732 We start praying through that stuff and we run into a demon.

733 Do you know who's there to learn how to kick it out? Will Miller.

734 Will, he'd been around Vine for a dozen years, never kicked anything out. Now since
735 then, he's probably kicked out four or five.

736 Right? You kind of learn: apprentice-style, shoulder-to-shoulder, doing stuff together.

737 Similarly, with helping people develop gifts, it's a really big deal. Gifts of prophecy,
738 mercy, serving. Sometimes it's a kind of "send them out, teach them how to think about
739 it, and they come back." We're responsible for developing people's gifts.

740 54:00

741 I think sometimes people just get festering on all the issues or sores or things that feel
742 hard or "I hate my job," but really they need to learn how to use their gifts and abilities,
743 and find some purpose.

744 And it's not just leaders that we're to develop, what about a serving gift? People don't
745 know what to do with that sometimes. "Hey, man, so and so is really in a hard spot, could
746 you shovel their driveway?" You guys have to do that all the time, right? Shovel
747 driveways? Things like that.

748 Or mercy gifting? Man, you got to give some leadership attention to a mercy gifting
749 because a mercy gifting without a leader's discernment to help, they'll run themselves in
750 the ground, they'll be exhausted. I mean, they'll just hear all the world's problems, and
751 they'll just feel like — you got to come alongside of mercy gifting and help.

752 Man, you start developing people's gifts and releasing them and sending them out, and
753 you check in, "Hey, how'd it go?"

754 You take a core member that's not leading anybody right now, a potential leader that you
755 wonder about, that you've been developing them in a group discussion, but they're not
756 discipling anybody. And you say, "Hey, why don't you spend time with so and so. Here's
757 something I've noticed with him," or even better to say, "Is there anything that you
758 notice? What do you wonder is a next step for them? What do you suspect God might be
759 doing?" And then you pepper in what you see.

760 “Why don’t you go spend time with them and see if you can get there. If it doesn't work,
761 don't force it. Don't kick the door down. Let's see if you can get there.”

762 They come back, “Hey, how’d it go?” Usually, they kind of opened it, and they
763 chickened out. They got stuck, but you talk them through it, right?

764 See, it's this apprentice style: it's developing people's gifts, sending them out to go to do
765 the stuff, they come back, and you talk about how it goes. When it doesn't go well you
766 say, "How long do I have to be with you, faithless..." Don't do that. In most cases, it's
767 incredibly gracious and incredibly tactful. But here, this is kind of a model and a pattern
768 of leadership that we see.

769 A little quick on the last one to make sure we have plenty of time for prayer. And I know
770 you guys want to get to your bonfire at 9:30. We got nine o'clock right now?

771 The last thing that I really have to point us to is, kind of, then, the face-to-face, how do
772 you think about face-to-face?

773 56:00

774 And so, 30 through 37. It says, “They went on from there and they pass through Galilee.
775 He did not want anyone to know for He was teaching His disciples and saying to them,
776 ‘The Son of Man is going to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill Him.
777 And when He's killed, after three days, He will rise,’ but they didn't understand the
778 saying and were afraid to ask Him.”

779 So here, Jesus is doing something where He knows what's ahead, and He's trying to
780 prepare them for it.

781 And what he's talking about is the cross. He's trying to prepare them for a reality where
782 they aren't just in His small group, right? He's trying to prepare them for them being on
783 their own going through the horrors of watching Him die.

784 There are multiple other passages where we see Jesus preparing the disciples in this kind
785 of way. He prepares Peter by going even further to say Satan demanded to have you, that
786 he could sift you like wheat, but I've prayed that your faith wouldn't fail. He's seen what's
787 ahead. He's anticipating the outcomes ahead. And He's trying to prepare them for that. I
788 would label that proactive leadership.

789

790 It is a leader initiated: here's what's ahead, here's a person's next step, here are the pitfalls
791 ahead. Here's what concerns me about your dating relationship. Here's how I think God's
792 made you to be and what it's going to look like to get that proactive leadership. The
793 leader sees and identifies what's in the future and prepares and equips a person for that.

794 Reactive leadership would be the opposite. We see that in verse 33, it says, 'They came
795 to Capernaum, and when He was in the house, He asked them, 'What were you
796 discussing on the way?' But they kept silent, for on the way they argued with one another
797 about who was the greatest. And He sat down, and He called the twelve, and He said to
798 them, 'If anyone would be first, he must be last of all, and servant of all.' And he took a
799 child and put them in the midst of them. And taking him in his arms, He said to them,
800 'Whoever receives one such child in my name receives me. And whoever receives me
801 receives not me, but Him who sent me.'"

802 58:00

803 And so, here, this is a problem dumped on His lap. When you do relational discipleship,
804 and you're spending time together, you're going to notice things in people that you lead.
805 Have you noticed things in people that you lead? Sometimes you can feel frustrated, it
806 makes you want to recoil. But you're going to see things in people you lead.

807 And so, some things get dumped on your lap. Here, Jesus overhears them arguing. He's
808 got to deal with it, right? So He reacts.

809 It's like parenting, you see your siblings or your children fight, my two and four-year-old,
810 they fight aplenty. You have to deal with it. You might kind of let it go to a certain point,
811 but if it crosses the line, you got to jump in, you got to intervene.

812 With reactive leadership and proactive leadership, one is, here it is right in front of you,
813 staring at you. A married couple is fighting, "Hey, we're fighting like crazy. Need help."
814 "Hey, I have been struggling with sin, can you help?" That's reactive leadership. It's right
815 there staring you in the face.

816 Proactive would be the opposite. And that is: the leader sees it, the person themselves
817 can't see it. Developing their gifts, protecting them from pitfalls, all those kinds of things.
818 Between those two, we see Jesus do both, back to back.

819 Which do you think we do more? Yeah. Big time, right? Big time.

820 And the truth is, there are a number of things that play into that. One, I remember Sándor
821 saying forever ago — those of you guys who know Sándor, lead pastor at Vine, formerly,
822 because now he's in Texas, too. But anyway, I remember him saying, "Proximity blinds

823 discernment.” Like if you ever go to someone's house, and they got a real nasty dog, it
824 smells terrible, and can't see out of one eye, and smells like a dog, right?

825 They all just love it and think it's awesome. And you're, like, grossed out by the thing?
826 What's the difference? They're really close, and they can't see it anymore.

827 So that's one thing we've got working against us that makes proactive leadership difficult.

828 60:00

829 The good thing about how we do church is, you guys aren't hung out to dry or on your
830 own. Those of you guys that lead groups, if you're working with your DC pastor, to think
831 about what's next in the people that you lead, that'll help a lot. DC pastors, you've got
832 more of a bird's eye, and this is part of what you are accountable for in helping leaders, is
833 to kind of think through, what are the next things for people. And as I say that, Sam and
834 Isaac, be gracious with me, but I'm accountable to helping them think, "What's this
835 person need next? What are the pitfalls? What are the things that are there?"

836 Reactive leadership. A couple of observations from Him doing it, real quick: How long
837 do you think He noticed this? They'd been arguing the whole way. He didn't interrupt
838 them right away. You know, “bad boy.” There, he heard the whole way. How long was
839 the walk? I don't know. You could look it up if it interests you.

840 Do you think it was the first time He'd ever seen it? Probably not. He knew what was in
841 the heart of men. There are two errors: one is passivity where you see it and don't deal
842 with it, the other is to just pick at everything.

843 Does He disqualify them? Kick them out of his small group, they're not usable, “sorry,
844 you're demoted.” Next time there's transfiguration, “sorry, you guys, I'm picking a
845 different combo?” Oddly, it doesn't even make them not be usable. It's kind of helpful for
846 ways that we ourselves are in process, is it not? That God uses messy people. That was
847 actually my Christmas series: “God uses messy people.” And I was shocked at how
848 limitless the options were for teaching topics. It could have been a 20-week series. He
849 also, in addressing it, doesn't make them say, “uncle,” in the moment. He teaches them
850 what's right and He lets them chew on it.

851 I think earlier on in leading, I was more kind of: bulldog, pin you down, you got to
852 confess, repent, whatever it is right here on the spot. That's not always, necessarily, but
853 sometimes probably.

854 62:00

855 But here, He doesn't even make him say uncle, in the moment. He teaches them what's
856 right, and then He lets them chew on it. I think we would do well to do this because
857 there's the work that the Holy Spirit does to do some of the leading.

858 Sometimes we feel like it's all on us. And we got to get it all the way from A to B.
859 There's work that the Holy Spirit does. Sometimes it's, "Hey, you might consider." "Hey,
860 can I just explain to you how I might think of that? You can land wherever you land, it
861 really is okay. But can I kind of just share some thoughts on what I think the Bible might
862 imply on that? You know, the subjective stuff, that's grey?" And then, you say it, and
863 then just let it sit and you see where they land.

864 It's remarkable how often people really do land in the right spot.

865 And if they don't, you got to be okay with it. But he doesn't make him say, "uncle," in
866 the moment. He teaches them what's right and they keep going.

867 With proactive leadership, it's speaking into, anticipating the things that are in advance.
868 There are going to be things where you really, as a leader, just have to believe it's your
869 right and responsibility to speak into.

870 Some things get dropped into your lap; those are easier. Some things you have to speak
871 up and say. To equip and to warn. It's true of things possible down the road, you have to
872 be able to anticipate outcomes.

873 For me, I think about it like this, "What would this look like played out over time? What's
874 this look like played out over time?"

875 Right now, we've got a shocking amount of homeschool folks coming around that are
876 new. I'll let Tony sift through if, for any of you guys, that's kind of a hang-up point.
877 We don't have a stake in the ground per se on that, but it is often indicative of a
878 withdrawing from culture. And the kind of church that God's called us to be, we don't
879 think is more Puritan-like, it's kind of more Missionary-like, where we really are called to
880 engage with culture and raise kids that know how to... I mean, you see... who are some
881 of the most influential people in the Bible in terms of...?

882 64:00

883 Daniel? Look at that guy; raised in Babylon. Moses? Raised in Pharaoh's house.

884 I mean, those are the guys that know how to influence. How? They were raised in it.

885

886 And, so I've got to think, "Okay, I can either wait until someone says, 'Hey, what do you
887 think about schooling?'" Or I can say, "What's this look like played out over time, if I
888 don't find tactful ways to speak into, address? We will end up becoming a church that I
889 don't even want to lead. We'll get kind of stiff and religious-y.

890 Pitfalls in people as well: Dating, marriage, those kinds of things.

891 I mean, shoot, even, my four-year-old, we have to proactively lead him every week
892 before soccer at 9:50 because I know his pitfalls. He talks too much. He's a people
893 person, he's used to being around Christians that just love and want to talk. And the other
894 kids on his team and his coach, don't really care to talk.

895 I got to warn him in his emotions because he's an older sibling, and he's very competitive.
896 And he had a meltdown last week when he wasn't the one that scored the goal. And the
897 first time they actually had a three versus three-goal scoring kind of thing. I have to
898 proactively lead him every week before soccer on how to not blow a lid emotionally.

899 We have to proactively lead the people that we lead. For Tytus and Jess — now married
900 in November, Saturday, before a team meeting and 3 DCs, no big deal — I talked with
901 them about, even in the early dating stage, here's where I think your pitfalls are, her
902 pitfalls are, and where they will intersect, and how to navigate it. We don't do formal
903 premarital counseling before they're married, but we talked about that. And you still run
904 right into it anyway, right?

905 But think about it.

906 Next steps with people: we got to think what's next, what God's made them to be.

907 A story and then we'll wrap up.

908 66:00

909 There's a guy that just started leading a group a few months ago. He's got a couple of
910 years on me, mid-upper 30s, and he's a Stryker engineer, a really, really, sharp guy. I
911 wonder someday if he might end up on our board or something like that. He just started
912 leading a small group, but it's taken some getting there. He moved from San Francisco
913 area a number of years ago. Kind of one foot in, one foot out for a while, man, am I even
914 really going to make it? Kind of, "Man, okay, I get it. I love the community, the
915 relationships, I feel God's presence," — worship wasn't his thing — but, "like the
916 teaching." He felt like he could relate to me and a couple of our leaders.

917 He ended up sticking but he was just kind of a bump on a log. Like worship, like nothing
918 happening there. Is the guy a Christian? Hands-on prayer not his thing.

919 Money, big on investments, Dave Ramsey, all that kind of stuff.

920 And so, I can look at it and identify, here's a couple of things that I think this guy's going
921 to... it's kind of what's the all-in-for-Jesus version of this guy look like? Man, if this guy
922 was cleaned up, what's he look like?

923 Well, right now he looks like not even want to take a break off from small group around
924 Christmas and New Year's and being bummed that we're doing member Bible training for
925 the first time because he's all in on Jesus. But that wasn't what it was a year or two ago.

926 It was... We had our building offering, the church end up giving half a million dollars for
927 us to get into the building that we now are in. During that, I knew that he was a big
928 investments, really smart with money, Dave Ramsey — and there are some good things
929 about Dave Ramsey, but tithing is an afterthought and sacrificial generosity is not in there
930 at all. And so the kind of inversion there is pretty tipped.

931 And so during that, I thought, okay, this is an in. And so, I just would say, “Hey, what do
932 you think about some of the stuff we're talking about?” And just, no point in coming in
933 headstrong if the person will go to first base on their own anyway, then you can meet
934 them there and take him to the second. And so, let them do some of the work if they will.
935 Anyway, we got together. Actually, it was at Jungle Joe's, this big inflatable bounce
936 house kind of place in Kalamazoo. You grew up there. [inaudible] Jungle Joe's there back
937 in the day?

938 68:00

939 **Woman:**

940 Yup.

941 **Nick Sellers:**

942 There you go. All right. And so, their kids are similarly aged, running around all the
943 inflatables, all that kind of stuff. And I'm asking, we're talking about the Bible and
944 money. “Oh, shoot, wait, where's...” trying to keep up with our kids. But right there, I'm
945 moving him from A to B with the intention on the topic of money. And we got together
946 another time for lunch during that month of leading the church in it. He said that, from
947 kind of the start of that series to the end, he went from, “yeah, I'll give a couple of
948 thousand dollars” to being one of our biggest givers in that.

949 And it wasn't just the amount of it, it was the heart shift that happened in it, God really
950 did use that to rip his heart out of love for the world.

951 And I would talk to him, like, "The thing about investing is, yeah, you multiply your
952 investments, you have more money in this life. But the thing that God does with money is
953 he multiplies it and makes disciples who make disciples, and you can take something
954 that's perishable, and can literally be burned with fire, and turn it into something eternal.
955 That's why we give."

956 I didn't make him say uncle, I didn't pin him down, just let it work. He said his number
957 that he felt in prayer from the start to the end multiplied by 10 from start to finish. And
958 the heart surgery that was done during that process was probably about that.

959 Okay. So we got some progress on money.

960 Worship? the guy's still dead.

961 Prayer? Ugh.

962 Is he a leader? I don't know. I mean, he's got leader gifting but, man, how do you have a
963 leader that didn't worship or pray for people? How does that work, right?

964 Well, we ended up having a series on worship — and you know how I said earlier that
965 kind of power of two to five-minute interactions? We've got two double doors where you
966 enter our building, and I remember one of the conversations on worship was a two-to-
967 three-minute conversation, literally right there. As people were walking by, I kind of
968 turned my head, while talking to him and, "Hey, how're you doing? How're you doing?"
969 And I'm talking to him about, "Hey, how's the worship series going for you?"

970 70:00

971 If you don't know how to lead people sometimes, just assume your pastor does, and just
972 ask them about what they thought about the most about the recent Sunday teaching ,or
973 what they are reading in their Bible. Just come alongside that. You don't have to always
974 know it or see it.

975 But, anyway, we're talking right there and he's like, "Yeah, you know, you really got me
976 whenever you said, 'with sports, at a football game, you watch a bunch of grown men
977 just hooting and hollering and cheering' and I, yeah, I can't wiggle out of that."

978 So, I said, "So, what are you going to do about it?" He said, "Well, guess I got to try."
979 The next week, I asked him, "So, how'd it go?" He said, "Man, I felt so stupid at first.

980 But then, like, I felt my heart open up.” Now, he’s one of the first people that has his
981 hands up sometimes. He’s great.

982 Hands-on prayer? It took a little bit.

983 It took him experiencing God first, then it’s, “Okay, come alongside and pray with. Why
984 don’t you join me in praying for so and so.” I visited the group that he was in at the time,
985 and, “Hey, why don’t you pray for so and so with me?”

986 “What do you think about that guy?” — You know, Chloe’s daughter? Her husband,
987 Dale? That guy was the bump on the log. Mark’s growing, and now he’s the bump on the
988 log. And so I’m trying to get Mark, because he’s growing, to get the new bump on the log
989 to not be a bump on the log.

990 I work apprentice-style, shoulder-to-shoulder, I want to focus together, making disciples,
991 not just telling about your feelings and your job. And — although I love your feelings
992 and your job.

993 But anyway, I said, “Hey, Hands-on Prayer Clinic is coming up.” — Learning to Pray for
994 Others, whatever we call it. “Why don’t you make it your aim to get Dale there? Can you
995 get him there?” And he ends up not being able to, he’s like, “Yeah, he wouldn’t respond
996 to my text,” and I’m like, “Yeah, he does that to me all the time, too. It doesn’t mean he
997 hates you.”

998 We’re talking about how it’s going. So, then I asked, “Are you still going to go to
999 Learning to Pray for Others?” He’s like, “Yeah, I’m going to go.” Well, I had to lead a
1000 group leader meeting while Seamus was leading that because we had a calendar fail. It
1001 was kind of funky. We do our group leader meetings after Sunday service.

1002 And so, real quick before I’m running over to lead my group leader meeting — again,
1003 impact a couple of intentional minutes — I said, “Hey, do you know that guy over
1004 there?” There’s another bump on the log, right. Another engineer.

1005 72:00

1006 He was like, “Yeah, I’ve met him before.”

1007 “Why don’t you go sit with him and see if you can pray for him after?”

1008 Well, I go off to the leader meeting, end up at the end, I come back over, and the guy,
1009 Ryan, was actually praying for Mark. I was like, “What the heck just happened there?” I

1010 checked on Mark after, he was like, “Well, I prayed for him, and then he did the
1011 obligatory like, can I pray for you about anything, too?”

1012 And that's what happened after but like, “How'd it go praying for him?”

1013 So you look at money, worship, hands-on prayer, the things that this guy has to grow and
1014 to be what God has made him to be. What's this guy look like if he's all in for Jesus?
1015 What's this guy look like if he's cleaned up? We got to get his money right, we got to get
1016 his heart right, we got to get his worship right, he's got to learn how to pray for people.

1017 Now he knows how to do all those things and he was bummed that the Membership Bible
1018 Training started. There's nothing else he wants to do. He wants to make disciples. He
1019 didn't want to take a week off around Christmas or New Year's. Everybody in the church
1020 got sick between Christmas and New Year, so they ended up taking a week off. But, man,
1021 he's all in, he loves Jesus.

1022 Asked me during the Member Bible Training if it was okay if they went on vacation for a
1023 week and missed one of the sessions. It's like, “We're thinking of going to Hawaii and if
1024 it was okay to miss one,” I was like, “Mark, I told everybody they can miss two. I want
1025 you to. Go miss two, go to Hawaii for two weeks. Man,” but like, the heart to even ask,
1026 said something.

1027 What happened?

1028 Intentional, proactive leadershi. Experiencing the Holy Spirit. Apprentice-style
1029 leadership. Shoulder-to-shoulder, outward focused together. Yeah, some kind of deep-
1030 touch moments, but also a whole bunch of intentional light touch. If we could, kind of,
1031 lead and think in this way, people grow.

1032 And not just they sin less; they know how to make disciples too. And you mobilize a
1033 church like this. You get you guys doing this, and your core doing this. Walking this out
1034 together, the pastors coming alongside and tag-teaming and helping the group leaders,
1035 you get a different church. You get a different church.

1036 So, do you guys want to pray, see what God'll do? You guys need a bathroom break?

1037 [end]