



# RESTORING LEAD

**MORE OFTEN THAN NOT**, the soul is the most neglected part of a leader's life. This is surprising for those charged with spiritual leadership in local church and parachurch ministry settings. Yet we know it is true, because if we're honest, it's most likely our personal reality too.

Consider your daily grind. Routines, relationships, and responsibilities pull us toward a myriad of diverse tasks from dawn to dusk: marriage and family life, church and community service, the workplace of ministry, with countless and relentless expectations. Add to those personal interests and self-care, leisure and technology, and you get the picture of a full-to-overflowing life.

Is the trajectory of your life moving toward a more spacious,

Spirit-filled, reflective way of being? Or is it increasingly harried, stressful, and endlessly fast-paced? We seem to quickly justify all of this activity as important—but is it really what God intends for us?

If our souls are grossly ignored, the inevitable conclusion is that God is ignored. We are called to a life of service to the Lord yet it is easy to neglect meeting with him on a regular basis. We simply don't have much time for Almighty God. Sounds a bit arrogant, but it's hard to dispute this given the reality of our daily calendars. God is tapping on the shoulder of our hearts 24/7 and we're brushing him off, avoiding his initiatives, or simply too busy to notice his presence.



# ERS' SOULS

Your spiritual needs must be a priority.

By Stephen A. Macchia

Our ministry offices look and sound a lot like a secular business or corporate boardroom. We engage with others in our context, often without consideration of God's intentions, invitations, and inclinations. We have become a lot like the world of leaders in our culture today, and far too few are actively seeking an alternative.

## **SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP**

So what does it mean to be a spiritual leader? We read and talk extensively about leadership. We learn from those who are experts in the marketplace. We attend conferences where it is the thematic focus. We compare, contrast, and compete with one another for time, talent, and treasure. But where are we conversing together

about why the word "spiritual" belongs in front of the word "leadership"? Is that a perfunctory preface or a meaningful descriptor of our leadership as Christians?

If we are to lean into restoring our souls, it begins with our yearnings and motivations as spiritual leaders. When we know who we are and whose we are, we will long for growth in our souls first, in our service second. Or, as we say it in our ministry, "Out of the depth of our souls we experience vitality in our service to others."

Soul first, service second; spiritual first, leadership second. Is that your priority order? If not, then it's time we consider afresh the great needs of the soul and pursue our desire to become a leader fully receptive to the life God invites us to live, filled-up and

overflowing with a heart for God. Spiritual leaders take soul care seriously, knowing that they must care for their own soul first if they are going to be equipped to care for the souls of others. That is the essence of spiritual leadership.

And it's never too late to pursue a restored, satisfied, and healthy soul as spiritual leaders.

Jesus made it clear to the disciples: come close, draw near, and follow him. His messages, lifestyle, and ongoing invitations were toward intimacy with God as Father, Son, and Spirit. His model of servant, steward, and shepherding leadership was marked by a counter-intuitive perspective, a sharp contrast to the cultural and even the religious rulers of his day. His parables were all about abiding in kingdom priorities and not being swept up by the cares and concerns of this world.

In Luke 8, Jesus uses a powerful agricultural imagery to make his point clear. Often called the parable of the sower, I prefer describing it as the parable of the soul. Here we have all the ingredients of soul care wrapped up in one parable: the sower (God himself), sowing seed (his word), among the receptivity-challenged soils (vulnerable pathway, hardened rock, wandering thorns) as well as the good soil, "a noble and good heart, who hear the word, retain it, and by persevering produce a crop" (8:15). His point? Remain humbly open to the generosity of the sower, receive with joy the Living Word of God, and the fruit of your life will be evident.

## SOUL CARE STEPS

*Soul care begins with receptivity.* It commences with the leader, who in turn invites others into that lifestyle. Devoted to soul care and the priority of deepening intimacy with Christ, we may enter into the arenas of spiritual leadership marked by discernment, decision-making, implementation, and refinement of ministry to glorify God, build his kingdom, and renew his church!

Restoring the souls of leaders can and certainly does happen when we posture ourselves to be receptive to all the gifts God delights to deliver to his children.

### Silence and Solitude

Leaders need to find a place

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If you are interested in learning more about these spiritual leadership principles, practices, and priorities, Macchia will be leading an ITI and workshop at the upcoming 2011 Christian Leadership Alliance National Conference in Dallas, April 26-28 ([claconference.org](http://claconference.org)).



**Is the trajectory of your life moving toward a more spacious, Spirit-filled, reflective way of being?**

set apart for biblical reflection and prayer. Known as a "prayer closet," this is the distinct space where they go to meet with God alone. Here is the location and time set apart for holy leisure and Sabbath rest. It can be a spot that's used for other purposes, but when the leader devotes time to enter that space with Bible and journal in hand, it's for the distinct purpose of deepening intimacy with God.

In one's prayer closet, we come to receive from the Lord in three ways:

**1. In his Word:** We open the Scriptures with a desire to hold the sacred text, read it slowly and repeatedly, not too much content at a time, with an openness to a word or phrase that pops off the page and lands in our hearts. We ponder the Scriptures and consider God's invitation in that word or phrase for us that day or season of our lives.

**2. In Prayer:** We listen attentively to the voice of God as we quiet ourselves and prepare to hear God speak into our hearts

through what we've just meditated on and in our praise, confession, and petitioning prayers.

**3. In Love:** We are renewed by the sweetness of our companionship and the manifold blessings of God, who desires more than anything to lavish us with the richness of his love, grace, mercy, and peace. We join the psalmist (Psalm 103) in this regard by not forgetting God's benefits: He forgives, heals, redeems, crowns with love and compassion, satisfies desires, and is gracious, just, and abounds in love.

### Spiritual Community

Leaders must realize that the Christian walk is not to be lived alone. We need one another as members of the body of Christ. Without the influence of others who come alongside us to attend to our souls, we may miss out on all that God intends for us. In Christian ministry settings, we exercise our spiritual leadership by maintaining personal soul care in our prayer closets, as well as jointly experienced soul care with one another.

In and among our spiritual

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