

The Battle for the Kingdom

[The theme in this section is focused on the call placed on our lives to surrender our lives fully in service to the Lord, and the struggles we can face in that endeavor.]

In the sharpest possible distinction, the call to live for Christ is a call to give up all things in our earthly kingdom. God has asked us to lay aside those things that are not of his kingdom. German theologian Dietrich Bonhoeffer proclaimed it clearly: When Christ calls a man, he bids him come and die. So, if you have come to Christ, God has called you to step off the throne and come into his kingdom fully, completely and unreservedly.

Galatians 2:20, I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me.

Luke 9:23, And he said to all, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me.

When we are called to leadership, the temptation to two-kingdom living grows exponentially. Thus begins one of the greatest spiritual battles of our life. On one hand, the enemy works in us to shift our allegiance to anything but the lordship of Christ. On the other, the Holy Spirit works in us a transformation that empowers us to reject our personal kingdoms and live as one-kingdom people. This process of dismantling and disowning for the sake of trusting and obeying is at the heart of the effective steward leader. It occurs at all four levels, because the enemy wants us to seize control at all four levels. [As a reminder, these are the four relational levels that were broken and

have now been restored, God and man, man and himself, man and others people, man and creation.]

When a person puts everything under the one lordship of Jesus Christ he or she gives up that control. The call to one-kingdom living is a call to the daily exercise of dying to self and rising to righteousness, of taking up our cross and following him. It is affirming with Paul that "I no longer live, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20)

This great battle, as the internal work of transformation by the Holy Spirit, cannot be separated from our vocation and calling as leaders. The call to be steward leaders is a wholly transformative one. Our obedient submission to its transforming power determines the effectiveness of our work. Both the calling and the function of a steward leader are based on this transformation.

This work is our vocation as steward leaders, yet the very term vocation may be misleading. We most commonly use it to denote our efforts, the use of our skills and relying on our experience. In the tension of being and doing, the study of leadership is almost completely stacked on the doing side. Even when the character and values of the leader are taken seriously (in both secular and faith-based studies), they are most often valued only as they relate to and contribute to the "success" of the leader. That is, the measurable outcomes of leadership dictate the level of importance placed on the inward life of the leader.

I will use the term vocation in a different way, defining vocation for a steward leader as "obedient and joyful response." Throughout Scripture, God "called" leaders, asking only for their obedient response. *He called many ill-equipped, untrained, dysfunctional, poorly skilled men and women into leadership. He thrust them into impossible situations with stubborn and disobedient people and asked only that they be obedient and trusting.*

This is the posture of the one-kingdom steward leader. Such stewards understand that the relationships they enjoy at all four levels are gifts from God. Each was part of God's rich and wondrous intent for us at creation. Each was lost through our own sinfulness. And each has been restored to us through the blood of Christ. So expensive a gift as this now demands our faithful stewarding.

But that work is still not wholly ours, for it is the result of the ongoing work of transformation that the Spirit accomplishes in each of us who will respond obediently to our calling. If this is true for us as godly stewards, it is true for us in our work as leaders. Thus, the term "steward leader." Our vocation is a participation in the transforming work God is doing in us, and it is a process of letting that work transform us as leaders, the people we serve and the organizations we lead.

Becoming a steward leader does not require that you learn another set of techniques. There are no "Twelve Steps to Becoming an Effective Steward Leader." You cannot take a course in it, get a certificate for it, or read a book and apply it. It is a vocation that demands full obedience and wholehearted

response. However, precisely because it requires this and nothing more, it is a vocation of freedom. We are freed from the reliance on techniques or charm or charisma or leadership self-help programs. We are freed from both nature (being born to lead) and nurture (having to learn the skills as we go).

This is not to say that we do not apply all that God has given to us. It is also not to say that we do not learn and grow, read and acquire skills to help us be the best leaders we can. The fundamental understanding here is that, despite what we might bring to the job or learn on the job, we are called to a transforming, obedient response to the vocation of the steward leader.

- Why does having a position of leadership increase the temptation for 2-kingdom living?
- “This process of dismantling and disowning for the sake of trusting and obeying is at the heart of the effective steward leader.” In the context of the 4 restored relationships, what does this mean to you?
- I will use the term vocation in a different way, defining vocation for a steward leader as "obedient and joyful response."
- Being vs, Doing. Going back to one of the early lessons focuses on “Who” instead of “How”. How does this relate to total submission to Christ?
- The fundamental understanding here is that, despite what we might bring to the job or learn on the job, we are called to a transforming, obedient response to the vocation of the steward leader.