

The Steward Leader in the Presence of God Level One Transformation

When godly stewards are called to lead, they must seek to find that place where their work as stewards of their relationship to God intersects their call to lead. What they find is that this relationship comes under attack almost from the moment they assume their leadership role. The enemy works his deceptive ways in all of us, but Christian leaders are especially set up for the worst the enemy has to bring.

The reason is easy to see, when leaders fall, they take so much of the kingdom with them. They take the reputations of their ministry or church, they take the trust of their people, they take the loyalty of their supporters, they take their witness in their community, and they take the confidence of other leaders or those who may someday be called to lead. Any believer who has ever taken on a leadership role knows exactly what I mean.

The first place where this attack will be felt is in the battle for your relationship with God. In light of this battle I believe that the steward leader is given the gift of an extraordinary sense of intimacy with God and faces an extraordinary temptation to let that relationship stagnate.

The Gift of Intimacy

The gift God has for us as stewards of our relationship with him is the precious gift of intimacy. Hebrews calls us to "approach the throne of grace with confidence" (Hebrews 4:16). To the Romans, Paul wrote, "For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, 'Abba, Father'" (Romans 8:15).

We steward this gift through the disciplines of worship, prayer, fasting, meditation on God's Word, devotion, simplicity, solitude, submission, service, confession and celebration.

As we practice each, we act as stewards of this gift of intimate relationship with our Creator. Richard Foster reminds us that "the Classic disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths."

So, it should be in our life with God. Our transformation is a journey, and journeys are, by definition, movements. When you sit down, your journey is placed on hold. When you stop growing, your transformation stalls. When you ignore your guide and go your own way, your journey may turn into a nightmare. Jesus promised us, "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all truth" (John 16:13). As the Holy Spirit guides us into truth, along this journey of transformation, he always beckons us into deeper water.

Now, deeper water is almost always a scary place to journey. Deeper water means less control. Yet the Spirit calls us, beckons us and gently leads us out into deeper water than we have ever experienced. He calls us to trust, to cling even more tightly to him, to trust Him as Peter did when Jesus

called him out of the boat.

The rewards for going deeper are immeasurable, and God wants that for every one of us. He wants such a level of intimacy that we will walk out into deeper water with him.

The question for the steward leader is, what for you is the next deeper step? No matter where we are in our spiritual journey, no matter how seasoned, how spiritually mature, how biblically knowledgeable or how revered, there is for each of us a "next deeper step." Whatever it may be, it will require of us a new level of intimacy with our Savior. We can go deeper when we draw closer, hold tighter and trust more deeply in the one who calls us out beyond the waves.

Leaders who remain content to splash along in the ankle-deep waves are heading for trouble. And leaders who venture out into deeper water without their guide will surely drown. Where are you?

This image of the call to deeper water demonstrates again the magnificent gift of freedom that is ours in Christ. Intimacy with God requires a freedom of spirit that comes only as a gift from God. He not only has saved us, but also has equipped us to respond to him with an open heart, free to love and trust and obey. Our transformation is a journey to freedom.

As we are freed, we are able through God's power to journey to depths beyond our wildest dreams. Paul describes Christ as the one "who is able to do immeasurably more than all we ask or imagine, according to his power that is at work *within us*" (Ephesians 3:20).

Christ wants to do in you immeasurably more than you could even imagine. That means richer intimacy, greater freedom and deeper water.

There is a question that is logical to ask about this deeper water: "Is it safe out there?" **If** we are to go plunging into the deeper waters into which God is calling us, can we be sure the journey will be safe? The answer is an unequivocal no! Jesus does not promise us safety. In fact, he warns us that going deeper will cost us everything: "If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for me will save it" (Luke 9:23-24).

Going deeper means living even more completely the values of the kingdom of God, which place us in direct conflict with the values of this world. Going deeper means loving more, sacrificing more and standing even more firmly as our faith requires. All of these are not safe places to live, not at all.

The one who stands in deeper water and calls us to come to him does not promise us a calm and safe journey, *but he is good, he is the King!* And for that reason, we come.

In our journey of transformation, we are daily being freed for this work. It is only in freedom that we grow, that we journey out to the unknown and prepare for the exploits of life. When we set aside our desire for control, even in our relationship to God, we are set free to

walk out beyond our comfort level.

Intimacy is the foundation for this freedom. Do not let this gift become a burden or a duty. It is in our freedom that we joyfully respond to God's call to deeper intimacy. Our devotional time, our prayer life, our worship and our meditation on God's Word are free and joyous responses. And they are the foundation on which every steward leader must stand.

- ["the Classic disciplines of the spiritual life call us to move beyond surface living into the depths."](#) Are we faithful in this?
- [No matter where we are in our spiritual journey, no matter how seasoned, how spiritually mature, how biblically knowledgeable or how revered, there is for each of us a "next deeper step."](#)

Where are you?

- [He not only has saved us, but also has equipped us to respond to him with an open heart, free to love and trust and obey. Our transformation is a journey to freedom.](#) Is this idea different than other ideas about the Christian life or focus?
- [Going deeper means living even more completely the values of the kingdom of God, which place us in direct conflict with the values of this world.](#) We should expect challenges and conflict.