

*What If God Gave Up? A Call to Spiritual Leadership*  
F. Edwards | 4.12.26

On January 10, I looked down at my phone and this is what I see (show screenshot of text). There was no, let me think about it...oh thanks for asking, I gotta look at my calendar. This was my response (show screenshot). Later that day while I was milling around the house I prayed and I thanked God for allowing me to think about this at a deeper level. By Sunday, I was sitting next to Susan saying OMG! What have I gotten myself into. For a few days I asked Jesus...WHY! I contemplated not doing it...but GOD has a way.

If you're in a position of leadership, you likely know the struggle to maintain credibility, authenticity, and to have the trust of those around you. Even if you don't have that label the challenges still exist. I'd say that at some point, we all play the role of leader in somebody else's life. Maybe you lead a small group, or you teach kids; maybe you run the nursing floor at your hospital or you are a shift leader at a restaurant; maybe you are just trying to be a good influence in someone else's life. In all those places, you are leading others. But are you leading the way HE has called us to lead?

### **BEFORE WE JUMP IN...WOULD YOU PRAY WITH ME.**

Like any leader, you have schedules, Post It notes on the mirror, alarms...I put many of these things in place to stay on track with putting together this message. I don't really know what the moment was but what God laid on my heart is this "*What If God Gave Up? A Call to Spiritual Leadership*". And so the guiding scripture: Galatians 6:9 Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up".

My small group has been on a leadership journey with me since the pandemic. I went from being an interim dean to a founding dean...to a Deputy Chief to now an Associate Vice President. There have been times when imposter syndrome made me feel unworthy, sometimes unwelcomed and often unprepared. I would go into my office and read my scripture in the frame...cause y'all know all good Christians have a scripture in a frame, on a plaque, a piece of wood...something in their office! Proverbs 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction. And so I thought this scripture would have utility for me and my students at the time....who wants to be a fool at a university....we all are here seeking wisdom and instruction...and that included me. And so reading this day in and day out, did not reduce my fear...did not make the imposter syndrome go away...I began to think about

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what exactly I was doing with my life. If I was doing the work God had called me to do. Because that was my story...God called me to Higher Ed. But imagining not feeling like you're doing enough...solving enough problems...putting out enough fires? What if God felt like that?

What if God gave up? What if God said, "These people don't follow instructions, they don't stay in line, they don't stay focused—I'm done. I think we all know that if God had given up, we wouldn't be here. If God had given up, grace wouldn't be here. If God had given up, mercy wouldn't be here. And that's why Galatians 6:9 tells us, "Let us not grow weary in doing good, for in due season we shall reap, if we do not give up."

My own leadership journey started to change but it wasn't because of me. A coworker and friend shared this scripture with me...**Colossians 3:23** "Whatever you do, work at it with all your heart, as working for the Lord, not for human masters." Craig Groeschell shared a leadership message in 2021 and he said that people will follow a leader with a heart faster than a leader with a title. You see, spiritual leadership—real leadership—is not about titles, positions, or microphones. It's about perseverance. It's about character. It's about staying faithful when the assignment gets heavy. Jesus said in **Matthew 20:26**, "Whoever wants to be great must be a servant." You see God cared more for the people than the applause of the people. That means leadership is not about being in front—it's about being faithful.

Let's be honest: leadership is hard. Parents, you know leadership is hard. Teachers, you know leadership is hard. Any first responders or members who have served in the military...you know leadership is hard. Even if you're the 16 year old supervising the 10 year old...you know leadership is hard. Even leading yourself is hard. Some of us can't even lead ourselves to bed on time. But imagine if God led like we lead. If God gave up like we sometimes want to, we'd all be in trouble. Imagine if God led like our workplaces. You ever been in a meeting so long you started praying for the rapture? I've been there...in those moments you mentally check out...but God doesn't clock out. God doesn't resign. God doesn't say, "I'm tired of this team called humanity." Instead, God models spiritual leadership that stays, that endures, that keeps showing up. **Isaiah 40:28** says, "The Lord does not faint or grow weary." He keeps leading.

But here's where God really started working with us in our spiritual leadership journey: if God doesn't give up on *us*, why are we so quick to give up on *ourselves*? Especially when it comes to something like spiritual leadership. Why do we let fear talk louder than faith? Why do we let exhaustion speak louder than purpose? Why do we let insecurity drown out the very calling God placed inside of us? I had to sit with that. I had to sit with

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the reality that sometimes I don't show up the way God wants me to. I was showing up to work tired, overwhelmed, stretched thin, and then bringing that same energy into my home, my small group...and wondering, "Lord, why me?" And this is when God whispers back, "Because I trusted you with it." I trust you with the gift of being called to spiritual leadership.

And that's the thing...we're all called to be spiritual leaders. Our spiritual leadership doesn't come with the label of Pastor David or Pastor Emily... but nonetheless the call is there. And you know the reality is that God doesn't call the qualified; God qualifies the called into leadership. And sometimes the qualification process feels like breaking. Sometimes it feels like pruning. Sometimes it feels like being stretched in ways you didn't ask for. But the stretching is not punishment—it's preparation. It's God enlarging your capacity for the harvest He already has in mind. **Galatians 6:9 doesn't say *if* the harvest comes; it says *when* the harvest comes. "In due season we shall reap, *if* we do not give up."** That "if" is where the enemy fights us the hardest. That "if" is where doubt creeps in. That "if" is where the imposter syndrome tries to take root. And where we start believing the lie that we are not enough.

But hear me: **God has never asked you to be enough. God asked you to be faithful.**

And when I look back over my journey I can see now that every season where I felt unworthy, God was working. Every season where I felt unprepared, God was equipping. Every season where I felt unseen, God was positioning. And every season where I felt like giving up, God was carrying me. Because spiritual leadership is not about being the strongest in the room; it's about being the most surrendered.

And let me tell you something—God will let you get tired, but He will never let you quit. **Isaiah 40:31 says, "They that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength."** Not replace it—**renew** it. That means God will take your worn-out strength, your stretched-thin strength, your "I can't do this anymore" strength, and breathe on it until it becomes supernatural strength. Strength you didn't earn. Strength you didn't muster. Strength you didn't have yesterday. Strength that only comes from Him.

So when you feel like giving up—when the assignment feels too heavy, when the people feel too difficult, when the expectations feel too high—remember this: God has never given up on you. Not once. Not for a moment. Not even on your worst day. And if the God of the universe refuses to give up on you, then you have no business giving up on the calling He placed inside of you to grow disciples and be a spiritual leader.

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Because spiritual leadership is not about perfection—it’s about perseverance. It’s not about being fearless—it’s about being faithful. And it’s not about being strong—it’s about staying surrendered to the One who IS.

So as we begin looking at the role of leadership in our spiritual lives, it’s important to get some sense of spiritual leadership in the context of church. Spiritual leadership is simply leading from a biblical place of purpose, love, and inner conviction. It inspires people not through authority, but through hope, shared values, and a sense of meaning....to me that’s what CCC has been for me and my family for 20 years. And this congregation has been led by pastors who reflect Christ in both character and action. I love a good acronym so go with me as I take you through what I like to call the versus of a leader:

<p><b>L</b></p>	<p>stands for <b>Love</b>, because every leader begins by loving God and loving people, just as Jesus taught that the greatest commandment is to “love the Lord your God... and your neighbor as yourself” (Matthew 22:37–39)</p> <p><i>Jesus replied: “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.’This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself</i></p>
<p><b>E</b></p>	<p>is for <b>Example</b>, reminding us that leadership is not a title but a lifestyle, echoing Paul’s charge: “Follow me as I follow Christ” (1 Corinthians 11:1)</p> <p><i>Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ</i></p>
<p><b>A</b></p>	<p>represents <b>Accountability</b>, for Hebrews 13:17 teaches that leaders “keep watch over souls” and will give an account to God for how they lead.</p> <p><i>Have confidence in your leaders and submit to their authority, because they keep watch over you as those who must give an account. Do this so that their work will be a joy, not a burden, for that would be of no benefit to you.</i></p>
<p><b>D</b></p>	<p>stands for <b>Discernment</b>, because James 1:5 says <i>If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.</i> The word says that if we lack wisdom, we can ask God, who gives generously to all.</p>

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	<i>If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.</i>
<b>E</b>	is for <b>Endurance</b> . Galatians 6:9 says <i>Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up.</i> A strong enduring leader knows that in due season we will reap a harvest.
<b>R</b>	stands for <b>Reliance</b> on God, because Proverbs 3:5–6 calls us to trust in the Lord with all our heart and lean not on our own understanding.  <i>Trust in the LORD with all your heart and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways submit to him, and he will make your paths straight.</i>

Scripture can be a powerful tool in helping us to show up as leaders. When we accept Jesus' invitation to show up to lead, we get to do leadership **with** Him. We are able to lead through covenant...through consistency and through a vision that God has given us.

When a leader walks in Love, sets an Example, embraces Accountability, seeks Discernment, practices Endurance, and understands Reliance on God, they become the kind of leader that uplifts every person they serve.

Another thing that happens when we accept Jesus' invitation to lead is that obstacles that seem insurmountable are no longer insurmountable! Feeling like we are disqualified from being leaders because we don't have a certain skill set or influence, because scripture doesn't roll off our tongues doesn't exist anymore...When we show up to participate with Jesus we're participating with the very being who made us in the first place. **SO WHY NOT ACCEPT THE CHALLENGE?**

Accepting the invitation to show up as a leader in life is about moving from the bleachers to the field. It's about knowing that God has placed on our hearts the notion that things matter enough to us to be intentional about doing something...**GOD'S WAY.**

When we accept the challenge to show up as leaders in the way that God would have us to do...it's contagious. People are watching! Whether you're one of our youth who's rocking a cool CCC sweatshirt to school, whether you're a volunteer or greeter on Sunday, whether you show up when the sanctuary is empty to do God's work...people are watching. And in all of those situations I just referenced...you are leading. When

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other people start to see life through the lens that God has helped you to see through there's a ripple effect that is way more powerful than just staying on those bleachers and watching life go by.

In my own life I still struggle with leadership...making sure that spiritual leadership shows up in all of my roles, mother, wife, sister, friend...at work, here at church. And sometimes I feel like giving up.

But here's the good news: God didn't give up on Moses when he doubted. God didn't give up on Jonah when he ran. God didn't give up on Peter when he denied. God didn't give up on Paul when he persecuted. God didn't give up on Israel when they complained. And God doesn't give up on us when we wander.

Family the truth is...**spiritual leadership is something that God has placed in all of us.** Spiritual leadership shows up at work, at home, in school, at Aldi, at the car wash, on the baseball field, in the board room...you name it. Because you're walking in faith...you're bringing spiritual leadership in the room!

I want to leave you with three keys thoughts to spiritual leadership:

### **1. God's Faithfulness Fuels Our Faithfulness**

God's faithfulness is the foundation that makes our leadership possible. Because He never gives up on us, we learn how not to give up on the people and assignments He's entrusted to us. Throughout the Bible, God leads... Moses, Jonah, Peter, Paul even in their doubt, denial, and wandering. His steady love becomes the model for how we lead with endurance and grace.

### **2. Spiritual Leadership Is a Calling Placed in Every Believer**

Because the Holy Spirit lives in us, we carry God's influence into every space we enter: Scripture reminds us of this shared calling in **Matthew 5:14–16**,

*You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven.*

You see Jesus says, **"You are the light of the world... let your light shine before others."** That means every follower of Christ is called to lead by shining His character—through

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love, service, integrity, and faith. When we show up with God's heart, we are already stepping into the spiritual leadership He designed us for.

### 3. **True Leadership Is Formed Through Surrender, Not Strength**

Surrender to God is foundational for true leadership because it allows leaders to be guided by divine principles. Before you can guide others, you must first be guided by the One who created you, learning to depend on His wisdom, strength, and presence in every step. The world may measure leaders by their followers, but God measures leaders by their willingness to follow Him faithfully, even when no one is watching and the path is hard.

Family... as I end this message, I want you to feel the weight of something holy: **God has never given up on you.** Not once. Not in your doubt, not in your wandering, not in your exhaustion, not in your why me moments. And because He has never given up on you, there is a calling on your life that cannot be dismissed, diminished, or denied.

You were created to lead—not because of your résumé, your confidence, or your qualifications—but because the Spirit of the living God chose to place His light inside of you. **You are the light of the world,** Jesus said, and light doesn't need permission to shine. It just shines.

So today, I'm inviting you to step out of the bleachers and onto the field. To stop watching life happen and start leading the way God designed you to lead—through love, through example, through accountability, through discernment, through endurance, and through complete reliance on Him. Because when you show up with God's heart, heaven shows up with you.

And hear this: the same God who renewed Moses' courage, who redirected Jonah's steps, who restored Peter's calling, who transformed Paul's life—that same God is renewing, redirecting, restoring, and transforming you. **He trusts you with this assignment. He trusts you with influence. He trusts you with people. He trusts you with purpose.**

So don't shrink back. Don't disqualify yourself. Don't let fear speak louder than faith. Because the God who never grows weary is breathing new strength into you.

And when you walk out of this place today—into your home, your job, your school, your neighborhood walk out knowing this:

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**You are a spiritual leader.**

**You are called.**

**You are equipped.**

**You are carried.**

**And you are never, ever alone.**

**Let us pray...**