

*Life-giving  
Leadership*

Karen Hodge and Susan Hunt

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*What is a leader?*

*What are some words or qualities that describe a leader?*

*What does leadership look like for a woman in her various callings and contexts?*

*How has the leadership of other women shaped your life?*

*How would you contrast life-taking and life-giving leadership?*

*What is your reference point for learning how to be a leader?*



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## *Life-giver*

When the first man and woman sinned against God, they deserved the death sentence but received the gospel promise of Life through a Redeemer, and grace upon grace this Life would come through woman (Gen. 3:15). In response, Adam gave his wife a new name that sounds like the Hebrew word for life-giver—Eve (Gen. 3:20).

The gospel brought a radical reversal of what our first parents expected and deserved (death), and how they had behaved (disobedience to God; disloyalty to one another). This reversal is celebrated by the name Adam gave her.

When we are saved, our *potential* changes from life-taker to life-giver because our *status* has changed: “Whoever has the Son has life; whoever does not have the Son of God does not have life” (1 John 5:12).

Birthing a child—a *life*—is a beautiful illustration of our redemptive calling to be life-givers, but the ultimate demonstration is when the Life of Christ fills us and spills out onto our circumstances and relationships. Our redemptive calling transcends age, life-season, marital status, time and place in history. It is big. *Really big*. It is a calling to live boldly and biblically. It is a life-long adventure of “beholding the glory of the Lord [and] being transformed into the same image from one degree of glory to another” (2 Cor. 3:18).

from *Transformed—Life-taker to Life-giver*  
Karen Hodge and Susan Hunt





# Introduction



## *The Story*

This is not a smart way to begin a book, but it must be said: We are not experts on leadership. Leadership is big business with a plethora of books, conferences, and celebrities. So why would two ordinary women who don't know the current leadership language write a book on the topic? Here's the story.

We are a spiritual mother and daughter (Susan is 77 and Karen is 50) whose hearts have been knit together by God's grace. We are both wives of pastors, and we are moms. Susan is a grandmom.

And not because we planned it or felt we were qualified for it, but in obedience to God's call, we both found ourselves leading a women's ministry, in our local churches and then for our denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America (PCA).

## Susan's Story

In 1973, my husband and I joined others and left a denomination that ordained women to the eldership to become part of a new denomination, the PCA, which holds to male headship. This was definitely out of sync with the cultural climate. The leaders of

this movement appointed a few women to organize a women's ministry. I was a young mom when I attended one of the meetings and listened to those women talk about the commitment of our husbands to the inerrancy of Scripture and to the gospel of Jesus Christ. I did not know these women personally, but their love for Jesus, His Word, His church, and their husbands awoke something good and right in my heart. I wanted to follow them. They crafted a purpose statement that has continued to this day: *The purpose of the Women in the Church is that every woman know Christ personally and be committed to extending His Kingdom in her life, home, church, community, and throughout the world.*

Over the next several years one of those women, Georgia Settle, became a spiritual mother to me, and eventually, I followed her as Coordinator of Women's Ministry. From the beginning there were theological non-negotiables that guided and protected us:

- The authority of God's Word.
- The theological standards of our denomination.
- The ecclesiastical structure of our denomination.

When I became Coordinator, the cultural confusion about gender had reached fever-pitch—or so we thought. It pales in comparison to what we face today. The women's leadership team, who served under the oversight of the denomination's Committee on Discipleship Ministries, was beginning to ask definitive questions.

- What does the Bible say about womanhood?
- We know what women are not to do in the church, but what are we to do?
- How can the whole range of women's gifts be utilized without compromising male headship?

I well remember the day Georgia Settle looked at me and said, "As we answer these questions, we need to provide resources to disciple women to understand the answers." My spiritual mother

was not simply telling me what I should do; she was telling me she believed I *could* do such a thing. I had never written a book. Did she really have that kind of confidence in me? Looking back, I get it—this was not about me. Georgia had complete confidence that God would enable me to do what He called me to do.

So, with the prayers, guidance, and help of that leadership team, we developed a biblical apologetic of womanhood and of woman's place in the church with an emphasis on Titus 2 discipleship. This women's ministry narrative flows out of the sound doctrine that God is our reference point, His Word is our authority, and His glory is our purpose. As we provided printed resources to teach this apologetic, we never thought about them being used beyond the PCA, but God did immeasurably more than we dared imagine. We soon realized the need to recruit women to be trainers. Karen Hodge was one of the first women we recruited. She became a spiritual daughter, and now she is Coordinator of Women's Ministry. Under her leadership, the resources are going global. They have been published in other languages and several Spanish-speaking women are trained to be trainers. As I reflect on that original purpose statement, I am struck that it was big enough to grow this flourishing ministry. I am also struck that the faith of those women was big enough to believe more than they could imagine.

## Karen's Story

I entered the national women's ministry leadership scene not as a leader but as the pianist. We finished leading the worship, and I found a seat at the back of the auditorium. It was 20 years ago, but I still remember the keynote speaker's words, "Women, where are your women?" I sheepishly looked around to see who she was talking about. Her exhortation challenged these leadership women to know and strategically invest in the women God sovereignly placed in their circles of influence. What I did not know that day was God sovereignly placed me there to be influenced by those women. I did not know that by His grace He would give me "my

own women” to know, love, serve and invest in. In essence, she was relating that life-giving leadership is about stewardship. To be a steward is to cultivate and keep something of great value that has been entrusted. Each day my goal as a leader is to steward the rich and robust truths I was entrusted with starting that day in the auditorium. My prayer is that I will be a faithful steward (Luke 16:11).

## Our Point

As you engage in women’s ministry in your church, think big, think long, think biblically.

## The Book’s Story

This book started forty years ago. Building on that original purpose statement, we have taught that the mission of a women’s ministry in a local church is to encourage and equip *all* women in their church, regardless of age and marital status, to fulfill their God-given design in whatever context He calls them—in the home, church, workplace, community, and throughout the world—for His glory. A women’s ministry should serve *all* the women, not just those who are active in the women’s ministry studies and activities. It should be a *sending ministry*—discipling women and encouraging them to be life-givers throughout the life and ministry of the church. This will equip them to apply life-giving leadership principles to all areas of life—as employers, employees, friends, volunteers, daughters, wives, and mothers, and so extend God’s kingdom.

We should have anticipated the repeated requests for a resource to train women to be leaders, but we didn’t. As we considered these requests, we realized that women’s ministry leaders were not simply asking for a resource to train leaders for the women’s ministry. They were asking for a resource to encourage and equip *all* women in the church to serve wherever God calls them.

So, you are probably asking why we didn't simply select one of the aforementioned plethora of leadership books on the market. Believe us, we considered that. There are many helpful ones out there, but we knew that anything we add should be consistent with, and expand upon, our forty-year narrative. To be honest, we struggled, but we soldiered on in prayer, finally concluding that we don't need to be experts. We are followers of Jesus. We have His Word. We share a desire to lead others to Him.

*“Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.”*  
*Dan. 12:3*

We wrote as we learned and we learned as we wrote—but isn't that the way life in Christ is—a transforming process of “from him and through him and to him” (Rom. 11:36)? Writing together is that other-worldly fellowship of two people “with one voice glorify[ing] the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Rom. 15:6)—but isn't that what life-giving leadership is?

As we developed ideas, we taught some of the material several times. After one seminar there was a pivotal moment when a woman said, “I'm a professional and have attended many leadership seminars, but this is different. Those seminars were designed to take me to the top; this one takes me to Jesus.” We decided to write the book.

Our desire is to share the gift and grace of our experience as wives, moms, and women's ministry leaders. Much of what we have learned has been from the times we were life-taking leaders, and we learned more of God's mercy. Most often we have led out of our weakness, when we learned that His grace is sufficient and His power is made perfect in weakness (2 Cor. 12:9). We speak not as those who are ahead of you, but as two women beside you who desire to “share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you had become very dear to us” (1 Thess. 2:8).

Our prayer for you as you read this book is that expressed by Paul in Galatians 4:19: “My little children, for whom I am again in the anguish of childbirth until Christ is formed in you!” And we pray that you will labor in prayer for Him to be formed

in those around you. Our friend Debbie Locke says that she grew up hearing her Dad, who was a pastor, say, “God doesn’t use people to get the ministry done. He uses the ministry to get the people done.”

*God doesn't use people to  
get the ministry done.  
He uses the ministry to get  
the people done.*

As we add this chapter to the women’s ministry narrative, we encourage you to read this book with other women—it’s the covenant way, it’s the life-giving leadership way. A leader’s guide is available.

## The Leader’s Guide

Our suggestion: Once the Women’s Ministry leadership team reads the book together, use the Leader’s Guide to teach the material in a Bible study, or in Titus 2 Discipleship Groups, to equip all women to be leaders in all of life.

A Leader’s Guide for this book and resources for women’s ministry in the church are available from the Presbyterian Church in America Committee on Discipleship Ministries online at [www.pcbookstore.com](http://www.pcbookstore.com) or by phone at 1-800-283-1357.

# Part 1

## *The Confidence, Calling, Clarity, and Character of Life-giving Leadership*



*Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens,  
and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars for ever and ever.  
Daniel 12:3 (NIV)*

One of our goals in women’s ministry is to equip women to think biblically and live covenantally. For this book, we will tweak that statement: This book is about equipping women to **think biblically** *about leadership* and to *lead* covenantally in a complementarian context.

The big idea of Part 1: God’s worthiness (His character, who He is) and His Word are the reference point for life-giving leadership.

Part 1 focuses on thinking biblically. It’s easy for a women’s ministry to drift into becoming event and project driven—after all, there is so much work to be done, and like Martha we become “distracted with much serving” (Luke 10:40). A life-giving leader makes time to sit “at the Lord’s feet and [listen] to his teaching” (v. 39) because she knows that is where her confidence, calling, clarity, and character are shaped. Thinking biblically is foundational to living, loving and leading covenantally.

*Note:* We’ll revisit Mary and Martha in Chapter 9. Both women have much to teach us.





## *Stephanie's Story*



“Carpe diem!” was the mantra on our college campus. Its meaning—“Seize the day!”—characterized my entire undergraduate life. As an enthusiastic student with graduate school ambitions, I worked hard and I played hard. While excelling academically, I lettered in two sports, worked part-time, and by my senior year served as president of four organizations. One day, my Dad quietly said to me, “Steph, you know you can’t live your life like this.” Aptly fulfilling my role as the strong-willed child in the family, I looked at him and said, “Watch me!”

While my twenty-year-old optimistic, self-confident personality knew few limits—thirty-five years later—I am finally willing to admit that my Dad was right. Without giving it a name, my wise father was trying to spare me from the anguish of burnout. One definition of the term “burnout” is “the cessation of operation usually of a jet or rocket engine.” That sums up my experience. After decades of launching cutting-edge ministry initiatives at the local and national levels while raising a family (including a child with Down syndrome), I realized that my jet engine was sputtering, and I began to lose altitude. It was insidious at first. Eventually—emotionally, physically and spiritually exhausted—I could no longer deny the reality. I was in the throes of “rock-bottom-shovel-hitting-on-concrete-of-the-soul-ain’t-got-nothing-left” burnout. It was time to be still and reflect on these questions:

- How has God uniquely designed me?
- How, in my self-confidence, have I been blind-sided to the corresponding weaknesses that accompany my God-given strengths?
- How have I neglected to embrace my finiteness as a human being?
- Where am I experiencing frustration as a result of expectations by myself or by others?
- Where does my fuel source really come from?

In pondering these, I found my true confidence. Our Creator God uniquely designs us for his glory. He knows not only our strengths but our weaknesses as well. He is not surprised by our finiteness, even when we are. The only expectations that ultimately matter are the expectations of the Triune God—and, for the believer, they have all been met in Christ. And we find amazing freedom and new energy when we find our fuel source in the endless supply of his love for us. I can't live a life like this on my own, but I can in Christ, through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit.

*Stephanie Hubach is a wife, mom, daughter, friend and Tim's Chauffeur (her adult son with Down Syndrome) in Ephrata, Pennsylvania. She currently serves as a Research Fellow in Disability Ministries at Covenant Theological Seminary.*

# 1

## *Confidence*



Remember our purpose: This book is about equipping women to think biblically *about leadership* and to *lead* covenantally in a complementarian context.

In our theological and cultural climate, it takes a crazy woman, or a confident one, to put the above sentence in print. Neither of us is known for our abundance of confidence—crazy maybe, but not self-confident—and yet this is the time in which we are called to be life-giving leaders.

How can we develop the confidence for such a mission?

If our confidence is connected to our personal or cultural circumstances, we stand on shifting sand. Paul described his dire circumstances and concluded they were intended to “make us rely not on ourselves but on God who raises the dead” (2 Cor. 1:9).

The resurrection of Christ is the basis of our confidence. Paul makes the audacious request that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ will open the eyes of our hearts that we may know “the immeasurable greatness of his power toward us who believe, according to the working of his great might that he worked in Christ when he raised him from the

*Christ-confidence has a transcendent perspective, a holy anticipation. We expect to be surprised by God's presence and power.*

dead” (Eph. 1:19-20).

We have every reason to lack self-confidence. We have every reason to have complete and compelling confidence in the power of Christ in us—the very power that raised Jesus from the dead.

Christ-confidence has a transcendent perspective, a holy anticipation. We expect to be surprised by God’s presence and power.

Life-giving leadership is . . .



*Jennifer texts Melissa, the Nursery Ministry Coordinator, and asks if they can meet for lunch. Jennifer, a single woman who loves babies, hopes she can serve in the nursery. The day passes and she doesn’t hear from Melissa. “I wonder if I’ve done something to offend Melissa. Maybe she doesn’t want me on her team.” The next morning Melissa calls. “I’m sorry I didn’t answer your text. I lost my phone and finally found it late last night at the bottom of the laundry basket. Are you free for lunch today?” Jennifer is embarrassed she defaulted to the negative, but the truth is, she usually does—and so do we.*



*A tornado ripped through a community a few miles from Carly’s home. Her heart is broken by the devastation. On Sunday the pastor prays for the people whose homes were destroyed. “But they need help cleaning and re-building,” Carly thinks. She served on a disaster-relief committee in her church before she moved to this community and she would love to volunteer to help the church offer practical help. “I don’t want them to think I’m overbearing and bossy,” she thinks. So she remains silent.*

A fundamental difference between life-taking and life-giving leadership is the object of our confidence.

In his book *A Time for Confidence*, Dr. Stephen Nichols defines confidence:

The word *confidence* actually comes from the Latin word *fides*, meaning “faith.” *Con-* is a prefix meaning “with.” In this compound word, it functions as an intensive. “Full trust” is the idea behind the word *confidence*. Reliance, firmness—these are synonyms of the word

*confidence*. When we use the expression *lack of confidence*, what we are really talking about are distractions that get in the way of our confidence, of our reliance and full-throttle trust . . . Athletes are supposed to put their confidence in their training. It's what they do. Christians, on the other hand, know that there's no sense whatsoever in putting any confidence in the flesh. Paul says clearly, "Put no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). We steadfastly and firmly rely upon our God. We have planted our flag with Him, in Him, and even through Him . . . We can be confident in God, confident in his Word, confident in Christ, confident in the gospel, and confident in hope . . . "Do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward" (Heb. 10:35).<sup>1</sup>

*A fundamental difference between life-taking and life-giving leadership is the object of our confidence.*

### **A life-giving leader has full confidence in God.**

Becoming a Christ-confident leader means dying to self. Jesus, our life-giving leader, said,

Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him (John 12: 24-26).

*Life-giving leadership is life-giving because it abides in Christ and bears gospel fruit.*

We must die to live and we must die to lead. Death is painful and scary, but death is necessary for life—*His life*—to be formed in us. Life-giving leaders know they are nothing more than a tiny grain of wheat, called to a unique place of dirt where they are to die. We die to our fears. Perhaps it means dying to our reputation, or comfort or

convenience. Maybe it's dying to our plans, dreams, and agendas. Life-giving leadership is sacrificial. It's costly and it's daily. It's glorious and it's significant. It's life-giving because it abides in Christ and bears gospel fruit.

Jesus asks life-giving questions:



- Will we hate our lives in this world?
- Will we follow Him on the path to Calvary?
- Will we die to self and put all of our trust in Him?
- Will we serve rather than be served?
- Will we let the truth about the Son of Man become the truth about us?

Jesus makes life-giving promises: fruitfulness, eternal life, His Presence, honor. “And now, little children, abide in him, so that when he appears we may have *confidence* and not shrink from him in shame at his coming” (1 John 2:28, emphasis added).

**Life-giving leaders progressively die to self, abide in Jesus, and confidently bear gospel fruit for His glory.**

A gospel-transformed life and gospel-transformed leadership begin with God's Word and ask the Holy Spirit to renew our minds (head), change our hearts so that we love God and others, and empower us to become doers of the Word (hands). Life-giving leaders are learners who are continually growing in the “grace (heart) and knowledge (head) of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ” (2 Peter 3:18), and who long to impart “some spiritual gift to strengthen you—that is, that we may be mutually encouraged by each other's faith” (hands) (Rom. 1:11-12), for “the common good” (1 Cor. 12:7). It's not just my head, heart, and hands—it's *our* heads, hearts, and hands joined together.

Our confidence for such all-out involvement rests in God's Word and God's power in us. We trust Him, not ourselves.

**Life-giving leadership is a head, heart, and hands endeavor.**

When we think about leadership, we often put priority on leadership skills. Skills are important, but skills can be life-giving or life-taking. Skills can be manipulative, controlling and self-serving. We want to consider a different mindset. We will use the biblical category of gifts and graces which includes head, heart, and hands.

For as in one body we have many members, and the members do not all have the same function, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. Having *gifts* that differ according to the grace given to us, let us use them (Rom. 12:4-6, emphasis added).

Gifts and graces are a result of our union with Christ. They are spirit-empowered and full of faith. We are spiritually connected to everything Jesus has done and to everyone He calls to Himself. It is *koinonia*, the richest and most intimate fellowship. It is a living and loving relationship where we experience sweet communion in each other's gifts and graces. Consider this beautiful statement from the *Westminster Confession of Faith*:

*Gifts and graces are a result of our union with Christ. They are spirit-empowered and full of faith.*

All saints, that are united to Jesus Christ their Head, by His Spirit, and by faith, have fellowship with Him in His grace, sufferings, death, resurrection, and glory: and, being united to one another in love, they have communion in each other's gifts and graces, and are obliged to the performance of such duties, public and private, as do conduce to their mutual good, both in the inward and outward man.<sup>2</sup>

**A life-giving leader shares her gifts and graces with others.**

Paul instructed Timothy to “fan into flame the gift of God” (2 Tim. 1:6). In each chapter, we will identify a specific gift and grace and discuss ways leaders can grow, develop and use it for God’s glory and the good of His people. Using our gifts and graces for the common good strengthens us and cultivates a life-giving culture wherever we are.

As each has received a gift, use it to serve one another, as good stewards of God’s varied grace: whoever speaks, as one who speaks oracles of God; whoever serves, as one who serves by the strength that God supplies—in order that in everything God may be glorified through Jesus Christ. To him belong glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen (1 Peter 4:10-11).

Both of us knew we were in over our heads the moment we became Coordinator of Women’s Ministry. For me (Susan) it felt like stepping off a cliff where I felt safe into what I call the grace zone—a place where the only way I can do this is if Jesus does it through me. I have lost count of the number of times I stood in a hotel room so gripped by fear that I was unable to open the door and go speak to a group of women. In those moments I tell myself what I know to be true. “My grace is sufficient . . . my power is made perfect in weakness” (2 Cor. 12:9). He has never failed me. Gradually the grace zone has become safer than standing on the edge of the cliff, but sometimes I still cling to the cliff. And I repent, and He forgives, and my confidence in Him increases.

I (Karen) was a young bride, pastor’s wife and a fairly overwhelmed mother of two. It was there that I was lovingly planted in the dirt of helping my husband start a new church and develop the various ministries, including women’s ministry, from the ground up. This rugged terrain was the context where I learned that leadership was more than a flashy array of skill sets. All my formulaic answers and naive leadership theories went out the window. God planted me in that soil to teach me that my first choice as my feet hit the floor each day is to die. I



had to die to my desire to be right, to be liked, to my comfort and convenience. But it was in that death that I began to live and thrive as a leader. Fast forward twenty years and I am still in that dirt; it's just a bigger plot as I serve as Women's Ministry Coordinator. Servant leadership is not a popular leadership methodology, but rather a glorious invitation to become more like Jesus. Life-giving leadership is a selfless and sacrificial calling that yields the harvest of gospel fruit—follow me as I follow Christ (1 Cor.11:1).

*Servant leadership is not a popular leadership methodology, but rather a glorious invitation to become more like Jesus.*

**A life-giving leader develops her gifts and graces.**

It was the day of the first national conference for women in our denomination. I (Susan) was frantically checking on last-minute details. I saw some women on our leadership team approaching. “Why are they here—they’re supposed to be in the hotel lobby greeting women,” I thought. In a calm voice, one of them said, “We just received word that Edith Schaeffer was taken to the hospital. She’s okay, but she will not be here.” I felt everything unraveling. Women had traveled from all over the country to hear her. Before I could speak, one of the wiser women said, “God has something better for us.” That was her default position—total confidence in God’s plan. She continued, “The women will have heard three speakers. Why don’t we use Mrs. Schaeffer’s session to pray? Mrs. Schaeffer would love that, and it will be an opportunity for the women to pray for her and to process all they have heard.” The only words I could utter were, “Will you plan and lead that session?” She did, and it was magnificent. I grew in Christ-confidence and in my gratitude for the heads, hearts, and hands of my sisters who had full-throttle trust in the Lord.

**Self-confident leadership is life-taking. Christ-confident leadership is life-giving.**

“Do not be afraid of sudden terror or of the ruin of the wicked, when it comes, for the LORD will be your confidence and will keep your foot from being caught” (Prov. 3:25-26).

### *Naaman's Maid Part 1*

The riveting narrative in 2 Kings 5 hinges on a slave girl. It's doubtful she ever thought of herself as a leader. To say she was marginalized is an understatement. We don't even know her name, and only a few of her words are recorded.

Naaman, commander of the army of the king of Syria, was a great man with his master and in high favor, because by him the LORD had given victory to Syria. He was a mighty man of valor, but he was a leper. Now the Syrians on one of their raids had carried off a little girl from the land of Israel, and she worked in the service of Naaman's wife (2 Kings 5:1-2).

The girl's kidnapper has leprosy. We would expect her to remain silent or to mumble, “He got what he deserves.” However, she does the unexpected. She speaks words of hope to Naaman's wife: “Would that my lord were with the prophet who is in Samaria! He would cure him of his leprosy” (v. 3).

The girl's confidence in the Prophet of Israel is stunning. Imagine the blowback if Naaman had not been healed. Was she sending him on a fool's errand? Would he be the laughingstock of Syria for listening to an Israelite slave girl? Would she be blamed for the time and resources spent on the trip? Surely, she considered the “what ifs” before speaking—but maybe not. Perhaps she did not count the cost to herself. Apparently, this covenant child trusted the Lord with all her heart.

Remarkably, Naaman follows her advice, goes to Elisha, washes in the Jordan seven times, “and his flesh was restored like the flesh of a little child, and he was clean” (v. 14). Naaman's flesh was not just restored to its pre-leprosy condition; it was like the skin of a little child. There were no scars, illustrating the power of the gospel. “He restores my soul” (Ps. 23:3) and the scars on

my heart are healed. The gospel was at work in Naaman's heart and in the girl's heart. The slave girl was a free girl. She was free of bitterness, fear, and anger. Apparently, she had learned to "be content with what you have, for he has said, 'I will never leave you nor forsake you.' So, we can *confidently* say, 'The Lord is my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?'" (Heb. 13:5-6).

Naaman returns to Elisha, and this foreigner who oppressed God's people confesses, "Behold, I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel" (v. 15). The girl's simple words led the mighty man of valor to the Righteous One. I wonder how many prayers preceded her words.



### *Pause, Pray, Ponder*

How does this chapter help you think biblically about leadership?

When things get hard, is your first reaction to rely on yourself or on Christ?

Describe the dirt where you are planted right now.

Pray that you will bear fruit where you are.



## Cultivating a Life-giving Culture by Sharing the Gift and Grace of Prayer

Prayer builds confidence in Christ, and confidence in Christ fuels prayer. There is only one reason we can enter the throne room

of the High King of Heaven without being crushed by His holiness and majesty: “We have a great high priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus, the Son of God . . . Let us then with confidence draw near to the

*Prayer builds confidence in Christ, and confidence in Christ fuels prayer.*

throne of grace, that we may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Heb. 4:14, 16). Aren’t you overwhelmed with shock and awe at such a grand invitation?

A life-giving leader enters the throne room often. She enters in repentance when she has relied on herself.

Have mercy on me, O God, according to your steadfast love; according to your abundant mercy blot out my transgressions. Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin! . . . Create in me a clean heart (Ps. 51:1-2, 10).

When things are going well, she enters with the petition to be delivered from self-confidence and self-promotion. “Not to us, O LORD, not to us, but to your name give glory, for the sake of your steadfast love and your faithfulness!” (Ps. 115:1).

When things are *not* going well, she enters with the prayer of Jesus on her lips and she stays until it is in her heart. “Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me. Nevertheless, not my will, but yours be done” (Luke 22:42).

When Paul said his circumstances were used to make him rely not on himself but on God who raises the dead, he went on to say, “He delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will deliver us again.” And then he adds a startling statement: “You also must help us by prayer, so that many will give thanks on our behalf for the blessing granted us through the prayers of many” (2 Cor. 1:10-11). A life-giving leader prays for others and she asks them to pray for her.

There is a poignant prayer in Bernard of Clairvaux’s hymn “O Sacred Head, Now Wounded”: “O make me thine forever; and should I fainting be, Lord, let me never, never outlive my love to thee.”<sup>3</sup>

This is our prayer, but our confidence and comfort is that even if we do outlive our love for Jesus we will never, never outlive *His* love for us.

### *Practice These Things*

*Do not neglect the gift you have . . . Practice these things, devote yourself to them, so that all may see your progress.”*

*1 Tim. 4:14-15*



Paul wrote these instructions to his spiritual son Timothy. In each chapter we will suggest ways for you, and for a leadership team, to

develop and practice the gifts and graces entrusted to you.

So what about Jennifer and Carly, the women you met earlier in the chapter? How can a leader be a life-giver to them?

We pray for sensitivity to recognize the confidence problem in other women—whether it’s self-confidence or lack of confidence, and we pray for and with them. Here’s the thing about prayer, it draws us to God and it sends us to others. Notice the head, heart, and hands movement in Hebrews:

Therefore [in light of everything we have learned in previous chapters about the superiority of Christ that has renewed our minds] . . . we have *confidence* to enter the holy places by the blood of Jesus . . . let us draw near with a true *heart* in full assurance of faith . . . And let us consider how to stir up one another to love and good works [*hands*], not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near (10:19-25, emphasis added).

We help Jennifer and Carly think biblically by pointing them to the superiority and sufficiency of Christ. We share our own journey of how growing in the knowledge of Jesus helped us trust Him with all our hearts and not lean on our own understanding or default to our own interpretation of circumstances. We ask them to pray about whether God is *calling* them to a specific ministry. If their response is, “I have a desire to serve in this way, but I do not feel qualified,” we tell them, “Our concern is not your abilities but your calling. If God is calling you, He will give you the gifts and graces you need. We have confidence in Him about you.”

The Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ (2 Thess. 3:3-5).

A life-giving leader does not simply pray for others to do better; she asks the Lord to direct their hearts to His love and

steadfastness. She encourages them to trust Him. And as she does this, she trusts Him more.

“In the fear of the Lord one has strong confidence, and his children will have a refuge” (Prov. 14:26). When our confidence is in the Lord, our spiritual daughters will find a refuge in us where they will flourish and grow into strong and steady leaders whose confidence is not in themselves but in the power that is in them—the same power that raised Jesus from the dead. Christ-confident leaders rejoice in how God surprises them by enabling them to do more than they are capable of doing.



*Pause, Pray, Ponder*

What difference does it make when you direct your heart to the love of God and the steadfastness of Christ?

What is one thing from this chapter you will practice?



## *Pastoral Encouragement*

Dear Weary Leader,

Servant leadership is often a tiring and discouraging pursuit. Just because you are leading in the right way does not mean it will always be smooth and easy. Often this is just a by-product of the amount of time and energy required to put the needs of others and your organization first; however, many times I have found there is a more basic and less obvious reason for frustration. When I move from being a conduit for God's grace and power to attempting to be the source of grace and power, I always end up in trouble. The classic way of talking about this is that I have begun to work in the flesh (from the gifts and strengths I have as a result of the way I was born) instead of through the Spirit (through the power of God made available to me when I was reborn). The distinction may seem subtle, but it makes all the difference in the world for a servant leader. If I work through the flesh, I look for credit for things that go well and despair when they do not. When I work through the Spirit, God gets the credit for everything that goes well and I fall on His grace and wisdom when they do not seem to be doing so. It is tempting to think that this distinction is minor, but it is the difference between life-taking and life-giving leadership.

*Rev. Chris Hodge*

Rev. Chris Hodge, Senior Pastor  
Naperville Presbyterian Church (PCA), Naperville, IL