

**Spiritual Influence: The Hidden Power behind Leadership** by Mel Lawrenz  
Zondervan Publishers, Grand Rapids, MI: 2012  
(33 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols)

### **1. Man with No Influence**

The most hateful human misfortune is for a wise man to have no influence. –  
Herodotus (Page 25)

### **2. Passionately Curious**

Walter Isaacson, who wrote a definitive biography on Einstein, says, “The relevant question was how his mind worked, not his brain,” and then quotes Einstein himself: “I have no special talents. I am only passionately curious.” (Page 26)

### **3. Effective Leadership**

Leaders who want to effect enduring change will take the time to understand the power of subtleties of influence. They are not content just to see things happen; they want to see people, organizations, movements, and even culture itself shaped in ways that last for a lifetime. Today leadership is so much more than the building of organizations. Leadership includes influences in education, culture, the arts, community life, and much more. (Page 27)

### **4. The Need for Godly Leadership**

Leaders abound today, but there is a desperate need for leadership that has spiritual substance. The only enduring influence is God, so we must guide people to the place where God does His transforming work. This form of leadership understands God as the influence and we as His instruments. (Page 27-28)

### **5. Spiritual Influence is about Priorities**

In a world of infinite possibilities, we need deep spiritual insight to sort out the good from the bad, or to choose between good, better, and best. Spending habits, media consumption, associations, commitments, entertainment, and lifestyle decisions are all spiritual matters. God has something to say about it all, and we must help guide people into the best spiritual decisions they can make. (Page 32)

### **6. Spiritual Influence is about Time**

People need help managing their time. When someone asks how we are doing, our standard response is, “I’ve been so busy.” This is a useless statement. It says nothing

about how we really are doing, it signals that we may be having problems disciplining our lives, and it may even be a badge of honor we are subtly flashing because busyness is taken as a sign that we are hardworking and committed. Busyness and stress are two problem areas that we turn into merit. So here is a possibility of a double blessing: when leaders take time management seriously in their own lives, they not only help themselves; they also have something to offer the people they are leading. Chaos is never a virtue. (Page 33)

### **7. Character is the Very Shape of One's Life**

Spiritual influence is about character—the kind of people we are, the shape of our inner and outer lives. Our word *character* comes from a Greek word which goes back to the word for a stamp that leaves an imprint, like the dies used to make coins. Character is the very shape of one's inner life (**thoughts, motives, values, desires**), which is revealed in the shape of one's outer life (**actions, behaviors, speech, relationships**). And the shape of one's character may be stamped on someone else's character for good or for ill. Influence is unavoidable. Everyone leaves a mark. The question is, What kind of mark will it be? (Page 33-34)

### **8. We Cannot All Be Masters**

We cannot all be masters, nor all masters cannot be truly follow'd. – William Shakespeare, *Othello* (Page 37)

### **9. Best Leaders—Best Followers**

The best leaders are the best followers. That's because they have been powerfully influenced by God and by other people and are enthused for others to benefit from what they have received. (Page 37)

### **10. Admit if You are Copying Someone Else**

If we are building on someone else's great idea, why not admit it? (Page 38)

### **11. The Disciples Learned from Jesus**

The disciples learned from Jesus by engaging with people, healing them, confronting them, comforting them, sometimes being chased away by them. The disciples sometimes came to town as heroes following the Hero (Matthew 4:25; 15:30; 19:2; 21:9), and sometimes as outcasts entering the den of His enemies. The disciples also followed Jesus when He wiped the dust off His feet and disengaged from people who

rejected the message (Luke 9:3-5). Being a spiritual influence includes discerning where you can be effective and where your efforts would be a waste of time. (Page 39)

## **12. No Human Leader is Steadfast Like God**

The greatest gift a leader can pass on is the model of the follower-life. Making people dependent on us today only sets them up for disappointment later. Eventually, people will lose their leaders, because no human leader is steadfast like God. Teaching people to follow Jesus puts people in the one place in the universe where they will never be left alone. (Page 41)

## **13. Held Captive**

One of the boldest, most strong-headed, even obstinate leaders in history, Martin Luther, was actually radically committed to following. Look closely and you will find a phalanx of prior authorities he followed. A young monk with a deeply troubled conscience, Luther submitted to the orders of his superior mentor, Karl Von Staupitz, that he go to university for years of intensive biblical education. In that experience Luther made a fresh personal discovery of the gospel of grace and knew that he would forever have to subject all his thoughts to that and other core biblical truths. At the general assembly of European lords in 1521, presided over by the Holy Roman Emperor, Luther said, “My conscience is held captive by the Word of God.” While his opponents viewed him as bullheaded, arrogant, and intractable, Luther viewed himself as radically submissive. Those who knew him personally found him to be unassuming, approachable, even plain. He married a simple woman, and he presided over a household of six children, six live-in nieces and nephews, and many eager students.

Luther found in the writings of Augustine the same gospel of grace that he discovered in Paul, and so he let Augustine be his teacher. He had no personal ambition that drove him to break from the Catholic Church. He tried to suppress the radical impulses of some of his followers who were tearing down the art in their churches and dismantling all the institutions of the late medieval church. He wanted to follow his tradition as far as Scripture would allow him—he did not want to invent anything. His idea of “reinventing the church” (a phrase we sometimes hear today) would have been nonsensical to Luther. Invention (by Jesus), yes. Reform, yes. Reinvention, no.

Luther was a leader who impacted history—only because he followed people and principles higher than himself. Most important, his absolute conviction about the sovereignty of God meant that he viewed his own leadership as directly and practically

derived from God. Luther lived in the divine/human nexus, by temperament, by theology, and by policy. Had he not, he probably would have remained a quivering, guilt-ridden, hidden ascetic—never to be known or named. (Page 41-42)

#### **14. Jesus Left Us an Example**

In the end we have nothing to offer people unless we follow Christ ourselves. Jesus set the baseline: “Whoever wants to be disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me” (Matthew 16:24). This is our calling. “To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in His steps” (1 Peter 2:21). (Page 44)

#### **15. Integrity Matters**

If you have integrity, nothing else matters. If you don’t have integrity, nothing else matters. – Alan K. Simpson (Page 57)

#### **16. Leaders Trade in Trust**

The highest currency leaders trade on is trust. If there is trust between leaders and those they lead, any reasonable goal is attainable. Without trust even in the simplest objective is a hill too high to climb. (Page 57)

#### **17. Trust Must be Earned**

Acceptance may be free, but trust must be earned. And the earning begins when there is integrity in the life of the leader. (Page 57)

#### **18. Don’t Assume People Trust You Unless You Earn It**

People who exercise good spiritual influence begin with the assumption that they have no inherent right to demand or expect trust from anybody. They do not assume people respect them; they seek to earn others’ respect. (Page 57)

#### **19. Integrity Begins With Knowing We Don’t Have It**

So integrity begins with the conviction that we do not have it. Aspiring leaders must not entertain the slightest temptation to posture as flawless, complete, inerrant. Leaders do not have credibility because of personal holiness, but because God has consecrated the leader for God’s own holy purpose. (Page 58)

## **20. Spiritual Influence Begins With Building People**

Spiritual influence does not begin with building organizations or institutions, but with building people and communities. (Page 59)

## **21. Building Spiritual a House**

Great universities, churches, and benevolent organizations derive their greatness from the person-by-person integrity of building lives and of bringing “living stones” in contact with each other until a “spiritual house” is built. (Page 59)

## **22. Integrity is Constructing and Reconstructing Character**

Integrity is both a quality of life and a process of living. It is a commitment to a whole-life process of constructing and reconstructing character, all with a background of humility in which the leader acknowledges just how far he or she falls short. Integrity is a process that is never finished. (Page 59-60)

## **23. Integrity Means**

Integrity also means coherence within one’s personality. Lack of integrity occurs when a person splits belief from behavior or intellect from will. (Page 60)

## **24. Greed Compromises Integrity**

Greed is hard to quantify, but it has seriously compromised the integrity of many leaders. Greed can dress itself in the pious clothing of “vision” and “passion.” But when greed is the driving energy of leadership, purer motives are choked out. Jesus warned us that one cannot serve God and mammon at the same time, because He knew that we will sacrifice our integrity in the process. Divided allegiances on these matters amount to no allegiance. (Page 60)

## **25. A Definition of Integrity from Paul**

Paul outlines a definition of integrity in his list of qualifications for elders. Strictly speaking, the list is for church officers, but it serves as a picture of spiritual integrity for all leaders. “Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, nor quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well...He must not be a recent convert...He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap” (1 Timothy 3:3-7). (Page 61)

## **26. Today's Challenges**

The core issues of integrity remain the same across the ages and across cultures. The coherence of the person, the consistency between the public self and the private self, the need for sound character—all lie at the heart of spiritual influence. (Page 63)

## **27. Spiritual Leadership is a State of War**

Some surmise that they need to step out of leadership in order to care for personal needs, but oftentimes the right thing to do is to keep at the work, knowing there are no guarantees of peace and contentment in this life. Many leaders face powerful spiritual opposition. In business a leader's rivals are other businesses. In spiritual leadership the rival is sometimes immense, powerful, and malicious—evil itself. Commerce concerns itself with competition; spiritual leadership is a state of war. (Page 63)

## **28. The Incidence of Depression and Despondency is Alarming**

All of us are affected by the brokenness in our world. The incidence of depression and despondency is alarming. Sometimes the reason is that a leader, coming from a broken home and a series of broken relationships, is working out of an unrecognized deficit in his or her own life. And in other cases, leaders repeat unhealthy patterns that they see in the governing structures of the country they live in. Often our Christian leaders don't behave any better than our corrupt political leaders; they just repeat the same patterns. (Page 64)

## **29. Influence is a Spiritual Dynamic**

Spiritual influence is the hidden power behind leadership—the sustained influx of great ideas, solid wisdom, reliable truth. Influence is not merely persuasion or salesmanship but a spiritual dynamic that shapes our thinking and being. Our influence in the lives of others must always have a grounding in God. (Page 65)

## **30. The Best Leaders are the Best Followers**

The best leaders are the best followers. They scour the earth for good, wise, reliable ideas. They follow the model of Jesus' followers, who, after becoming leaders, become more radically committed to following Jesus than ever before. (Page 65)

## **31. Spiritual Leadership—Submission to God**

Spiritual leadership is founded on an attitude of prayer and worship—submission *to* God, and willing service *for* God. (Page 65)

### **32. The Secret of Success**

Success consists of going from failure to failure without loss of enthusiasm. – Winston Churchill (Page 199)

### **33. A Success and a Successful Failure**

The single sentence that came crackling through the radio signal from almost a quarter-million miles from Earth sounded simple, even routine. “Houston, we’ve had a problem.” The three crew members of the *Apollo 13* spacecraft circling the moon knew that something had gone terribly wrong with their spacecraft after hearing the sound of an explosion and watching their electricity-generating fuel cells go dead. “A problem” for sure. The planned moon landing was aborted and emergency measures were put in place for the crew to coax their crippled craft back toward Earth. Three days later the capsule splashed down in the Pacific. NASA called the mission “a successful failure.” Commander James Lovell told the tale in a book with a mournful-sounding title: *Lost Moon*.

Another sentence voiced from the moon ten months earlier is equally memorable: “Houston, Tranquility Base here—the *Eagle* has landed.” Neal Armstrong, commander of Apollo 11, had manually controlled the landing vehicle over boulder-strewn plains to a safe landing on the lunar surface. More people on Earth were focused on that moment than any other event in history. For the first time ever, a thrill and a celebration broke out across all humanity. Two men landing a thin-skinned spidery metal box on another planetary body was a success almost beyond imagining.

One a “success” and the other a “successful failure.”

Yet decades after the Apollo project, it was a film telling the story of the “successful failure,” *Apollo 13*, that won widespread acclaim. Ron Howard’s movie gives the inside story of how three men trapped in a fragile, cramped spacecraft hundreds of thousands of miles from Earth were able to overcome a lack of oxygen, water, and electricity to limp back to Earth. They improvised perilous rocket burns to put them on the right trajectory. They rebuilt mechanical systems in the craft. And dozens of young engineers, computer programmers, aeronautics experts, and others worked together to move past the failure of the spacecraft. Not many people today even remember that, in total, there were six successful moon landings in the Apollo program, that twelve different men walked on the moon. They probably do remember, however, something about the “successful failure.”

Success is not about avoiding or denying failure. It is about building past failure. If “success” means little if any failure, then the only way to achieve it is to never try anything new. Certainly nothing bold or risky. (Page 199-200)