

Courageous Churchmen: Leaders Compelling Enough to Follow by Jerry Wragg, Kress Biblical Resources: The Woodlands, TX (2018). (61 Quotes selected by Doug Nichols.)

1. Pastor Wragg's Study of Being a Godly Leader.

Jerry Wragg is uniquely qualified to write a book titled *Courageous Churchmen*. He is both a capable teacher and a natural leader, and is committed to Jesus' pattern of humility and self-sacrifice as the only viable model of church leadership. This book is a refreshing, readable study of what it means to be a godly leader. – John MacArthur [pages 4-5]

2. Skilled Leadership Takes Time.

Becoming a wise and skilled leader simply takes time—a lifetime in fact. [page 7]

3. Spiritual Influence Comes from God Alone.

Good intentions simply aren't enough to create a lasting legacy! Godly, faithful leaders are men of strong conviction and noble character, virtues intensely pursued and steadily cultivated. They are men who understand that spiritual influence comes from God alone, and that nothing of eternal value can be accomplished without His favor. They understand that business trends and pop-cultural opinions come and go, but the heart of a truly effective leader is uncompromising, unwavering in his spiritual life. [pages 7-8]

4. God Blesses the Leader Who Speaks His Truth.

I'm convinced that at the heart of an ability to influence others is a compelling life of fearless conviction and a transcendent, divine message. A man who lives in the fear of God and boldly speaks His truth to the world is the kind of leader God promises to bless (Isa 66:2). [page 8]

5. Righteousness and Conviction Necessary for Leadership.

When a man's life manifests a righteous character and the spiritual convictions which cannot be shaken, others can't resist following such moral strength. [page 9]

6. Spiritually Influential Men Tremble at God's Word.

Strong and effective spiritual leaders are men who tirelessly strive to forge godly habits. They speak truth and take stands without wavering. Such men of influence tremble at God's Word rather than cater to the culture. [page 9]

7. Return to God to Raise Up Godly Leadership for the Future.

The church's leadership crisis won't be solved with another strategy meeting or the total abandonment of our heritage. I believe we must return to the throne of grace and plead with God to raise up a mighty generation of churchmen who will lead His people out of the cultural desert and into abundance. [page 16]

8. God's Word Clearly Illuminates Man's Condition.

God's revelation offers the only true clarity available where humanity is concerned. [page 17]

9. Scriptures Shows a Clear Picture of Mankind.

A lost man is incapable of seeing his true spiritual need on his own. That is why the Scriptures are so clear about human depravity and our desperate need for the convicting work of the Spirit (John 3:3; 1 Cor 2:12-14). [page 17]

10. Trusting the Holy Spirit Is Crucial in Leadership.

The straightforward truth of Scripture is able both to open blind eyes and to transform the heart (Ps. 19:7-11). Supernatural discernment comes from a mind saturated with truth (Ps 119:97-104). It brings clarity to flaws, liberates the conscience (Jas 1:25), uncovers the deepest issues of the inner man (Heb 4:12), and fully equips the believer for a life of pleasing God (2 Tim 3:16-17). Many leadership models today have uttered abandoned a simple trust in the work of the Holy Spirit to bring effective spiritual influence, and the results have been disastrous. [page 18]

11. The Word of God Clearly Most Effective.

Nothing is more penetrating and more effective in reaching sin-hardened hearts than the pure and unadulterated Word of God. All our human techniques and ingenuity are like dull plastic butter knives compared to the Word of God, which is "sharper than any two-edged sword." [pages 18-19]

12. The Body of Christ Needs Real Spiritual Food Continually.

Without the regular proclamation of the living and abiding Word of God and the convicting power of the Holy Spirit, true spiritual influence dries up and the body of Christ is starved of real sustenance. [page 20]

13. Items Missing from Today's Ministry.

The biblical privileges of shepherding, accountability, discipleship, holy living, and obeying the "one anothers" seem to have escaped today's ministry designers. [page 20]

14. Trusting in the Word of God for Growth.

We need leaders who put their confidence in the Word of God alone for the growth of God's people. The Lord Jesus Christ said He would build His church (Matt 16:18), we cannot sit idle while the sheep are ravaged by ministry leaders who've resigned their responsibility to trust in "the living and abiding word of God" (1 Peter 1:23). [page 21]

15. Humility Is Crucial in a True Leader.

The true leader will have no desire to lord it over God's heritage, but will be humble gentle, self-sacrificing and altogether as ready to follow as to lead, when the Spirit makes it clear that a wiser and more gifted man than himself has appeared. [page 22]

16. Godly Character in the Life of a Leader.

...it is the *godly character* of a leader that determines the level of beneficial and long-term influence in spiritual matters. If others are to be effectively launched in a Godward direction a leader must ignite the fuel of his own intimate walk with Jesus Christ. [page 23]

17. Consecration and Holiness.

The great Charles Haddon Spurgeon once said, "Let us aspire to saintliness of spirit and character. I am persuaded that the greatest power we can get over our fellow-men is the power which comes of consecration and holiness." [page 25]

18. Credibility Comes from a Holy, Pure Life.

Spiritual credibility springs from a holy and pure life. Righteousness may not get the popular vote, but it should have no rivals in the preparation of an effective leader. From the pulpit to the pew nothing is more stabilizing, more admirable, more compelling among the leadership qualification than our personal holiness. [page 26]

19. Pursuing Godliness.

Without the fervent pursuit of godliness, preaching loses all authority, discipleship becomes cold duty, and prayer is hypocrisy. [page 29]

20. Being the Lord's Messenger to Everyone He Has to Do.

The Servant of the Lord Jesus must be instant in season and out of season, knowing that he is the Lord's messenger to everyone with whom he has to do, and *ever learning of the Lord*; seeing that he is to be continually ministering to others, he must be receiving fresh supplies from God of all grace through all channels ... seeking in every way to magnify Christ and abased the creature. – from Robert L. Peterson's *Robert Chapman, A Biography* (Neptune, NJ: Loiseaux Brothers, Inc., 1995) p. 145. [page 33]

21. Thinking of Oneself Less.

Ken Blanchard, cofounder of The Ken Blanchard Companies, which helps businesses learn to lead effectively, crystallized the issue when he said, “The key of a servant leader’s heart is humility. People with humility don’t think less of themselves; they just think of themselves less.” [page 35]

22. Think of Others, Not of Self.

Vision and discernment flourish under a leader whose ultimate goal is larger than personal aggrandizement. A true servant-leader channels the energies and gifting of others toward worthy goals. [page 36]

23. God Alone is Worthy and Preeminent.

...our usefulness points to God’s supreme worth and preeminent significance. We sometimes behave as though our talents and gifts are indispensable to God’s redemptive plan, but Scripture teaches the opposite. As Paul admonished a very gifted Corinthian congregation, “What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants though whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth” (1 Cor 3:5-7). [pages 39-40]

24. Living Obediently.

...it’s easier to talk of being humbly obedient than to cultivate the discipline required to grow its lasting roots. It’s a bit like a husband and wife who were contemplating a trip to the Holy Land:

Husband: “Wouldn’t it be fantastic to go to the Holy Land and stand and shout the Ten Commandments from Mount Sinai?”

Wife: “It would be better if we stayed home and kept them.” [page 46]

25. Bringing Our Conduct into Conformity of God’s Word.

For *spiritual* leaders, the Word of God is our incontestable standard! Our convictions must come from Scripture and our conduct brought into conformity with its directives. Where there is doctrinal compromise there has long been a contentedness “with unbiblical notions that raise [the] comfort level and either justify or overlook ... sins.” Integrity is having an untarnished moral character both publicly and *when no one else is around*. [pages 53-54]

26. Being in the Truth Shines Light upon Edging toward Compromise.

Prompt obedience sharpens the clarity of truth’s familiar sound, causing our spiritual senses to go on high alerts. The more we obey, the greater affirmation that we are

honest and genuine. A highly trained, truth-sensitive conscience will give us no rest when we edge toward compromise. [page 56]

27. Fleeing Sin.

The moment our minds entertain a sinful desire we must “flee these things” (1 Tim 6:11), running as fast as we can to take refuge in the cross of our Lord and Master. [page 62]

28. Knowing God Well.

MacArthur simply states, “Divine truth and godliness are inextricably related. No matter how sincere our intentions might be, we cannot obey God’s will if we do not know what it is. We cannot be godly if we do not know what God is like and what He expects of those who belong to Him.” [page 63]

29. Faithfulness in Shepherds.

Some time ago, I asked a very prominent pastor of many battle-worn years what he saw as the most needed quality among church leaders today. Without a moment’s hesitation, he emphatically replied, “Faithfulness!” Above all other worthy qualities, steadfast endurance immediately topped this seasoned shepherd’s list. [page 65]

30. The Church Is Missing Long-term Faithful Leaders.

Books continue to be written and leadership resources offered at breakneck speed. With all that is available one would expect that, as with a time-tested automobile, the basic frame and power plant of ministry would be well oiled. By now, the church should be adept at identifying, cultivating, and replicating strong Christian leaders who demonstrate long-term faithfulness in the same direction. Where are such individuals? [page 66]

31. Grace Saves and Supplies.

The grace that *saves* the sinner is the power that must *supply* the sinner. [page 67]

32. Striving for Faithfulness.

Faithfulness is not forged in passivity. God’s power will sustain us, but the *means* by which divine strength is enjoyed is our proactive striving (Phil 2:12-13). [page 67]

33. Weakness Comes When Leaders Are Lazy or Isolated.

Weakness spreads rapidly when leaders are lazy or isolated from the flow of discipleship and mentoring. [page 69]

34. Discipleship Necessary for Leaders of Future Gospel Ministry.

The self-styled leaders of evangelicalism today are too disconnected from the heritage of godly leadership to understand that what they're crafting cannot sustain the people of God during what may prove to be the church's most embattled season of gospel ministry yet. Paul calls all generations of leaders to get in the flow of discipleship, accurately and faithfully passing the baton of gospel ministry to those who have demonstrated the gifts and commitment for lasting effectiveness. [page 70]

35. Refusing to Give Up Vanity and the World's Distractions.

One of the reasons men "burn out" in the service of Christ is the excess vanity and worldly distraction they simply refuse to jettison, which always leads to unfulfilled expectations. If we take on spiritual responsibility with designs on leisure, comfort, and perks, then we will not make enduring shepherds. [page 72]

36. Laying Down One's Life for Others.

The man whose heart longs to see Christ fully formed in God's people will bear the unselfish and tender marks of the Chief Shepherd, always willing to lay down his life for others. [page 83]

37. The Importance of Stewardship.

John MacArthur's summary of the data is helpful:

Sixteen of Christ's thirty-eight parables speak about how people should handle earthly treasure. In fact, our Lord taught much more about such stewardship (one out of every ten verses in the Gospels) than about heaven and hell combined. The entire Bible contains more than two thousand references to wealth and property, twice as many as total references to faith and prayer. What we do with the things God has given us is very important to Him. [page 83]

38. Devoted Zeal to Serve.

A good shepherd – devoted and honest—looks to the needs of others and carefully uses resources for the good of all. Peter describes the Christlike leader as full of zeal for the highest spiritual ideals ("eagerly," 5:2 – literally, a "devoted zeal to serve"), willing to make personal sacrifices wherever it is optimum for the flock. [page 84]

39. Robert G. Lee's Ministry.

Robert G. Lee was, by the testimony of all who knew him, the very opposite of belligerent. He was a model shepherd whose ministry was marked by a "love for his people and a determined defense of the word of God." Lee, born on November 11, 1886, in a South Carolina log cabin, was known not only for powerful preaching, but also for

his rare blend of strong Bible exposition and *tender shepherding*. His view of ministry was simple: defend the truth and love others by helping them live it! This unadorned but thoroughly biblical approach resulted in a lifetime of extraordinary preaching and divine blessing. [page 86]

40. No Place for Selfish Leaders.

The trustworthy leader will serve God best by feeding others with His food, reproofing them with His Word, tending them with His heart, and disciplining them with His grace. There is no place in the church for pugnacious, quarrelsome, or angry leaders (1 Tim 3:3, 2 Tim 2:24-25; 4:2). [page 87]

41. Impatience Has No Place in a Godly Leadership.

All Christians must learn to bear with one another's weaknesses, but leaders are called to a greater forbearance and compassion than those we lead. An intolerant shepherd may be free to carry out his ministry for a season, but God resists such attitudes and will most certainly chasten an impatient leader severely until he faces the problem. [page 88]

42. Honesty in Confession and Forsaking Sin.

Negligently, some leaders try to "clear the air" by generally admitting to a quick temper, or by making regular verbal apologies for offenses without the hard work of serious character reformation. This is a profound danger to one's spiritual integrity and conscience. Proverbs 28:13 teaches that shallow, half-hearted apologies invite more trouble, while an honest confession and desire to forsake sin stirs up compassion. [pages 90-91]

43. New Affections Have Power.

The only way to dispossess the heart of an old affection is by the expulsive power of a new one. [page 92]

44. Seeing Others Receiving Honor.

It is healthy to ask for a critique from those under your leadership. Often a person's opportunism is excused as a "strong leadership quality." The Scriptures teach, however, that strong leaders accentuate the usefulness of others and enjoy seeing someone else receive honor for faithful service (1 Cor 3:5-7). Beware the man who boasts of his own gifts (Prov 25:14). [page 93]

45. Impatience Is Destructive.

“A lack of patience in a Christian leader is a serious deficiency. An impatient leader is a destructive to people as an impatient father is to his children or as an impatient shepherd is to his sheep.” [page 110]

46. Learning to Listen Well.

Facing criticism well requires undistracted and careful listening. It's not easy, but the Scriptures command leaders to model how it's done (2 Tim 2:24-26). [page 111]

47. Use of Speech to Build Up.

Wise listeners always bring counsel that builds up the faith of another. When criticized, our speech should reflect our passion for the glory of Christ and the edification of His people. We are called to use speech that is “good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear (Eph 4:29). [page 115]

48. Criticism Used by God.

...instead of yielding to the temptation of pride and fear of man, we ought to consider every criticism as a providential gift from the Lord to teach us some beneficial lessons:

- Criticism drives us to prayer. A greater degree of dependency results when we're burdened over the criticism of others. We're compelled to take every matter before the Lord so that our hearts are guarded (Phil 4:6).
- Criticism drives us to the Scriptures. We are constrained to search the Word of God for clarity, wisdom, and understanding (Ps 119:98-100; Prov 3:5-6; 2 Tim 3:16-17).
- Criticism refines our communication skills. We benefit from having to rearticulate what we believe in clearer terms and with a more careful disposition (Eph 4:29; Col 4:6).
- Criticism forces us to examine our hearts. Criticism causes us to look carefully at our attitudes and motives, and we are reminded of our own sinfulness (1 Cor 4:3-5; Gal 6:4-5).
- Criticism produces spiritual endurance. Being criticized may be painful, but God uses it to wean us from our own resources and makes us stronger in His grace and strength (Jas 1:2-4; 2 Cor 12:7-10).

- Criticism provides unique opportunities to model godly humility. When others disagree, even sharply, we should be an example of humble submission to the Lord’s sanctifying grace in our lives (Prov 9:8-9; 12:15).
- Criticism offers greater opportunity to give God glory. God is exalted and His glory. God is exalted and His glory magnified when His servants bear up graciously under harsh treatment (1 Pet 2:20; 3:15-17). [pages 119-120]

49. False Criticism.

A fool’s criticism will bear the following marks:

- Dishonesty, tale-bearing, and slander (Prov 11:13; 3 John 10)
- Separation from accountability (Prov 18:1)
- A quarrelsome spirit and strife-mongering (Prov 26:20; 6:19; 15:18) [page 122]

50. The Sanctifying Grace of Criticism.

For spiritual leaders, criticism is a painful inevitability. It can come when we least expect it, and sometimes from the least likely sources. How we respond will be the difference between an excellent ministry and one that is plagued with strife. We need to hone our listening skills. We must resist taking personal offence when complaints are thrown at us. The kingdom work is God’s business, and His glory should be our highest pursuit. When our reputation, our name, our achievements are paramount, we view criticism as a negative to be constantly avoided. But criticism is a sanctifying grace in the believer’s life, and we can learn from the perceptions of others—both the accurate and mistaken. [page 123]

51. Confronting One Another in Love.

Church leaders must be clean vessels, “sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work” (2 Tim 2:21). Uncomfortable or not, we must be willing to gently confront one another in love so that all sin is righted and relationships restored. It’s no wonder that many leadership teams can’t seem to make wise decisions for the church: so often they have tried to conduct ministry while unresolved sin boils below the surface, looking for a place to erupt. We serve the people of God best when, as one of my mentors used to say, “we place ourselves in the place of God’s maximum blessing.” It means that we must, “so far as it depends on [us], live peaceably with all” (Romans 12:18). [page 141].

52. A Shepherd Being an Unashamed Watchman.

Richard Mayhue calls the shepherd a “Spiritual Sentinel.” These sentinels are “not only approved workmen (2 Tim 2:15), but also *unashamed watchmen*.” The shepherd is called a watchman for a good reason! He can never neglect the safety of his flock, nor be indifferent or reckless concerning their constant need for food and shelter. If he becomes timid and self-preserving, he will run at the first sign of trouble, and the sheep are doomed. If he miscalculates the seriousness of his duties and becomes careless or casual, the flock will not be spared. Mayhue sets the tone by saying, “In a life-and-death situation, he must alertly tend the flock like a vigilant watchman protects his city.” [pages 170- 171]

53. Spurgeon’s Self-Assessment for Pastors.

In *Lectures to My Students*, Charles Spurgeon begins with the chapter, “The Minister’s Self-Watch,” which includes this assessment: “[The minister’s] pulse of vital godliness must beat strongly and regularly; his eye of faith must be bright; his foot of resolution must be firm; his hand of activity must be quick; his whole inner man must be in the highest degree of sanity.” [pages 178-179]

54. Walking in Error.

Spurgeon once said, “Complicity with error will take from the best of men the power to enter any successful protest against it.” [pages 181-182]

55. Some Can be Effective Leaders.

The truth of the matter is that some men make effective leaders and some do not. [page 189]

56. Contentedness with Others Good to Mentor Future Leaders.

Those men in the church who demonstrate a contentedness—even an overt thankfulness—at the special abilities and effectiveness of others are the ones to pray over, spend time with, mentor, and cultivate into the next generation of leaders. [page 192]

57. Men of Good Repute, Trustworthiness.

The godly servants of Acts 6:3, appointed to help resolve a serious conflict in the church, were chosen because they were men “of good repute.” Everyone knew that these men were absolutely trustworthy! No one even flinched when they were given responsibility over money, food distribution, and proper shepherding of wrong attitudes. These men were known by their friends as having integrity. Paul told Timothy that overseers must also be men who are “well thought of by outsiders” (1 Tim 3:7). When the raw quality of trustworthiness shows up, there is the making of a strong leader. [page 194]

58. Three-Year Leadership Training.

We began to meet at 6:00 a.m. on Monday mornings, partly because the schedule of one of our elders prevented him taking a different day, and partly because, in the providence of God, my willingness to meet in the early hours of Monday (after a full Lord’s Day) would encourage greater commitment in them. I decided to work through a two-year cycle of teaching, concentrating on every aspect of pastoral theology—practical ministry for spiritual leaders. We called these meetings our “Monday Leadership Training,” a kind of leadership practicum and forum for questions and discussions on shepherding issues.

Seventeen years into my ministry in this church, we’re still meeting every week, adding new potential leaders by the year. During the (now) three-year cycle, we cover the following area of practical ministry:

- Church leadership/shepherding
- Resolving leadership conflicts
- Church government
- Philosophy of ministry (non-negotiables)
- Biblical discipleship/counseling
- Understanding worship and music in the local church
- Church discipline
- Women’s role in local church
- Spiritual gifts/body life
- Shepherding families
- Dealing with crises
- Divorce and remarriage
- Studying Scripture (basic hermeneutics)

- Overview of theology
- Teaching Scripture (assigned texts and evaluations)
- Contemporary issues
- Church history [pages 197-198]

59. Bible Knowledge Basics Necessary for Church Leadership.

Strong leadership learns how to refine and clearly articulate what it believes and why. Such influence slowly begins to permeate the church, flowing down from the leadership to every area of ministry.

This requires that leaders learn to make their way around their own Bibles. It's sad having to state this at all when it comes to spiritual leadership in the church, but many shepherds and leaders have never been taught Bible knowledge basics, let alone a summary of orthodox doctrine. Training leaders begins with teaching the men theology, both systematic and practical. [pages 199-200]

60. Must Know Bible!

With our leaders, early on we study what we call “the non-negotiables of effective gospel ministry,” which include a right view of God, the Scriptures, sin, salvation in Christ, the church, and biblical leadership. No matter how you accomplish it, your next generation of leaders must know their Bibles! [page 200]

61. Faithful Men Able to Teach Others.

What...is leadership? It is the God-given ability to influence others through the power of a godly life and the wisdom gained in the practice of truth. God's people are suffering greatly today for lack of dynamic spiritual influence. Oh, there are all kinds of influence being had—popularity contests, business savvy, political power, financial manipulation, social mobilization, etc.—and such methods have infiltrated the work of the church, captivating the affections of her leaders who seem ready to chase every new fad on the horizon. These tactics are impotent when it comes to true leadership. Leading others to real change and spiritual growth demands character that has walked that same path in victory. We must abandon the pop-techniques of the business world and the communal overtones of the postmodern, anti-authority bent. As the spiritual leaders of today who are teaching those of tomorrow, we must be able to articulate the truth with piercing clarity, our lives must reflect a sober-mindedness and the pursuit of holy living, we must flee from the weaknesses and sinful habits that destroys integrity, faithfulness, and humble obedience, and we must pour our lives into the next generation of God's men. If we bail on this vital responsibility, the people of God will have to live with the fallout. The mandate is clear; our orders are unambiguous. In the

words of Paul, “What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2). [page 213]