

How to Strike it “Rich”  
“Develop Leaders—Humbly”  
Colossians 3:12-17

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The Lion King came roaring into Nashville a few weeks ago. This delightful Broadway musical about the circle of life tells the story of Simba, the shame-based, guilt-ridden, lion cub from Pride Rock who avoids becoming King of the Jungle because he doesn't think he's good enough.

When I mention the word leader, what images dance in your head — a military officer barking orders, a politician seeking votes, the head of a company telling others what to do? How does 'leader' strike you?

A stranger called a church office one day and said to the receptionist, “I want to speak to the Head Hog.” The stunned receptionist replied, “I'm not sure what you mean.” The impatient stranger on the phone said, “Look, ma'am, I want to give the church a million dollars. I need to talk with the Head Hog.” The perceptive receptionist said immediately, “I'll transfer you. The Big Pig just came in the door.”

What if leadership were connecting instead of controlling, influence instead of power, direction instead of dictatorship? What if, like Simba, you are destined to be a leader whether you want to or not? Maybe you are not a business leader, a political leader, or even a church leader. Never, however, shy away from your role as a spiritual leader—a person with the responsibility of influencing God's people in God's direction—in your family, in your community, at your church, and yes, even at work. Today, I want to talk about developing leaders humbly.

**SPIRITUAL LEADERS CLOTHE THEMSELVES IN CHRIST.** In the scripture lesson for today in Verse 12 Paul says, “*Clothe yourselves with compassion and kindness and humility and genuineness and patience.*” Clothing stores have a saying which goes, “Clothes make the person.” Indeed they do. Clothes cover us, protect us, contain us, shape us, announce us. Clothes are so much more than pieces of fabric sewn together. Clothes tell people who we are, what we want to be and with whom we want to be identified. We dress not just for comfort, but for self-expression.

It should come as no surprise that the Bible is full of references to clothes. “*The Lord God made garments of skin for Adam and Eve and clothed them*” (Genesis 3:21). When the prodigal son came home, the father said to his servants, “*Quick, bring the best robe and put it on him. Put a ring on his finger and sandals on his feet*” (Luke 15:22).

When Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead he said, *“Take off his grave clothes and let him go”* (John 11:44). Isaiah said, *“All righteous acts are nothing more than filthy rags”* (Isaiah 64:6). Here Paul says, *“Clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience.”* In the early church when new converts were baptized into the faith, they were stripped naked, and then clothed in a white robe which they wore for an entire week, symbolizing their new life in Christ. Paul seems to be saying in this passage, don’t be running around with a naked soul. Shed the filthy rags of selfishness, pride, lust, and greed, and let your soul be clothed in Christ, who makes all things new.

**SPIRITUAL LEADERS FORGIVE AS THE LORD FORGIVES.** In Verse 13 we read, *“Bear with each other and forgive whatever grievances you may have against one another. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”*

Just a few weeks ago, Charles Carl Roberts IV walked into the West Nickel Mines School in Lancaster, Pennsylvania and killed five Amish girls and wounded several others. The blood was barely dry on the floor of that school when the Amish parents sent words of forgiveness to the family of Mr. Roberts. Of the seventy-five people at Mr. Robert’s funeral, at least half of them were Amish. The Amish community helped establish a relief fund for Mrs. Roberts and her three children. When stunned reporters asked the grieving community what they were doing by such acts of mercy, they simply responded, *“That’s what we do. We forgive.”*

To be perfectly honest, I have always been a little leery of fast forgivers. Forgiveness for me has been a much slower process—one step forward and two steps backward. Sometimes I lose ground in the process of forgiveness. Often I just stand still for a while. Who am I to judge those who have lost so much? Of this I am certain, life is too short to be consumed by resentments. Life is too good to be controlled by bitterness. If we decide to harbor our hurts we will be the losers in the long run.

So we must forgive one another, not because it’s easy, not because the wrong is trivial, not because the pain is diminished, not because we can forget about it, but by the grace of God deciding to go on living without allowing the wrong to define our existence or our anger to control our life. That is forgiveness. Forgive one another as God has forgiven you.

**SPIRITUAL LEADERS WORK FOR PEACE.** In Verse 15 we read, *“Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts since as members of one body you were called to peace.”* When it comes to conflict, are you a turtle, a skunk, or a real person? Turtle-like people avoid conflict at all cost. They stay in their shells pretending there is nothing wrong. It’s hard to relate to people in a shell. Skunk-like people create conflict; they like to stink up the place. With the least provocation they make life miserable for everybody and leave their odors behind for people to endure. Real people are neither turtles nor skunks. They accept

conflict as a fact of life and through assertiveness and active listening find creative ways to move toward reconciliation.

Henri Nouwen insists that prayer is the beginning and the end, the source and the fruit, the core and the content, the basis and the goal, of all peacemaking. In prayer, we discover the love that we are looking for and has already been given to us. In prayer we do not discover common ground, but higher ground, transcendent ground where the will of God can be known and done. In prayer we create a well not a wall. It is easy to build a wall, but what we need are wells, places of resources, a receptive place where we can quench our deepest thirsts for acceptance and understanding. We say in church, “May the peace of Christ be with you.” And the church responds, “And also with you” — pass it on. The peace, not of the world, not of contrived pressure, but the peace of Christ.

**SPIRITUAL LEADERS GIVE GOD THE GLORY.** *“And whatever you do, whether in word or deed, do it all in the name of the Lord Jesus”* (Verse 17).

I think one of the finest sermons I ever heard, was preached from this pulpit a few years ago by Dr. Zan Holmes. It was entitled, “Check Your Ego At The Door.” He addressed it to ministers, who certainly needed to hear it, but I’ve met a few lay people who could benefit from it as well.

It was Sigmund Freud back in 1923 who introduced the id, the ego, and the super-ego to the world. Down in the human psyche, there are primitive desires and norms of morality which the sense of self must manage and direct. So the ego is the “I” or “self” of any person.

The greatest obstacle to effective spiritual leadership is people pursuing their own agenda rather than seeking God’s will. Spiritual leadership is not about inflated egos. Spiritual leadership is not about bigger than life charisma. Spiritual leadership is not about personal success. Spiritual leadership is young Jesus saying, *“I must be about my Father’s business.”* Spiritual leadership is Jesus sweating drops of blood in the Garden of Gethsemane saying, *“Not my will, but Thine be done.”* Spiritual leadership is doing it all for the glory of God.

What does ego mean to you? Does ego mean edging God out? Does ego mean exalting God only?

Whether or not it is clear to us, most of us are influencing somebody, a child, a friend, a neighbor, a co-worker, a company, a community, a church. In that sense we are all leaders. Somebody’s destiny is being determined by our thoughts and actions. Wouldn’t you like to be the kind of spiritual leader that God wants you to be? Like Simba we might find ourselves saying, “Who me? Now you have to be kidding. I’m going to stick out in the other land where there are no worries, no responsibilities and no problems.” God doesn’t call us there; remember who you are, Simba. You belong back among your people setting them on the right road.

I invite you to a simple prayer of dedication that we may be the kind of leaders who glorify God. If you are a staff member, come to this altar. If you serve on any ministry or administrative team, teach a Sunday school class, lead a small group, youth-children's worker, I want to see you at these altars. If you are a parent and you'd like a little help, this is the place to pray. If you've got a company and you wonder what God is wanting you to do, this is the place to pray. If you are just an ordinary person trying to make a life, do the best you can and you could use some wisdom from God, there is power in a community of people who join hands and pray. Gather here and let's ask the Lord to lead us. Amen.