
Leading With Love



Core Values Series

BARBARA BROUWER

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We thank Barbara Brouwer, Coffee Break director, Elmhurst Christian Reformed Church, Elmhurst, Illinois, for writing this booklet. Barbara has also authored *Discover Hebrews* for Coffee Break ministry and has been a speaker at Coffee Break conventions.

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BARBARA BROUWER

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INTRODUCTION

Leading in ministry is an exciting opportunity and an awesome responsibility. When we are called to leadership, we often worry: Am I qualified to do the job? Do I have enough ability, knowledge, and experience? While these characteristics are helpful, they are not necessarily what God looks for when he chooses a leader.

Moses was advised by his father-in-law, Jethro, to share the load of leading the nation Israel. Jethro said, “Select capable men—men who fear God, trustworthy men who hate dishonest gain” (Ex. 18:21). Moses chose men who had a relationship with God and who demonstrated a God-fearing character. God looks for these same qualifications today. He is more interested in who we are than in what we can do.

Therefore, this booklet does not focus on teaching effective methods for leadership. Rather, it focuses on a leader’s relationship with God. Loving God is the single most important qualification for leadership in his kingdom. All other abilities and skills are useless without this foundation; from this foundation, true, loving, effective leadership of others can take place.

This booklet is designed to challenge experienced and beginning leaders to let God's love equip them to lead Coffee Break ministry. Jesus' teaching about servant leadership will be applied to our love for God and ourselves as we grow to love others and reach out to the lost. Directors will be encouraged to serve the leader through specific ministry strategies. As we lead others to God, may this be our motto: "Trust steadily in God, hope unswervingly, love extravagantly" (1 Cor. 13:13, *THE MESSAGE*).

LEADING BIBLICALLY

“But I am among you as one who serves.”

—Luke 22:27

What do we think of when we think of leadership? Many of our ideas about leadership come from the world around us. We see leaders who use their position to promote themselves and to take advantage of others. Some leaders behave as if they are not accountable to others. Some leaders believe that their needs, their ideas, and their programs must be achieved at any cost.

During the dark days of Watergate and before his conversion, Charles Colson said, “I’d walk over my grandmother to win an election.” Colson later wrote,

Not once did I see myself as having really sinned. Politics was a dirty business, and I was good at it. And what I had done, I rationalized, was no different from the usual political maneuvering. What’s more, right and wrong were relative, and my motives were for the good of the country—or so I believed.

In the Bible we see an entirely different picture of leadership. We see Abraham, who was given God's promise of a great inheritance and who never had a permanent home. We see Moses, who was elevated to the position of Israel's leader, and then spent the rest of his life serving a stubborn, rebellious, whining group of people, bringing them to an inheritance that he never enjoyed. We see prophets and apostles, who, after being chosen by God to be his messengers, were subjected to hardship, persecution, humiliation, rejection, and death. And, over all, we see Jesus as Paul describes him in Philippians 2:6-8:

Who, being in very nature God, did not consider equality with God something to be grasped, but made himself nothing, taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself and became obedient to death—even death on a cross!

Jesus modeled and taught a leadership style that challenges Christians to be leaders who seek to serve rather than to be served.

As a Servant

Jesus presented the idea of servant leadership to his disciples on at least two occasions. On one occasion, the disciples were having a heated discussion about who would be first in Jesus' kingdom. Jesus said, "If anyone wants to be first, he must be the very last, and the servant of all" (Mark 9:35). On another occasion, the mother of James and John requested positions of honor for her sons in Jesus' kingdom. In reply to this request, Jesus called the twelve disciples together and said,

“You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave—just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:25-28).

What does it mean to be a servant leader? It means that we consider ourselves servants in two ways. First of all, we are servants of our Lord Jesus Christ. And secondly, we are servants of those whom God gives us to lead. Our allegiance is both to God (upward) and to others (outward). Jesus demonstrated these priorities in his own life. In the gospel of John we read,

- “I tell you the truth, the Son can do nothing by himself; he can do only what he sees his Father doing, because whatever the Father does the Son also does” (5:19).
- “I do nothing on my own but speak just what the Father has taught me” (8:28).
- “And I will do whatever you ask in my name, so that the Son may bring glory to the Father” (14:13).
- “The Father is greater than I. . . . the world must learn that I love the Father and that I do exactly what my Father has commanded me” (14:28, 31).

Jesus declares his allegiance to his Father, his dependence on his Father, and his desire that his Father receive glory. He humbly recognizes that his Father is greater than he. These same attitudes should be evident in Christian leaders. Christian leaders are first of all followers—followers of God and his Son, Jesus Christ. Servants depend on their masters for position, provision, protection, and promotion. So, too, we depend on God to determine what we should do, to give us the means to do it, to protect us, and to promote

us as he sees fit. We can serve and lead others properly only when we understand that we are God's servants.

Johanna Veenstra, pioneer missionary to Nigeria, exemplified servant leadership as she "dared exchange the security of home and the comforts of Western society for loneliness, privation, tropical diseases, and human opposition . . . out of love and obedience to the Lord Jesus Christ." Upon returning to Nigeria after her first furlough, Johanna discovered that her coworkers had gone back to the United States because of health problems. Johanna—a twenty-six-year-old white woman with one year of missionary experience—was put in charge of the field! Clara Haigh, an English woman, came to help. In *Daughters Who Dared* (CRC Publications, 1992), Gerald Zandstra describes their servant role:

For three years, Johanna and Clara . . . put most of their energy into building their own compound. They erected buildings, fixed huts, and did their household chores. They were responsible for handling all the reports, accounts, and mail. . . . they traveled to the surrounding villages, preaching, teaching, and leading prayer services. Ideally, the mission field should have had an ordained leader . . . a teacher . . . a doctor . . . a builder and agriculturalist. . . . But . . . Johanna Veenstra and Clara Haigh had to be all of these things to the Nigerians.

After more than a decade of service in Nigeria, Johanna Veenstra's health failed. Zandstra records her final words: "He's altogether lovely. . . . My portion Tell my mother to be all at rest, to have no memorial applauses. I'm all unworthy, only a sinner saved by grace. . . . Tell my brothers and sisters I want them all to meet me in heaven."

With Love

As servants of Jesus Christ, we are compelled to lead with love as he did. This love is rooted in our love for God. It is demonstrated in a biblical love for self and sacrificial love for others. Johanna Veenstra followed her Master's example as she lived the words of Matthew 22:37-39: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. .- .-. [And] love your neighbor as yourself."

Johanna cared for the Nigerians as a mother cares for her children. Sensing their sorrow over her death, one of Johanna's coworkers wrote, "Pray for these children of the Lord, that the home-going of their mother may draw them closer to Him who is preparing a place for them in the house of many mansions." God's love prepares a home; our love, like Johanna Veenstra's, can lead others to that home.

Group Discussion

1. Think of leaders in our world today. What contrasts do you see between those who lead "biblically" and those who lead the way the world defines leadership?
2. Whom do Christian leaders serve? Why?
3. How can Coffee Break leaders demonstrate biblical leadership?

Reflection: Love in Action

1. Conduct a self-evaluation during your quiet time this week. (You may find it helpful to keep a journal.) Think about your leadership role in Coffee Break as you answer these questions:
 - Why do I want to be a Coffee Break leader?
 - What leadership gifts has God given me?
 - What leadership roles do I find especially difficult?
 - How can I be a Coffee Break *servant* leader? (Think of two or three specific ways you can reflect Jesus')

idea of servant leadership during this Coffee Break season.)

2. Read Zandstra's *Daughters Who Dared* (CRC Publications, 1992). Reflect on the significance of your leadership role in these words from the final chapter of this book:

Whatever other lessons can be learned from [the] lives [of these five women missionaries], the lessons of service and self-sacrifice shine through as examples to all. God called each person. . . . God equipped them by the power of the Holy Spirit with the necessary gifts and leadership so that hearts and souls . . . were won for Christ. Through their efforts . . . through their devotion, the church of Christ was planted where it had not before existed . . . a church that lives and serves in the spirit of the people whom Christ had chosen to plant it.

Let's Do It

- Offer to babysit for a struggling mom so that she can attend a parenting class.
- Deliver a grocery-store bouquet to celebrate a birthday, promotion, or other special event.
- Give hugs or high-fives for a job well done.
- Send a note of encouragement.
- Bring meals in time of crisis—loss of job, sickness, death in the family.
- Organize a house-cleaning party after a flooded basement, fire, or long illness.

LOVING GOD

“God . . . has called you into fellowship [koinonia] with his Son Jesus Christ our Lord.”

—1 Corinthians 1:9

As servants of Jesus Christ, we live in a love relationship with God. God loves us, and we respond to that love by committing ourselves to God with all our hearts and with all our souls and with all our minds (Matt. 22:37). Living in a loving relationship requires that we live in fellowship with the person whom we love. Fellowship with God is essential for leaders. In his book *Be the Leader You Were Meant To Be* (Victor Books, 1975), LeRoy Eims says, “God himself is our source of power, but *fellowship* with God is that which ‘throws the switch,’ and makes that power operative and effective in our lives.”

How should we live in loving fellowship with God? True fellowship is not easy to achieve or maintain. We need to build time into our daily lives for nurturing our relationship with God through prayer and Bible reading. At a specific, regular time each day we should place ourselves in the

presence of God to hear what he says to us and to tell him what's on our hearts and minds. We should open ourselves to God for his words, his comfort, his love. Fellowship with God includes *worship, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, and meditation.*

Worship

During worship we focus on who God is. Worship increases our knowledge of God; it also increases our ability to trust in him. A friend of mine says, "Praising God increases my certainty that God is who he says he is."

Sometimes words of worship do not come easily to us. At times like this, it is helpful to use praise passages from the Bible or praise songs to help us express our adoration. Books that focus on the attributes of God can also be helpful. A. W. Tozer's book *The Knowledge of the Holy* (Harper & Row, 1961) or J. I. Packer's *Knowing God* (InterVarsity Press, 1973) are books that help Christians learn about God's attributes.

Spending time in praise and worship draws us into the presence of God and focuses our thoughts on him. Praise and worship help us put our own needs and concerns into an eternal perspective, enabling us to relax and enjoy God's presence.

Confession

During confession we ask God to show us what in our lives hinders our fellowship with him. We confess with humility and a sincere desire to be continually growing into the image of Christ. Our attitude in confession is not one of defeat and despair. Rather, it is one of hope and joy as we reflect on God's mercy and forgiveness. These words from Psalm 51:10-13 can prepare our hearts to meet God:

Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me from your presence or take your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation and grant me a willing spirit, to sustain me. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners will turn back to you.

The progression of these verses makes them especially applicable to leaders. We can only teach others about God's ways when we have asked God to purify our own hearts and renew our spirits.

Another helpful confession passage is Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, O God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."

Thanksgiving

Effective fellowship includes thanksgiving. Psalm 50:23 says, "He who sacrifices thank offerings honors me, and he prepares the way so that I may show him the salvation of God." When we give thanks, we recognize with grateful hearts the blessings of God, and honor God as the giver of these blessings. Thanksgiving opens our hearts to God, enabling us to see his salvation at work in our lives. We can then teach others about God's salvation.

Supplication

Often the easiest aspect of fellowship is supplication. We eagerly bring our prayer needs before our Lord. We can be straightforward with God about our needs, submitting to God's wisdom and timing. Submission does not mean hiding how we feel; it means expressing our feelings to God and then trusting him to answer in his perfect, loving, good way.

Meditation

An open Bible is essential for our fellowship with God. Through God's Word we discover God's attributes, our need for confession, the blessing of salvation we have through Christ Jesus, and the assurance of God's loving interest in our prayer concerns. Donald Whitney, in his book *Spiritual Disciplines of the Christian Life* (NavPress, 1991), identifies three elements that are essential in making Bible devotions an integral part of our fellowship with God: reading, meditating, and memorizing. Whitney fittingly calls these three elements "Bible intake."

Reading the Bible involves reading with a plan and purpose, not just at random. We might read a particular book, or we might conduct a topical study of women of the Old Testament or a study of the parables. *Meditating* on what we read means taking the time to think and pray about what we've read. It means "digesting" the Word so that it becomes a part of our thoughts and actions. *Memorizing* passages of Scripture helps us to hold firmly to the promises of God as we hide his Word in our hearts (Ps. 119:11). To keep a particular verse in its context, it is best to memorize short passages rather than just one verse.

Deepening Our Fellowship with God

A prayer/devotion journal can be an invaluable help in making devotions meaningful. If we write down our prayer requests, we can more easily see over time the ways that God answers our prayers through revelation of his Word or through changes in our lives. This challenges us to be accountable for what he has revealed, and to love him with all our hearts, souls, and minds.

While daily devotions are essential in a leader's life, an occasional personal retreat day can be especially beneficial. A morning or afternoon in a park (or in a cubicle at the local

public library, or in a motel room, or at a retreat center) can be used for an extended period of uninterrupted time for worship, meditation, and prayer. Structuring a retreat time can be somewhat intimidating, but God will guide us in prioritizing the use of our time as we make ourselves available to him.

Small group retreats can provide similar benefits, as well as the support of others. Even more accountability and encouragement can be gained through spiritual mentoring—leaders guiding leaders in their walk with the Lord. Coffee Break leadership groups also provide an informal spiritual network and can be expanded to offer more one-on-one discipleship support.

To love God is to place ourselves in his presence. Want to be a leader? Plug into God's power!

Group Discussion

1. Which aspect of fellowship (worship, confession, thanksgiving, supplication, meditation) is the hardest for you? What can you do to overcome this?
2. Why are personal devotions so important for leaders?
3. How can your group of Coffee Break leaders help each other grow closer to God?

Reflection: Love in Action

1. Make an appointment with God each day for prayer and Bible intake. (Write it on your calendar along with all your other daily and weekly reminders.)
2. Begin a prayer/devotion journal. Share your reflections with your small group or with a spiritual mentor.
3. Keep a Christian songbook with your Bible, or listen to tapes and CDs in the car or around the house to help you worship and praise God.

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4. Schedule one day or a half day each month for a retreat day—extended time spent alone with God. (Perhaps your leadership group may want to plan a retreat, allowing for some personal and small group fellowship with God and with each other.)
 5. Choose Scripture passages that you would like to memorize. Write them on index cards and carry them with you to learn and review in the car, doctor's office, or wherever you may have a few minutes of waiting time.
 6. Read Edith Bajema's *The Priority of Prayer* (CRC Publications, 1993). Evaluate your own prayer priorities, and set two or three goals for the next several weeks to increase your prayer time and to make it more meaningful.

Let's Do It

- Go for a weekly walk with a friend and pray aloud together.
- Pray on the phone with an accountability partner.
- Make a concert date with God and play the piano and sing praise songs to him alone.
- Spend time in solitude, listening to God speak in the stillness.
- Get up early to watch a sunrise and thank God for all it represents—a new beginning, light, faithfulness, and so on.

LOVING SELF

“Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come!”

—2 Corinthians 5:17

If we love God, we will live obedient lives. Jesus says in John 14:15, “If you love me, you will obey what I command.” Jesus summarized our obedience in Matthew 22:37-39 when he said, “Love the Lord your God .-. [and] love your neighbor as yourself.” The second part of this great commandment assumes that we already love ourselves, but too often our love for ourselves keeps us from loving others.

To talk about loving self in the context of servant leadership seems to be contradictory. After all, when we serve God and others, aren't we supposed to submerge ourselves, placing ourselves at the bottom of our priority list? We often misunderstand Christian service this way and consequently lose touch with who we are in Christ and how we have been gifted by God for service. When we submerge ourselves, we can damage our ability to serve effectively in joy, love, and confidence as God intended.

Children of God

Most of us carry pictures in our wallets (we might even be SOGs—“silly old grandmas” with pictures in our purse). All of us carry a picture of ourselves in our minds. It’s a picture of how we see ourselves and how we think others see us. When we see ourselves as children of God, we have a whole new perspective for leading in love.

When we accept and rejoice in the realization that God loves us, we are no longer bound by feelings of fear, selfishness, shame, guilt, alienation, or incompetence. We are children of the King, called to serve and to lead in love.

How are we to love ourselves? Our mental picture or self-image should be based on what the Bible tells us about who we are in Christ. This biblical picture answers questions like these: Where do I belong? How much am I worth? What am I able to do?

First of all, we understand that we have been adopted by God into his family. Thus we have an identity as children of God. John 1:12-13 tells us, “Yet to all who received him, to those who believed in his name, he gave the right to become children of God—children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband’s will, but born of God.”

Second, we understand that we have inestimable value in the kingdom of God because the price of our adoption was the blood of God’s Son, Jesus Christ. Peter reminds us, “For you know that it was not with perishable things such as silver or gold that you were redeemed from the empty way of life handed down to you from your forefathers, but with the precious blood of Christ, a lamb without blemish or defect” (1 Pet. 1:18-19).

Third, we understand that we have been equipped by the Holy Spirit to do the work God gives us to do. We read in 2 Corinthians 3:5-6 that “our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant.”

This competence comes to us through the Holy Spirit, who “will guide you into all truth. He will not speak on his own; he will speak only what he hears, and he will tell you what is yet to come” (John 16:13).

We recognize that God loves us as his children. We have been lovingly created, redeemed, and equipped by a master craftsman for a unique purpose in his kingdom. “For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph. 2:10).

Gifted for Service

Another way we love ourselves is by taking the time and effort to discover how God has gifted us for service. In Romans 12:3 Paul writes, “Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.” J. B. Phillips in *The New Testament in Modern English* (Macmillan, 1972) paraphrases this verse: “Don’t cherish exaggerated ideas of yourself or your importance, but try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all.” This verse introduces a discussion of spiritual gifts in verses 4-8.

The Holy Spirit uses our unique life experiences, our personalities, our circumstances, and our talents or skills to develop our spiritual giftedness and to equip us for service. Sometimes we are not aware of the Spirit’s working, and we need to discover our spiritual gifts. The time spent in this discovery is not selfish time; rather it is time spent in obedience to God, discovering his design for our service. Discovery of our gifts will lead us to praise God for his marvelous work.

Group Discussion

1. What biblical picture can Coffee Break leaders carry of themselves?
2. Why is loving self part of our love for God and obedience to him?
3. Why is a *biblical* self-concept or mental image of ourselves important in enabling us to serve others effectively?
4. What spiritual gifts are represented in your group? (You might want to check Scripture references under "Gifts" in the concordance in the *NIV Study Bible* [Zondervan, 1985] for a list of specific gifts.)

Reflection: Love in Action

1. Meditate on and memorize verses that tell of God's love for you and who you are in Christ. Some verses and key words (pictures) are:
 - Romans 5:8: "sinners"
 - 1 Peter 1:18-19: "redeemed .-. with the precious blood of Christ"
 - Ephesians 1:5: "adopted"
 - John 1:12-13: "children of God"
 - Romans 8:14-16: "sons of God" (not slaves)
 - Matthew 6:26: "more valuable than they" (birds of the air)
 - Romans 8:37: "more than conquerors"
 - John 16:13: guided by the Spirit
 - 1 John 3:1-3: "children of God .-. like him"
 - 2 Corinthians 3:18: "transformed into his likeness"

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2. Complete the *Discover Your Gifts and Learn How to Use Them* course by Alvin J. Vander Griend (CRC Publications, 1996). This study can be done individually, in a small group, or by an entire congregation.
 3. Read Neil Anderson's book *Victory Over the Darkness: Realizing the Power of Your Identity in Christ* (Regal Books, 1990).

Let's Do It

- Reward yourself after completing a project. Take a leisurely bath, exchange manicures with a friend, read a book—just for fun.
- Buy something new to wear, even if it's just a pair of earrings.
- When struggling with poor self-image, work to see yourself through God's eyes.
- Make an inventory of your uniqueness by completing the following: God doesn't make junk. I'm valuable to him because . . .

LOVING OTHERS

*“Dear friends, let us love one another,
for love comes from God. Everyone who
loves has been born of God and knows
God.”*

—1 John 4:7

In the middle of Paul’s discussion of spiritual gifts in 1 Corinthians 12-14, we find the well-known chapter on love, 1 Corinthians 13. In this chapter we are taught that service without love is worth nothing to the giver or to the recipient. In fact, loveless service is as discordant and offensive as a sounding gong or clanging cymbal. Without love, our service is meaningless and ineffective. Jesus is our model for service; his service was born out of love and carried out in love. 1 John 3:16 says, “We know love by this, that he laid down his life for us—and we ought to lay down our lives for one another” (NRSV).

Where do we get this love for others, this sacrificial love that enables us to serve others as Jesus serves us? Sacrificial love does not come naturally to us. Rather, it is a love that God gives us through the Holy Spirit. Paul tells

us in Galatians 5:22 that love is a fruit of the Spirit. In 1 Thessalonians 3:12 Paul prays, “May the Lord make your love increase and overflow for each other and for everyone else.” Because sacrificial love comes from God, we need to make it a matter of prayer.

Accepting

When we love others, we accept them as they are. This acceptance is a reflection of the acceptance we have received from God. Ephesians 4:32 reminds us to “be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.” And Paul says in Romans 5:8, “But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” God loved us before we turned to him in repentance and faith. We reach out to others in the same way—in love, without judgment—for this is how Christ reached out to us.

In the Coffee Break setting, acceptance means welcoming all whom the Lord brings to our groups and providing for them a safe place to ask their questions, to respond to the nudging of the Holy Spirit, to express their doubts. It means allowing them to be quiet, letting them open up to you and to the group on their own timetable. It means removing anything that might be a barrier. Some of the questions leaders need to ask include

- Are childcare services adequate?
- Is it easy to find our church or meeting place?
- Are Bibles available for those who may not have one?
- Are our groups open to including new people?

Recognizing Needs

When we love others, we must be alert to their needs, especially their spiritual needs. Sometimes it’s easier to identify and focus on a person’s physical, social, and emotional needs—a meal, a hug, healing, encouragement. It

takes Spirit-led discernment to see beyond the obvious needs to the spiritual needs that people may have.

When Jesus was on earth, he healed the sick and he fed the hungry. But his greater concern was always for the spiritual needs of the people to whom he ministered. One example of this is found in John 9, where Jesus healed a blind man. He was not content to leave the man *spiritually* blind, ignorant of his greater need to believe in Jesus. After Jesus healed the man, he searched him out and asked him, “Do you believe in the Son of Man?” (9:35).

Spiritual wholeness was always a greater concern to Jesus than physical well-being. It should be our concern as well. When people come to Coffee Break, they have, by their attendance, already expressed a desire for spiritual things. We will not serve them adequately if we fail to discern and address their spiritual needs. They expect us to be spiritual guides; therefore we should be prepared to meet that need.

Discerning Spiritual Needs

What is a spiritual need? J. Stallwood in *Clinical Nursing* (Macmillan, 1975) describes a spiritual need as “anything that interferes with a person’s ability to establish or maintain a personal relationship with Jesus Christ.” Everyone’s ultimate spiritual need is to have a relationship with Jesus Christ. But even when that relationship has been established, lack of knowledge, emotional dysfunction, or life crises can block that relationship, making the person spiritually ill. (I am indebted to Grace Tazelaar, R.N., M.S., of the Luke Society for her training materials on spiritual needs.)

How do we discern spiritual needs? Some indications of spiritual need that a Coffee Break leader should be aware of are

- lack of a biblical understanding of God, humanity, and Jesus Christ

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- questions about the meaning of life, a search for “something more”
 - life crises that cause a person to ask “Why?”
 - expressions of self-pity, depression, insecurity, isolation, desperation, fear, or guilt

Besides being alert for these indications, we need to be careful listeners. We must listen to the person in need. We must also listen to the Spirit for guidance in our understanding of the person in need. One of the best ways to draw out spiritual needs is by asking spiritually sensitive questions like these:

- How would you describe God?
- What do you think about Jesus?
- What questions would you ask God if you could?
- How would you describe yourself spiritually?
- Do you ever wonder about life after death?
- Do you sometimes feel that life is empty?
- What is your biggest fear about coming to God and accepting his love?
- What do you think it means to be a Christian?
- Have you ever made a commitment to Jesus Christ?

Questions like these can open up the conversation to spiritual concerns and help you discern how best to serve in a spiritually significant way. When you are in a position of spiritual leadership, spiritual questions and conversation do not come as a surprise to those you are leading. Rather, they are expected and welcomed because they allow those we serve to express their spiritual needs and concerns.

Remembering how our own spiritual needs have been met in Jesus Christ (refer back to *Chapter 3: Loving Self*) will help us to lead others to the answers God provides.

Praying

Perhaps the most significant way we can serve others in love is to pray for them. The importance of intercessory

prayer is evident throughout the Bible. One significant verse about intercessory prayer is 1 Samuel 12:23, where Samuel says to the people of Israel, “As for me, far be it from me that I should sin against the Lord by failing to pray for you.” Our prayers for others will include their physical needs. However, our greater concern is to pray for their spiritual needs. Paul provides an excellent example of intercessory prayer for spiritual needs. Some examples from his epistles follow:

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 15:13).

I pray also that the eyes of your heart may be enlightened in order that you may know the hope to which he has called you, the riches of his glorious inheritance in the saints, and his incomparable great power for us who believe (Eph. 1:18-19).

Other prayers can be found in Ephesians 3:14-19; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9; 1 Thessalonians 3:12; 2 Thessalonians 1:11; 2:16. Paul’s prayers reflect Jesus’ greatest concern for the spiritual well-being of those for whom he prayed. Even when we don’t know the specific needs of the women who come to Coffee Break, we can use these prayers as models to effectively bring them to the throne of grace, asking for God’s work in their lives. Edith Bajema’s *The Priority of Prayer* (CRC Publications, 1993), another book in the Core Values series, highlights the power of prayer in Coffee Break ministry.

Caring Without Wearing

Caring and serving leaders are often concerned that they will wear out while they are leading. It is possible to wear out when the person we are serving is caught up in a problem

that is beyond our expertise. Wise leaders are aware of referral resources for persons with difficult problems, and they know when to refer. Persistent mental health problems and addiction issues are especially difficult and require referral to specially trained people. Referrals are not a cop-out. Rather, responsible referral is often the best way to serve others in difficult situations. Referrals should be made with prayer and with a healthy understanding that no one person is capable of meeting every need.

Another way we can wear out is by not taking care of ourselves. Carol Travilla, in her book *Caring Without Wearing* (NavPress, 1990), suggests these wearing-out warning signs:

- When I am irritable and short with the people I love most.
- When my quiet time is rushed and my attitude says, "Well, I've done that."
- When my exercise schedule is less than three hours a week.
- When the fruit of my spirit is to be critical and complain.
- When I am eating more and liking it less.
- When I am throwing longer pity parties and inviting more people.
- When I feel like nobody cares, nobody helps, and nobody loves me.
- When my calendar has no fun appointments.
- When I wish people would not ask me to do anything.
- When I just want to quit.

Sometimes we wear out because we have unrealistic expectations of ourselves. Travilla encourages us to rid ourselves of the following expectations:

- I have the ability to change another person.
- I have the capacity to help everyone.
- There should never be any limits to what I can do.

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- I am the only person available to help.
 - I must never make a mistake.

Travilla suggests that the key to “caring without wearing” is to “learn how to reach out within my limits .-. . understanding who I am, acknowledging who God is, having realistic expectations of myself, and adopting a lifestyle that gives priority to abiding in God’s love, wisdom, and daily guidance.” The key is loving and caring for ourselves so that we are able to love and care for others as God commands.

Jesus recognized the need to care for the caregiver when he slipped away to pray and to spend time by himself with his Father, and when he took his disciples away from the crowds for a respite. When we take care of ourselves, we will have the energy and resources to love others.

Group Discussion

1. What are some ways that Coffee Break leaders can love those they serve?
2. From your personal experience and previous involvement with Coffee Break, how have you recognized spiritual needs in yourself and others?
3. How can we turn a conversation about “everyday” concerns to spiritual concerns?
4. Look at Carol Travilla’s list of “wearing-out warning signs.” Are you experiencing any of these? What can you do to take better care of yourself?

Reflection: Love in Action

1. After your group meeting each week, take time to review the discussion and prayer requests. Think of ways to reach out to those in your group who may need extra encouragement.

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2. Keep the names of your group members on 3" x 5" cards and update them frequently with any information gleaned from your conversations and group time. Use these cards to guide your prayer for them.
 3. Regularly pray for each group member by name, mentioning their specific needs.
 4. Read Edith Bajema's *The Priority of Prayer* (CRC Publications, 1993) individually or as a group. Implement one or more of the eight "Ways to Make Prayer Part of Your Coffee Break." Use the ten questions to ask yourself or your group, "What makes for effective prayer?"

Let's Do It

- Share bite-size pieces of your faith journey in a natural context.
- Allow your love and the Holy Spirit time to work in someone's life.
- Recommend Christian books on marriage and family issues to a friend or acquaintance.
- Send affirming notes to people who make positive contributions to group discussion.
- Write on your calendar a weekly fun appointment just for you and keep it! (Go shopping, take a walk, enjoy a book and a cup of gourmet coffee, phone an old college roommate, browse in your local library, start a craft or sewing project.)

LOVING THE LOST

“For the Son of Man came to seek and to save what was lost.”

—Luke 19:10

As Jesus completed his earthly mission, he told us to seek the lost. Seeking the lost is one of the most important ways we can express our love for others.

For a variety of reasons, this love and concern may not come naturally to us. If we've grown up in a Christian environment, we may not have many friends or family members who do not know Jesus as their Savior. If we've been a Christian for a long time, those who need the Lord may have gradually dropped out of our network of relationships.

Regardless, we are called as Christians to reach out to the lost. This may stretch us and push us out of our comfort zones, but our love for God and for others compels us to reach out. How can we effectively seek and love the lost?

By Preparing

Peter exhorts us to “always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have” (1 Pet. 3:15). We can prepare for giving answers by

- sharing our own testimony, and
- learning how to present the gospel.

A testimony is simply an account of how we came to know God as our Savior and a description of the difference he makes in our lives. Some testimonies are dramatic, similar to the life-changing encounter that Paul had with Jesus on his way to Damascus. Others, like Timothy’s, are the result of a quiet, gradual process by which God shapes a life for himself. Either way, your personal testimony can be shared.

An effective testimony is concrete and specific. Writing it down will help us to think through what we want to share. Each of our testimonies will be unique, but we can include the following:

- the story of how we first came to trust in Jesus as our Savior and Lord
- examples of how belonging to Jesus has affected our lives
- specific examples of God’s work in our lives

Preparing and sharing our testimony will encourage us in our faith as we remember all the ways God has been faithful to us.

We also prepare to love the lost by learning to present the gospel clearly and completely. Numerous resources are available to help us. Two programs that your Coffee Break group or your entire congregation will find helpful are

- *Congregational Evangelism Training* (CRC Publications). This training program is based on D. James Kennedy’s popular book *Evangelism Explosion* (Tyndale House Publishers, 1983) and includes a detailed outline with corresponding Scripture texts, transitional sentences,

and diagnostic questions that equip a Christian to present the gospel.

- *Someone Needs You!* (CRC Publications). This 27-minute video shows how ordinary members of the church reach out in everyday ways to share Christ with the lost. It challenges you to consider how you can become more evangelistic. The user guide gives suggestions for showing the video in a discussion class or retreat setting.

Two inexpensive and convenient resources you might like to use individually include

- *The Bridge to New Life* (CRC Publications). This tract uses visuals along with a gospel presentation to help others cross the bridge to new life in Christ.
- *To Be Sure* (CRC Publications, 1983). This booklet introduces the gospel presentation first developed by D. James Kennedy through *Evangelism Explosion*. It's a tool you can use to help others find peace through assurance of their salvation.

Sharing the gospel is a learning process. These resources can provide a framework for telling the good news of Jesus Christ to people who are seeking the peace that comes from God.

By Praying

Our love for others is a fruit of the Spirit that cannot be conjured up by our own desire. Instead, it comes to us through the Spirit when we ask for it in prayer. And so we must pray for the desire to love others. Jesus says, "You may ask me for anything in my name, and I will do it" (John 14:14), and he promises, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses" (Acts 1:8).

Isaiah proclaims: "How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace,

who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, "Your God reigns!" (Isa. 52:7). Habbakuk reminds us that strength comes from the Lord: "The Sovereign Lord is my strength; he makes my feet like the feet of a deer, he enables me to go on the heights" (Hab. 3:19). Because of these promises we can pray with confidence that God will grant us missionary eyes for the people we meet and a missionary heart to love and reach out to them.

Mission concerns and the needs of the lost should be a regular part of our prayer life. Each of us should pray for the missionaries supported by our church and denomination. We should target certain neighbors, coworkers, family members, or friends each day in our prayers. When we pray for them, we can ask God to prepare their hearts to receive the gospel, to give us opportunities to develop relationships with them, and to share with them the hope of Jesus. We can ask that they respond with repentance and belief.

Prayer is essential, but it's not the only thing we can do to love the lost. As we pray, we need to be intentionally placing ourselves in situations where we can develop relationships with people who need the Lord.

By Developing Relationships

In his book, *Inside the Mind of Unchurched Harry & Mary* (Zondervan, 1983), Lee Strobel suggests that, "Often, before we can be used to rescue someone from spiritual danger, we have to build a relational bridge to them." In order to love the lost effectively, we first have to get to know them. This isn't easy when most of our time may be spent with Christians and in church activities.

If our relationship circle is primarily Christian, we may need to incorporate at least one activity in our lives that places us in a situation where we will meet those who are lost. Perhaps this means choosing a park-district aerobics class instead of the one held at your church. Or it might

mean getting involved in a community organization, even when this may limit time commitments at church. It may involve making sure that we are not so busy with our church activities that we neglect getting to know our neighbors. Or it may mean planning lunch with coworkers instead of doing our own thing.

In all of this, we keep our purpose in mind—we are reaching out to others to tell them about Jesus. Rebecca Manley Pippert, author of the popular book *Out of the Saltshaker and Into the World* (InterVarsity Press, 1979), summarizes this tension between loving and witnessing in these words:

The paradox of agape love is that we accept our neighbor unconditionally and with open arms and at the same time desire moral purity for their lives. .-. . That is holiness. It never abandons; it identifies deeply with individual people. But it also brings the reality of God's presence, the purity of his holiness. It is not intimidated by nor does it flee from crisis; neither does it deny the reality of existence.

So we must ask ourselves: Do I identify enough? Do I welcome people? Or am I a member of the Holy Huddle, the local God Squad? Do I hang around people of various beliefs and mores? Do I love the unlovely? Or, on the other hand, am I different enough? Am I Christlike? Do I bring this aspect of Christ's holiness, of his moral standards, of the fruit of the Spirit? Or out of my sincere desire to identify and to love, have I become culture accommodating?

—Pippert, "A Question of Holiness: Jesus and the Pharisees,"
Exploring Faith & Discipleship.
Christian Schools International, 1992.

Once we've developed a relationship, how do we turn our conversation to spiritual things? Too often we spend our time commiserating with others over the challenges our children present or the state of the world without seeing conversations as an opening for expressing the hope we have in Jesus Christ.

Often we're not sure how to turn an everyday conversation to spiritual matters in a natural way. As we pointed out in chapter 4, the key is listening. When we really listen and get to know another person, we'll come across natural opportunities to maneuver the conversation into spiritual topics.

For instance, Strobel suggests that when we find out "Unchurched Mary" has a couple of children who are driving her crazy, we could play it safe and say, "I know what you're saying; my kids drive me up the wall sometimes too." Or we can make a split-second decision to say, "You know, my kids can be a handful, but I was amazed to find out that the Bible has some great advice for raising kids. It's really helped me." That opens the door to a spiritual discussion; maybe we could follow up by lending Mary a Christian book about parenting.

Or if we discover that "Unchurched Harry" suffers from a sagging self-esteem, Strobel encourages us to make a split-second decision to say, "I get down on myself sometimes, too, but you know what? A while back I found out something that changed my whole attitude about myself. Let me know if you want to hear about it sometime." We've probably raised Harry's curiosity, and when he's ready to ask us to explain, we can tell him how our own self-esteem has soared ever since we learned how much we matter to God.

Loving the lost—it's sometimes difficult, always challenging, but certainly rewarding. It's joining Jesus in his work, and it results in great rejoicing in heaven and on earth.

Group Discussion

1. What is the most difficult thing for you when you consider reaching out to the lost? (You may wish to refer to chapter 3, "Facing Our Fears," *Linking to the Lost* by Donna Vander Griend, another booklet in the Core Values series developed for Coffee Break leaders by CRC Publications, 1995.)
2. Have you been successful in establishing a relationship with someone who needs to know Jesus? Have you been able to move from ordinary conversation to spiritual matters? What's worked for you in building this relationship?
3. Why is it imperative for us to love the lost?
4. What resources (printed material, training workshops, or other resources) could help you to reach out more effectively?

Reflection: Love in Action

1. Write out your testimony. Share it with another Christian, and ask her for suggestions for sharing it with a person who might attend Coffee Break.
2. Learn a gospel presentation and practice presenting it to someone. (*The Bridge to New Life* tract or the *To Be Sure* booklet provides a concise method in a format that you can carry in your purse, briefcase, or diaper bag for handy reference. Both are available from CRC Publications.)
3. Write down the names of lost and seeking people for whom you will commit to pray on a regular basis.
4. Begin developing a relationship with someone who needs to know Jesus.
5. Attend a Coffee Break "Winsome Ways" workshop.
6. Read *Linking to the Lost* by Donna Vander Griend (CRC Publications, 1995).

Let's Do It

- Extend grace instead of judgment to a group member dealing with divorce.
- Sit next to a stranger at your child's ball game and initiate a conversation.
- Take a special-interest class (computers, community choir, weaving, auto mechanics, landscape gardening) alone so you can meet new people.
- With a friend, practice turning superficial talk into a spiritual conversation.
- Be friendly with store clerks, bank tellers, crossing guards, and others whom you see often. Seek to establish a casual, but important, relationship with them.

CHAPTER 6

LOVING THE LEADERS: A WORD TO DIRECTORS

“It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.”

—Ephesians 4:11-13

Leading with love takes on a new dimension when we become directors. How do we demonstrate the biblical principle of servant leadership when we lead the leaders? We serve them! As a director, your responsibility becomes the welfare of the leaders rather than the people whom the ministry serves. This shift can be difficult to make. Most directors have worked in the ministry as Coffee Break group leaders or Story Hour teachers. Changing focus from the people the ministry serves to the staff means that your ministry to the community is indirect rather than

direct. Your primary responsibility is to serve the needs of the staff and enable them to do their jobs. We'll suggest six ways a ministry director can do this.

Be Organized

Servant directors can make it easier for staff members to serve by carefully defining organizational details and procedures. (Luke 9:1-6 illustrates how Jesus outlined the details when he sent out his twelve disciples.) Every leader wants these four questions answered:

- What am I supposed to do?
- Will you let me do it?
- Will you help me when I need it?
- Will you let me know how I'm doing?

A carefully planned organizational structure for the ministry—one which includes job descriptions, procedures, and policies—enables leaders to work with a minimum of distraction. It helps the staff to know what is expected from them and what they can expect from you as their director.

Encourage Individual Initiative

You can encourage individual initiative by being flexible, by changing your leadership style as the situation warrants. Allow the organizational structure to become a jumping-off point for the creativity of the staff, rather than something that confines and stifles. When staff members bring their own ideas into the program, they enrich the program, they are able to meet the needs of their groups more effectively, and they have a greater sense of satisfaction and ownership of the ministry. Allowing for staff creativity and input means that you must be teachable, open to other people's ideas and leadership styles. You must be willing to let the ministry be an expression of many people rather than just one person. Paul gives this advice: "Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than

yourselves. Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others” (Phil. 2:3-4).

In chapter 1 we saw how Johanna Veenstra exemplified servant leadership in her pioneer missionary work in Nigeria. Very early in her work Johanna had to make the transition from servant leader to servant director when she was placed in charge of the field. In *Daughters Who Dared* (CRC Publications, 1992), Zandstra records Johanna’s response to two new workers:

The more I see of both the girls, the better I like them. Miss Zagers knows more about medicine than about Reformed doctrine, but she is humble, earnest, full of determination, and very willing. Miss Stielstra is more reserved. A strong character. Cheerful and well qualified. I think we shall all dovetail into each other’s character, each able, I sincerely hope, to contribute help to the other. I do pray that all grace may be given me, for after all, if corrections or instruction need to be given, I will have to do it.

Johanna Veenstra had learned three things that encourage individual initiative: she *liked* her coworkers, she *accepted* their strengths and weaknesses, she *recognized* their potential to contribute. She lived this adage: “There’s no *I* in *teamwork*.”

Delegate

Servant directors delegate by sharing decision-making and responsibility. (In Exodus 18:17-22, Jethro advises Moses to divide up the work lest he wear out.) When a director shares decision-making, her role changes from being the one who solves the problems to being the one who presents the problems to the staff for their input in determining the

best solution. When a director shares responsibility, her role changes from being the one who does everything to being the one who transfers responsibility to others. The positive results of delegation are three-fold:

- First, delegation develops people; it trains future leaders.
- Second, delegation allows the ministry to grow. If only one person does the work, then the ministry is limited to what one person can do. If the responsibility is shared, then the ministry can expand to what three, four, or more people can do.
- Third, delegation saves the leader. The burden of leadership becomes lighter when more people are carrying the load.

Nurture

In your role as a servant director, you can nurture your staff by making time for nurturing an integral part of every staff meeting. Mark records a wonderful example of Jesus' nurturing:

The apostles gathered around Jesus and reported to him all they had done and taught. Then, because so many people were coming and going that they did not even have a chance to eat, he said to them, "Come with me by yourselves to a quiet place and get some rest" (Mark 6:30-31).

In her article "Committees People Want to Join" (*Lay Leadership*, Vol. 3, 1989), Roberta Hestenes states, "Even those who work with a deep sense of loyalty, commitment, and duty will get burned out or cynical if they try to do church work without receiving care." A primary time for nurturing to take place is during the staff meeting. Staff meetings provide a time and place to prepare for ministry, but

they must also provide a time for leaders to be heard, loved, supported, and encouraged in their personal concerns. Directors often feel tension between the tasks that need to be accomplished and the time necessary for the nurture of the staff. They must intentionally allow time for sharing and prayer so that the staff know that they are appreciated for who they are, not just for what they can do. This time helps leaders and directors grow in love for God, themselves, and others.

Celebrate

Servant directors can recognize staff and ministry accomplishments, encouraging the staff, and affirming them in the work they are doing. Paul praised the household of Stephanas, the first converts in Achaia who “devoted themselves to the service of the saints .-. they have supplied what was lacking from you. For they refreshed my spirit and yours also. Such men deserve recognition” (1 Cor. 16:15, 17-18).

Recognition, celebration, and applause help to develop a sense of value and worth in your staff. Celebration can take the form of recognition of individual contributions made by staff members and fun times of celebrating a job well done. Regular recognition of staff contributions is essential in order to build morale in your staff and keep the motivational energy at its peak. Every compliment that you hear about the ministry should be passed on to your staff. Celebration is especially important for a volunteer staff because their compensation is not tangible. Their bank accounts won't grow; their compensation comes from the satisfaction they get from serving God and others. Celebration and recognition affirm that they have indeed made a valuable contribution to the ministry.

Pray

As a servant director, take time to pray for your staff individually (by name), specifically (for their unique needs in their personal lives as well as for their needs as staff members), and consistently (setting aside time for the distinct purpose of praying only for them). Leadership proves itself in prayer. Just as Moses lifted up the children of Israel as they defeated the Amalekites (Ex. 17:8-15), hold up your staff and expect your Coffee Break leaders to be blessed as they reach out in love to the lost.

Being a Coffee Break director is an awesome responsibility. But it's also a privilege. Through our leadership we are helping people become the leaders God wants to use. We are God-given means for reaching God-given goals. Often our work will remain in the background with little fanfare or recognition. Our reward will be watching those we lead blossom and grow as they minister to others in Jesus' name.

Group Discussion

1. What do your Coffee Break leaders expect from you as their director?
2. What decisions can you share with your leaders?
3. What specific responsibilities can you delegate to your leaders? to others?
4. How can your staff meetings allow more time for nurturing?

Reflection: Love in Action

1. Develop a method for feedback from leaders. Find out if leaders are happy with the way Coffee Break is organized and with the leadership role they have. You might try a suggestion box, periodic evaluation through a written survey or discussion, or other ideas your leaders might suggest.

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2. Read Edith Bajema's *The Priority of Prayer*, another booklet in the Core Values series (CRC Publications, 1993). Try one or more ideas that will enhance your personal prayer time for leaders and help you build nurturing time into your staff meeting schedule.
 3. Plan a celebration time to recognize leaders and to share the Coffee Break ministry with your congregation and community.

Let's Do It

- Send encouraging cards to leaders, affirming their contributions in leaders' meetings.
- Verbally affirm spiritual gifts you observe in your leaders.
- Offer childcare so that a leader can lunch with a group member who is in need.
- Encourage leaders to develop their gifts by recommending books, tapes, or conferences.
- Pray for each leader faithfully.

Leading in ministry is an exciting opportunity and an awesome responsibility. Often we wonder if we are qualified to do the job. *Leading With Love* challenges experienced and beginning Coffee Break leaders to let God's love equip them. Discussion questions and ideas for growing as servant leaders will help you reach out in love.

The Core Values series reinforces the principles and practices necessary for Coffee Break leaders to experience the fruit of the Spirit and the joy of the harvest.

Other titles in this series include *The Priority of Prayer* by Edith Bajema, *Linking to the Lost* by Donna Vander Griend, and *Little Ones Need Jesus* by Jacque Bolt and Diane Dykgraaf.



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