

# **Building Servant Leadership Communities**

## **Group Member's Guide for Church Leaders**

A Publication of



BUILDING SERVANT LEADERSHIP COMMUNITIES: GROUP MEMBER'S GUIDE CHURCH LEADERS

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## Schedule

Fill in the following schedule for your group, including assigning one person to share for each session on their Story About Leaders in Your Life:

| Session Number and Topic  | Date and Time | Story About Leaders in Your Life |
|---|---------------|----------------------------------|
| Session 1: What is Biblical Servant Leadership? (Part 1)                        |               |                                  |
| Session 2: What is Biblical Servant Leadership? (Part 2)                        |               |                                  |
| Session 3: What is Biblical Servant Leadership? (Part 3)                        |               |                                  |
| Session 4: The Role of Titles in a Servant Led Church                           |               |                                  |
| Session 5: The Proper Metrics for a Servant Led Church                          |               |                                  |
| Session 6: Servant-Leadership in the Home                                       |               |                                  |
| Session 7: Leading as a Team  |               |                                  |
| Session 8: Preaching as a Team  |               |                                  |
| Session 9: Language of Servant Leadership                                       |               |                                  |
| Session 10: How to Stay on Track and Not Get Derailed                           |               |                                  |
| Session 11: The Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the Servant Leader |               |                                  |
|   |               |                                  |
|   |               |                                  |

## Session 1: What is Biblical Servant Leadership? (Part 1)

### Pre-Session Assignment

Read the book Breaking the King Saul Syndrome, from the Foreword through the chapter “The King Saul Syndrome: It’s Saul Over This World.” This book is available for download at <https://co-serve.org/bslc.html>. It is also available on Amazon or directly from Co-Serve International via email at [info@co-serve.org](mailto:info@co-serve.org). (Note: If you are combining the first three sessions into a kick-off retreat, you should read the entire book prior to the retreat.)

### Action Plan

Individually, take about 20 minutes to identify areas in your life where you see the seeds of the King Saul Syndrome. In what situations are you motivated by wanting to maintain your power, position, and control? For each area, write down how you can begin to counter these things in your leadership. Share some of your reflections and plans with the group.

## Group Commitments

The following guidelines will help us to benefit the most from our time together, allowing our group to be a place where the Holy Spirit can work in our midst, teach us, and shape our hearts.

1. All personal information shared in the group will remain strictly confidential to the group. I will not share personal stories of any person outside the group without their permission.
2. This group will be an absolute “no judging zone.” The life, experiences, struggles, and pains of each person will be accepted without any judgment. I will greatly respect and value the life, experiences and ideas of each participant and I will listen to each person carefully. I will not judge or criticize other participants or their ideas, even if I disagree with them.
3. I understand that my life and experiences are valuable teachers for the group. Therefore, I will attend all sessions on time. I will tell a facilitator ahead of time if I need to miss a session.
4. I will be open to letting the group become a safe place for me where I build trust with the other participants. As I feel comfortable, I will take the risk to open my heart to the group.
5. I will actively participate in group discussions and share honestly about my own feelings, ideas, and experiences. At the same time, I will be aware of other participants and give them fair time to share.
6. In their role as facilitators, group leaders can step in if the sharing process gets off track.
7. I will be open to new ideas and practices.
8. I will do the pre-session assignments to the best of my ability. I will also commit to doing any activities related to actions plans developed during the sessions.

## Preparing A Story about Leaders in Your Life

By preparing a story about leaders in your life, you will be able to reflect on the people who have significantly influenced you. This will help you to discern which kinds of leaders truly served you. Your group will also be able to learn from your experiences while growing closer to you.

Start by thinking back over your life and making a list of those people who had the greatest influence (positive or negative) on your life. Begin by thinking about your parents and other relatives that helped to raise you. Then, think about school and college years, including teachers, coaches, key friends, and fellow classmates. Think about influential managers or supervisors in jobs that you held. Think about church, including mentors, teachers, and pastors.

Now, go back over your list, and choose 1 or 2 key leaders that significantly influenced you (positively, negatively, or both) from every stage of your life: childhood, formative teen years, young adult years, and the present time. This should result in a list of between 4 and 8 leaders.

For each of these leaders, write one or two paragraphs about their influence in your life. Summarize the things about them that had the greatest impact on you. You may want to think about some of the following: Did you see them as a role model (good or bad)? Did they help you to make a difficult decision? Did they help you to choose your path in life? Did they help you to understand more about your gifts and potential? Did they give you an understanding about God (either correct or incorrect)? Did they help you in your spiritual life? Did they make you know that you were loved and accepted? Did they hurt you or cause some other traumatic event in your life?

In summary, write down your reflections, based on these leaders, about your own experience with leadership. What do you find to be true about the best leaders who really helped you and served you? Be prepared to share your experiences and reflections about the key leaders in your life for about 30 minutes.

## The Pyramid and the Tree





## Session 2: What is Biblical Servant Leadership? (Part 2)

### Pre-Session Assignment

Read the book Breaking the King Saul Syndrome, from the chapter “The Hunger to Lead: The Seeds of the Syndrome” through the chapter “Command and Control of Let the Holy Spirit Lead?” This book is available for download at <https://co-serve.org/bslc.html>. It is also available on Amazon or directly from Co-Serve International via email at [info@co-serve.org](mailto:info@co-serve.org).

### Action Plan

Individually, take about 20 minutes in prayer and reflection to think about the people in your life that you can build up, equip, train, and empower. If you are already training and mentoring some of these people, do you see areas where you can do more to lift them up and empower them? Write down your ideas on what you can do to build up and empower each person on your list. Share one example with the group.

### Session 3: What is Biblical Servant Leadership? (Part 3)

#### Pre-Session Assignment

Read the book Breaking the King Saul Syndrome, from the chapter “Why Discipleship So Often Fails” through the Epilogue. This book is available for download at <https://co-serve.org/bslc.html>. It is also available on Amazon or directly from Co-Serve International via email at [info@co-serve.org](mailto:info@co-serve.org).

#### Action Plan

In groups, discuss together and draw up an action plan on the roles of leaders in your church regarding mentoring and discipling of your church members. (This action plan should be developed by a group of people who are leaders in the same church. If this guide is being used by leaders from the same church, all leaders can work together on the plan. If this guide is being used by leaders from multiple churches, divide into small groups in the best way you feel is helpful).

As you develop your plan, consider if your current roles as leaders model the truth that everyone in your church is anointed and gifted by God. Are you setting an example to others about how to build up, train, and disciple others, even if it means they “become greater” than you?

## Session 4: The Role of Titles in a Servant Led Church

### Pre-Session Assignment

Read the article: “‘Pastor.’ You keep using that word. I do not think it means what you think it means.” at <https://servantledchurch.com/pastor-you-keep-using-that-word-i-do-not-think-it-means-what-you-think-it-means/>.

### Action Plan

In groups, discuss together and draw up an action plan about using titles in your church. (This action plan should be developed by a group of people who are leaders in the same church. If this guide is being used by leaders from the same church, all leaders can work together on the plan. If this guide is being used by leaders from multiple churches, divide into small groups in the best way you feel is helpful.)

Discuss together and draw up an action plan about using titles in your church. Instead of letting tradition dictate how you are giving titles in your church, discuss and decide what will be healthiest titles communicate the servant led nature of your church. Do your titles express that you believe that power and authority rests in the hands of the paid staff or in the lives of the people in the church? Do they feed preconceptions or really communicate what you do?

Are you going to keep everything the same, or are there changes that you are going to make? What changes? Draw up your plan.

## Session 5: The Proper Metrics for a Servant Led Church

### Pre-Session Assignment

Read the chapter on “Reproducing Reproducers” (the 13<sup>th</sup> letter) in the book, Reconstructing the Church: Paul's Letters to the 21st Century. This book is available for download at <https://co-serve.org/bslc.html>.

### Action Plan

In groups, discuss together and draw up an action plan on what 3 things are you going to do to change the way you measure success at your church? (This action plan should be developed by a group of people who are leaders in the same church. If this guide is being used by leaders from the same church, all leaders can work together on the plan. If this guide is being used by leaders from multiple churches, divide into small groups in the best way you feel is helpful.)

## Session 6: Servant-Leadership in the Home

### Pre-Session Assignment

Read Titus 1:5-9 and Timothy 3:2-12. Read all the qualifications for leaders in the Church. How many are skills? How many are Character? Why do you think Paul takes it back to the home in both passages and for both elders and deacons?

Read Without Love by Jonathan Martin (See Appendix).

### Action Plan

Individually, write down three things you are going to do in your home. Here is an example:

- Ask your wife what her dreams are and how you can help her get there.
- Take every Saturday morning to hear your wife and listen.
- Take your kids out and listen to them. Draw them out.

Then, write down two ways you are going to encourage those in your ministry to make their homes a priority.

## Session 7: Leading as a Team

### Pre-Session Assignment

Read “The Lost Attribute of God” at: <https://servantledchurch.com/the-lost-attribute-of-god/>

### Action Plan

Individually, write down all the tasks or activities you do on your own. Then, looking at your list, consider how you can do these things better as a team. Write down your reflections.

Similarly, write down all the preparations you do on your own or alone? How can you do these things better as a team? Write down your reflections.

Share some of your ideas and reflections with the group. If leaders from the same church are using this guide, take time to share your ideas and reflections with each other. Then, develop a plan on how you can do more together as a team.

## Session 8: Preaching as a Team

### Pre-Session Assignment

Read the chapter on “Building Teams - The Transformative Power of ‘We’” (the 8<sup>th</sup> letter) in the book, Reconstructing the Church: Paul's Letters to the 21st Century. Consider your answers to the discussion questions posed after the chapter. This book is available for download at <https://co-serve.org/bslc.html>.

### Action Plan

Individually or in church leadership groups, draw up a one-year plan to bring change and growth in this area of preaching as a team.

## Session 9: Language of Servant Leadership

### Pre-Session Assignment

Read “The Pyramid and the Tree” at <https://servantledchurch.com/the-pyramid-and-the-tree/>.

### Action Plan

Individually, come up with five key phrases that you will continue to use so the people in your congregation can begin to really understand the nature of servant-leadership.



## Session 10: How to Stay on Track and Not Get Derailed

### Pre-Session Assignment

Read “The Three Temptations of a Christian Leader” at <http://www.christianity9to5.org/three-temptations-of-a-christian-leader/>. Be prepared to share the three temptations and define and describe them.

### Action Plan

Individually, looking at the resolutions on the following page, write down one personal action point for each resolution. Then, write down one more proposed action for your church. Share your actions with the group.

An idea: Some pastors print out these resolutions and hang it near their desk, so they can read them often and make sure they are still on track.

## Resolutions

- I will train the people to do the work of the ministry rather than insisting on doing it myself or building it around myself. I will seek to empower and equip rather than to command and control. Ephesians 4:9-12.
- I will seek to build God's Big Kingdom in unison with other churches and pastors by praying for and working with them and I will not seek to build my own little kingdom. Matthew 6:33.
- I will give thanks when I see others gifted like I am, and I will give them opportunities to exercise these gifts even if they should surpass my own. Instead of being threatened by them, I will build into them and let God use them and teach them to do the same. Acts 18:24-28.
- I will rejoice when God is working greatly through another pastor near me and will not allow it to make me jealous. Philippians 1:18.
- I will wait on God to elevate me in position, by respecting those in leadership above me, and I will not seek to elevate myself my own way.

## Session 11: The Great Commandment, the Great Commission, and the Servant Leader.

### Pre-Session Assignment

Read the chapters on “Out of Commission” and “The Greatest Motivation and the Greatest Mission” (the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> letters) in the book, Reconstructing the Church: Paul's Letters to the 21st Century. Consider your answers to the discussion questions posed after each chapter. This book is available for download at <https://co-serve.org/bslc.html>.

### Action Plan

Come up with a plan (teaching, reading, preaching, bible study) to be able to teach the nature of Jesus’ servant leadership to your entire congregation. Draw up a plan with dates for how you will move forward.

Also, come up with a plan for accountability. Who will hold you accountable and when?

Note: We encourage the use of Building Servant Leadership Communities: A Discussion Guide for Church Small Groups in small groups throughout your Church so everyone is on this journey together. You can order digital or paper version of this guide from Co-Serve international via email [info@co-serve.org](mailto:info@co-serve.org).

## APPENDIX

## Example Ideas on What Servant Leadership Is and Is Not

The following lists were developed by previous groups using this guide. This may encourage you as you see common thinking with your own lists, and it may help you to consider more ideas raised by other groups.

### What Servant Leadership Is

Empowers people to be all they are called to be  
Living out the Gospel  
Earning others trust  
Not a single model  
Counter cultural everywhere  
Starts with modeling/ being an example  
Entrust people with authority  
Always teachable and approachable  
Learned and practiced in community  
Is not safe – you will have people leave  
Love and joy based and fueled  
Starts in weakness and brokenness  
Lays down one's life  
Does and says hard things  
A new socialization  
Transparent  
Accountable  
Manifests fruits of spirit and is character driven  
Values vulnerability and vulnerable people

### What Servant Leadership Is Not

Wimpy  
Using people for our ends  
A democracy/ egalitarian  
Demanding trust and submission  
Built around a personality  
Proud, having to be the best  
Afraid of failing  
Threatened by another's gifts  
A competition  
Mere rejecting broken models  
Fear based  
Power and control driven  
“Fear of man” driven  
Soft, warm, and sweet mellow

## Example Ideas on the Essentials of Biblical Servant Leadership

The following list was developed by previous groups using this guide. This may encourage you as you see common thinking with your own list, and it may help you to consider more ideas raised by other groups.

- Crosses all boundaries – age, social, economic, and cultural. Steps down to lift others up.
- Seeks to develop people toward their fullest potential in Christ.
- Community - it happens in and through community.
- Everyone in community discovering and Living out their purpose.
- It starts with Service.
- None on top but Jesus.
- Everyone anointed for ministry – anointing with oil “flows down.”
- Not education, not gifting, not credential, not personality, not relevance based.
- People are never a means to our end, but we become a means to their highest and best end.
- Not menial, but meaningful. Does not mean doing countless small tasks for everyone; but serving in ways to best lift others. Apostles and Deacons. Difference.
- Does not target the strong, rich, and beautiful – thinking their power will grow his kingdom. Never neglects the weak. Not quarterback focused.
- Starts with the Nature of God and imitates the Life of Christ. Takes people to Jesus.
- “God rules by serving.” Bonhoeffer
- We are to serve God first and foremost.

## Example Ideas on Measurements to Determine Success

The following list was developed by previous groups using this guide. This may encourage you as you see common thinking with your own list, and it may help you to consider more ideas raised by other groups.

- Level of joy.
- Level of trust.
- Level of feeling equipped.
- Number understanding their calling and their purpose?
- Number with life purpose statement and living it out.
- Number being able to explain the nature and purpose of the church and their specific role in the kingdom.
- Number trained, able and regularly communicating the Gospel.
- Level of authenticity and transparency.
- Number of servant leaders in places of work.
- Number of servant leaders in the home.
- Number of other churches blessed and empowered by church.
- Community blessed by church's actions.
- Church planters and missionaries built, commissioned, and sent out.
- Decreasing the division between clergy and laity (paid staff and nonpaid people).
- Silos broken down and cooperating between ministries.

## Example Ideas on Team in the Bible

The following list was developed by previous groups using this guide. This may encourage you as you see common thinking with your own list, and it may help you to consider more ideas raised by other groups.

- Jesus and his disciples.
- Jesus sending out disciples.
- Paul always with a team of men. Paul always assigning a team of locals to lead.
- Appointing elders.
- Paul writing his letters together with his team (Timothy, Titus, Sylvanus, Barnabus).
- The whole church building itself up in love.



## Example Ideas on What Does It Mean to Delegate Authority

The following list was developed by previous groups using this guide. This may encourage you as you see common thinking with your own list, and it may help you to consider more ideas raised by other groups.

- Relinquishing personal control and own agenda to see others on team truly empowered.
- Embracing risk and even failure as a means to personal and group spiritual growth.
- Leaning into and deferring to gifts.
- Value on relationships and not on getting it our way.
- Believing Jesus is really in them and in their anointing.
- Core commitment to team and the team members.

## Example Ideas on the Language of Servant Leadership

The following lists were developed by previous groups using this guide. This may encourage you as you see common thinking with your own lists, and it may help you to consider more ideas raised by other groups.

### The nature of servant leadership and community

- A community pushing one another upward to our highest purpose and calling.
- A community where the image of God is imprinted.
- Watching everyone thrive as they live into their purpose and calling.
- Making the next generation better than ours.
- Great Freedom given to fail.
- Every person called. Every person equipped. Every person commissioned.
- Are we a tree producing fruit or a pyramid using people to keep us going?

### Godly authority

- Power is what the spirit gives us to live supernaturally. Biblical authority flows out of our service to God and to others.
- Trust and Authority go hand in hand.
- Starts at home. Flows from our character. It is our example.
- If we are not modeling, we are neither serving nor leading.
- Not clutching our crowns. No crown clutching.
- Giving the Kingdom Away.
- Get rid of the ring of power. Give it to the little guy.
- No little (personal) Kingdoms.
- Give it to the next generation, don't cater to them.
- Grow and Let Go.
- I will ascend – Lucifer. I will descend – Jesus.

## Without Love by Jonathan Martin

I once sat across the table from a friend who had spent his life in leadership – church, business, even Boy Scouts. He made a statement I will never forget: “There is really only one kind of leadership. That of example. If you don’t model it, you are not a leader.”

We know there are many leaders out there who do a horrible job of modelling – CEO’s, politicians, and pastors whose personal lives are nothing but a train wreck not to be imitated. But there they are, in a position of power, calling the shots. It seems that leaders are allowed to pull the “Do what I say and not what I do” card. So, you could easily choose to disagree with my friend. But the funny thing is, Paul chose to agree with him. In 1 Corinthians 13, Paul tells us that you could pretty much own the whole world and everyone in it, but if you do not show love in a way that can be imitated “you are nothing!” And if I am nothing, then I am not – among other things – a leader. Not one in God’s eyes anyway.

There is a saying: you are not a leader if no one is following you. But what if the only opinion about your leadership that matters is God’s? After all, you could argue that the moment when Jesus was most clearly leading was when every one of his followers abandoned him. Our definition of leadership matters. If we don’t make hard choices for the good of our character and the health of our family, even when it will cost us followers, then maybe we’re not leaders at all.

## Love is the Beginning of Leadership

Where does leadership start? Where does modeling love start? In the relationships closest to us.

**My wife.** If I am not modeling love to my wife, and for my wife to others – then I am nothing. I might be preaching every Sunday in front of thousands, but I am not leading. I am lying. If I am telling them to love one another and I am not showing it...ouch! Hypocrisy 101 is what I’m teaching, for that is exactly what I am modeling. The people listening might not know it. But my wife will, and God will as well.

**My kids.** If I have nothing but a few spare minutes a week and a two-week-a-year vacation for my kids, what am I modeling to them... and to the whole Church? How can I raise spiritual children (disciples) if I can’t/don’t/won’t connect to the kids in my own house?

*Friends and those I disciple.* What am I modeling for those I disciple? How not to raise kids? How to produce rebels? How to use my wife for my own career advancement? If doing life together counts toward making disciples, then my life must be one worth imitating.

In 1 Timothy and Titus, Paul states it clearly: You want to lead? Great. Let's see how you are already leading. What are you modeling? Let's look at your home. Let's look at your character. For in these two things lies your whole ability to lead others in a Jesus-like direction.

## **Character and Competency**

I have heard a lot about character and competency and how these two things are necessary for a leader in the church. Look at the lists in Titus 1:5-9 and 1 Timothy 3:2-12, which are used by nearly every church as the foundational criteria for church leadership. What do we see? Character - verse after verse, and only one short comment on competency. Able to teach. It does not say "gifted at teaching." Nor "eloquent in speech." Nor does it say "passionate in his preaching." Simply able to communicate truth.

It is interesting to note that "hospitable" is on both lists. It is truly in a home of love and nurture where the Gospel is best exemplified, and those who are invited into that household learn more from the experience there than any sermon that might ever be preached.

Seminaries train for competency. We hire those with the degrees, with the accolades, the most gifted communicators. And we sure hope there is some character there somewhere, but how can we really know a man's character when we are hiring him from 2000 miles away? Worse yet, as leaders ourselves, we focus in on honing our skills and the up-front talents, instead on the very things that will truly lead future generations.

In 2 Corinthians 3, Paul makes reference (and not in a great light) to ministers who made a big deal about letters of recommendation, so that they would be well-received by groups they visited. As opposed to these people, Paul talks about how his "letter of recommendation" is written on the hearts of the Corinthian Christians – they have seen how he loved them and were marked by it through the Spirit. When we focus on competency over character – things that can be quantified on a piece of paper over things that are written on the hearts in our lives – we risk becoming "peddlers of God's word" rather than Christian leaders.

## **Follow My Example**

Paul says, “Follow me as I follow Christ.” How many of us might pause to think before saying this to those who are following us, because of what we know is going on in our homes?

If we are preaching with the tongues of angels but fail to model the love of Jesus to our wives, kids, and those we disciple, we are noisy gongs. How we serve and love our families is what we model. As believers in Jesus, this must be primarily what it means to lead. This the sole foundation for guiding others with our words.

Peter says we are not to lead like the world does, but by “being examples to the flock.” Our society screams that we must lead from the stage – from on top and up front. God’s word cries out that that “stage” must be our home – the love that is exemplified in our lives.

Servant-leadership starts in love, and love starts by serving in our homes. Love is not learned in sermons but from where one sees it, feels it, experiences it. It all starts in our homes – in our closest relationships.

## **A Common Problem**

I was with a 38-year-old friend and pastor one morning and I asked him this question: “In your lifetime, how many pastors have you seen whose kids don’t walk with Christ and whose marriages are not healthy?” He answered without hesitation, “Almost all!”

We all know what “P.K.” stands for. Preacher’s Kids do not have a particularly good reputation. I remember Tom – the most rebellious and out of control kid in the 8th grade. That was the first time I heard “P.K.” I remember thinking “How could this be?” I knew this was messed up and I had not even read the requirements for elders in the scriptures. How tragic. Is this what we church leaders model: save the church while our own kids go to hell?

Perhaps you are dealing with the problem we’ve been discussing in your own life right now. Perhaps you’re afraid to tell anyone else what’s really going on because you’re afraid of what might happen as a consequence. What might get out. Please consider three things:

First, at least those who interact with your kids probably already have some idea of the truth. What is hidden will be made known – light will shine on darkness. Will it be the light of the gospel working through you to redeem your family life, or the light of gossip which tears down

ruthlessly?

Second, this won't go away on its own. Your family won't grow out of it. You are planting seeds when your family is younger – you can only expect to see more of the same, unless you do some serious, aggressive weeding.

Third, you are not alone. This is not a unique failure on your part. There are people out there who will want to help you. But you must admit you don't have it all together, first.

## **The Cause and the Solution**

There are two groups to blame for this problem.

First – us leaders. As a shepherd of God's flock, I need to understand that my role starts at home. I need to decide – ahead of time – what I will do if my kids rebel, or if my marriage is suffering. Specifically, I need to be absolutely prepared to step away from my elder, pastor, leader role for whatever amount of time necessary to shepherd my family. The passages we have mentioned so far are not unclear (though we might like them to be). If my family is failing, I must take the time I need to be there for them. I must demonstrate love there, where it counts most. And I must have friends that love me enough to tell me it is time to love.

The second group to blame is the congregations. People see a pastor's unhealthy marriage and unhappy wife and they often conclude, "His sermons are so good, and he is such a man of God doing so much for the kingdom, that it must be her fault." The elders board sees his skill, his hard work, his ultimate dedication to the church, and his incredible up-front talents and are unwilling to let him take the break he needs, or if need be – to let him go. After all, he is a trained pastor – what else can he do? Yet the scripture seems clear – he can't be a leader if his home life isn't right. Do we trust God to be able to work in the lives of our leaders enough to give them the time they need to get things straight with their family?

The role of "Pastor" – what we have made it to be in our culture – actually pulls ministers away from their primary call – their families and their character – and forces them to focus on the superficial, i.e. their gifts, natural talents, and stage presence. Congregations and elder teams must encourage all their staff to lead by example first, and must be willing to sacrifice "the show" and "the crowds" to give their leaders the time to focus on what really matters – love.

I am not writing this to give you stones to throw at your leaders but rather for you to give them time and space to heal. We are not to be the police of one another's family life. But this does mean you must at times call out a leader who is putting in 70 hours a week, running all over the country to speak here-and-there. Sure, as his fame grows so do the numbers in your pews, but how is there any time at all for such a man to do what is primary – to model how to love one's wife and kids?

I remember a defining moment for me in life and ministry. I heard the story of a talented pastor who loved his job. But in the love for his job, he realized he was losing his own son, who was rebelling against him and God. He read the scriptures and did something I have seen no pastor do.

In 1 Timothy 3:4-5, he read, "He must manage his own household well, with all dignity keeping his children submissive, for if someone does not know how to manage his own household, how will he care for God's church?" And in Titus 1, "and his children are believers and not open to the charge of debauchery or insubordination."

This pastor listened to what the scriptures said, and he turned in his resignation. The congregation loved him so much and the elders tried to talk him out of it. But he listened to the word and followed.

His son caught word of what was happening, put two and two together, and knew exactly why his father had resigned. Their conversation:

"Dad, you can't quit! You love pastoring. You are so good at it. Don't leave your job!"

"Son, I have neglected you, and you mean way more to me than any dream job."

"No Dad, I mean it. I am done rebelling. You can't quit!"

This is the solitary example that I have seen of a man voluntarily giving up his position as pastor for the sake of his son, and it led to his own son's repentance and salvation. While you could say that this might be an outlier, and there is no guarantee that any other child will act that way, I can say this for sure: I have countless stories of a pastors destroying their families,

themselves, and ultimately their congregations because their career came first. What's the smarter risk to take? What's better modeling for our families and our congregations?

The very day I heard this story, I made the decision that I would gladly step away from "the ministry" for my family's sake – any member. My wife and kids knew they had the right to call "time out." After all, it was not "my ministry." It was "our family's ministry." If we were not in this together, then I would refuse to go it alone.

I have the privilege to work with a young pastor named Ryan. His wife Michelle and their family show joy on their faces. But this has not always been the case. Michelle described for us her first years as a "single mom" while her husband was always away doing ministry on staff at a big church as youth pastor. After all, that is what youth pastors do...right? He was ready to crash and burn along with his family, so he quit and took a secular job. God has since called him back into leading, but this time it is different. His work starts by serving at home and he knows it. His wife knows and feels it and it shows on her countenance. You can see it in the kids as well. They are in it together and it is beautiful to watch. They are modeling the words written 2000 years ago, and they bring life.

John says: "Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. By this we shall know that we are of the truth and reassure our heart before him ..." And, Paul says: "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing."

More than preaching love or casting vision for love, leaders must model love starting with those closest to us. The scriptures scream it: if he is to be a leader, a believer must first lead his household. I think such a leader can count on God's help showing up in powerful ways.