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MAGAZINE



The TRULY co.

*The Leadership Issue | Volume No. 1 | Issue No. 1*



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SHILOH, ISRAEL, NEAR THE SITE OF THE  
TABERNACLE | PHOTO: LINDSAY MAY

\*READ ABOUT HOW LINDSAY EXPERIENCED  
LEADERSHIP IN ISRAEL ON P. 32.

## Letter FROM THE Publisher



Hello! I'd like to take a moment to welcome you to the pages of *Truly* magazine. This publication is brought to you by an amazing team of women who have been praying for YOU, our readers, for over a year as this magazine has taken shape. We are a team of women from various backgrounds, life experiences, churches, ethnicities, and interests who are passionate about seeking truth (John 14:6).

In today's culture, truth has become a relative term. What is truth to me doesn't necessarily mean it has to be true for you, right? This ideology is tempting to embrace in our longing for nonconfrontational harmony, but it lacks what we really need—a firm footing. A rock we can anchor ourselves to when the going gets rough. If "truth" is relative, then how do we measure our own growth, since life's emotions and circumstances ebb and flow with the changing seasons (and society's beliefs)?

Our souls long for a steady horizon on which to fix our eyes in the midst of storms. If the shoreline changes with the effects of harsh elements—social media pressure, the political climate, and cultural expectations—we'll have trouble knowing where to find solid, peaceful shores.

Yes, there are indeed facts about your life and circumstances that are true, but seeking TRUTH is a different matter. Our hope is that we embrace our truest identity—the one Christ bestows upon us as we get to know the God who loves us. May our thoughts be focused on what is true, noble, and right. We want to fill our minds with things that are pure, lovely, and admirable and to think about things of praiseworthy

excellence (Philippians 4:8). Truly, what we dwell on determines our direction. May everything we say and do draw us to the way, the truth, and the life.

The following pages are not only beautifully designed, but filled with biblically focused principles and wisdom from real-world women like yourself. (If you are a man who happened to pick this up, this content is still applicable to you!) Our inaugural publication focuses on leadership. Before you roll your eyes or dismiss these articles because you don't think you're a leader, or perhaps because you've felt burned by someone in a leadership position in the past, or for whatever reason, I encourage you to read these articles with an open heart and mind.

Our prayer is that you are refreshed and challenged by these words, and that you discern what the Holy Spirit whispers to your heart. So, sisters, as you turn to the next pages, I declare that YOU are a leader. You don't need a title or a special job. You are a leader because of your existence and purpose on this earth!

Lead well,

LINDSAY MAY  
PUBLISHER & FOUNDER

# Why Leadership Matters

What leadership really is—and isn't—about.

WRITTEN BY *Lindsay May*



The topic of leadership tends to evoke a variety of reactions. Whether spoken out loud or not, questions often bubble in our minds. Are we doing it right? ARE we really leaders? Should we lead anything? Is it wrong to want to lead? And in the context of Christianity, can women lead (gasp!)?

If we're honest with ourselves, we've all probably wrestled with these questions at one time or another. To be clear, this article (and magazine issue) isn't meant to articulate or defend the finer theological points of women in leadership—in church, at home, or in the marketplace. This issue is meant to invite you to take an honest evaluation of your heart and mind when it comes to the topic. Why? Your response and actions based on your mindset affect the way you interact with the world around you.

Ready to read on? Okay. Let's take a moment to dissect some assumptions about leadership by clarifying what it's not. Being a leader does not necessarily equate to being visible. Leadership does not always result in fame and popularity. The desire to be a leader does not always imply self-driven motives, nor does it always involve pride and ego (nudge-nudge . . . let's all stop thinking the worst about our sister leaders, okay?).

What is leadership? Godly leadership is a natural byproduct of a faith-filled life of obedience. Our lives reflect God's leading when we are faithful to follow. Anytime he is reflected in us, hearts are touched and influence is built.

Leadership is often the aftereffect of invisible work. The thoughts rehearsed in your mind and heart over and over again will ultimately produce an action. A steadfast action nudges you toward the next step, day after day,

week after week, month after month, prayer after desperate prayer. Leadership is birthed as life is lived in the mundane moments and places where we spend our days.

Leadership requires faith that God will make good on his promises—that he will sustain you and provide what you need as you follow him. Leadership requires faith to praise God in the midst of your heartache, knowing that his timing is beyond what we can comprehend. It requires faith to be your realest self with God, believing he loves you as you process your specific situation and endless questions with him.

Leaders dare to take action on what he is whispering to our hearts and not let fear dominate our lives. Leaders have faith to actually take up our cross and follow Christ because of our understanding of what he has already done for us.

It's time we dismiss the notion that leadership is only proven through visible success—money, social following, loud personalities. . . . A rich and obnoxious person might have a lot of observers (or gawkers) but no real committed followers. No, leadership is something different entirely.

It's simply about influence. A friend recently shared some insight from a fortune cookie with me: "A leader is a person you will follow to a place you wouldn't go by yourself." It's as simple as that. Be the person who invites a new friend or neighbor to your home for coffee. Be the friend who is willing to go through the trenches with the person facing deep loss. This is why your leadership matters. God absolutely wants to reveal his love through you, and for that to happen, your world must take notice (Matthew 5:14–16). Be the person who reveals the light of the world to this dark place we live in so that others want to follow. So lead on, sisters! Lead well. ■

# Out of the Abundance of the Heart the Thumb Tweets

7 Faith-Filled Social Media Practices

WRITTEN BY *Jennifer Trautmann*



PHOTO: MADI REIMER

## 01 POST

Post from his presence. Intentionally invite Jesus beyond your bio and into your daily online interactions and reactions.

## 02 EMOJI

Is a post excellent or praiseworthy? Celebrate people's successes with a quick comment or emoji. It's a great antidote to the "Insta-ready" comparison game. 😊

## 03 D.M.

A gentle answer turns away wrath. And so does a gentle direct message. Remove conflict as a public spectacle and put your relationship back at the center.

## 04 UNDERSTAND

Seek first to understand. When you read a post from a friend and you disagree, do not immediately seek to persuade them. Cultivate a habit of true curiosity and conversation.

## 05 PRAY

Pray in the comments. There is value in taking a moment to offer a simple prayer. This small act of connection also helps other scrollers know how to pray.

## 06 ENCOURAGE

Encouragement wins over advice. When someone is asking for advice, they are often in need of encouragement but find it hard to ask.

## 07 HEAL

Heal thyself offline. Work on your own healing offline in the context of healthy relationships. If you find yourself looking for approval through likes and comments, consider it a warning.

# Check Your Soil

WRITTEN BY Rachel Smith

Though most of us probably aren't farmers and may not even have a green thumb, each of us will sow and harvest crops in our lives. Good leaders are natural planters. Be it in careers, spiritual growth, friendships, marriage, or parenting, there will always be ground for us to plant the seeds the Lord has placed in our care.

For me, the idea of "checking my soil" started almost as a mantra—a cadence in every situation I found myself during the spring a few years ago. As I led, walked the neighborhood, parented, I would hear with every step, "Check your soil, check your soil." Sometimes just a whisper, sometimes like a drumbeat, it was an ever-present theme in everything I did.

Confession time.

**Confession #1:** When the Lord whispers something cryptic to me like, "Check your soil," my first inclination is not to fall on my knees and seek him. I almost always look up and with furrowed brows ask, "What the heck does that mean?!" (Seriously. You can all pray for me.)

Alas, he didn't answer my question. He just kept the track on repeat until I started to look—to really look—at soil. Did you know Minnesota soil is beautiful? It's dark and full of nutrients. It's soft and eager to grow plants wherever the sun can catch a glimpse.

I began to learn that there are a few ways to tell how your soil is doing. For example, you can send a soil sample to a lab, and they will tell you about your nutrients and what additives will best help plants to grow. I promise you can do that—I met a lady at Bachman's who tried to give me a test tube for a soil sample. She is much more committed to dirt than I. Plus, I lack follow-through.



PHOTO: ANNA MARUM

# What can you do to stay soft to the Lord and his promises?



Another way to understand soil is to look at the plants that are already there. (I learned this a long time ago from famed KARE 11 meteorologist and gardener Belinda Jensen, who I happened to catch on TV when channel surfing was real and Netflix was delivered to your mailbox. I obviously dig deep in my soil research.) The known temperament of the plant will tell you why it's thriving in that location. Does it like water? Is it reaching for sunlight? Do the leaves seem small? What color is it?

As I was observing the soil in my yard, I began to examine the plants in my spiritual life. Are shrubs of grumbling and complaining thriving? Is overgrown impatience choking out the good fruit?

**Application #1:** Jesus talks about the importance of soil in the spiritual realm in Luke 8, Matthew 13, and Mark 4. Read Luke 8:1-15 and pay attention to the four soils that are outlined. Pull out a notebook and define each soil: trampled soil, rocky soil, thorny soil, and good soil.

**Confession #2:** I had soil that was fertile ground for thorny plants. As I worked in my garden that summer, I was surrounded by thistles—thorny and scratchy weeds that develop and deploy roots before a shoot is even visible. Deep and three-pronged, they were difficult to remove because of the depth of the root as well as the sting of the thorn when you pulled.

I soon realized that even though I thought I was getting to the root of those stinkers, I was leaving enough of a remnant for the thistle to gain ground and pop up again. My friend who grew up on a farm in Iowa finally gave me the answer. Salt.

Cut the weed at an angle just at the base and cover the cut with a tablespoon of salt. Turns out thistles thrive in damp soil and the salt dries them up.

Salt makes the soil uninhabitable for thistles.

As I poured salt onto the weeds, I began to beg God to similarly pour salt on my worries and on my insatiable desire for comfort. I begged God to dry up my life-choking self-obsession at the root. To actually change the soil in my spirit and make it hospitable for his Word to take root and thrive!

**Application #2:** How does the soil feel at your house? In your heart? In your leadership? Are you dry and tired? Feeling trampled and exposed, as if everything that is planted gets scattered? Or maybe you've been planting despite the rocks and weeds? Go ahead, write it down. How's your soil?

My soil is \_\_\_\_\_.

Oh boy, did the lesson of self-examination hit me hard! Since then, when I go through seasons when growth seems stagnant, I come back to this lesson. Often, I discover I'm fighting the very soil I've planted myself in—dodging rocks and thistles.

Look around. What do you see? What can you do to stay soft to the Lord and his promises?

Don't miss your opportunity for growth! Cultivate your soil through worship, memorizing the Word, praying, serving. Keep a tender spirit and persistently dig up weeds. Friends, God is faithful to grow what he plants. Belinda and Bachman's have nothing on his mad gardening skills. He just asks you to check your soil. ■

\*RACHEL SMITH LIVES IN MINNESOTA WITH HER HUSBAND, THEIR THREE HIGH SCHOOLERS, AND THEIR DOG, GINGER ROGERS. IN HER FREE TIME RACHEL CAN BE FOUND READING A GOOD MEMOIR (EITHER BY A FIRE IN THE WINTER OR ON A DECK IN THE SUMMER). SHE GEEKS OUT ABOUT THE OLD TESTAMENT AND CARY GRANT MOVIES. AND IS CURRENTLY PURSUING AN MDiv.

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# Trapped in Drama? Try Grace

WRITTEN BY Brooke Osell

Have you ever created an enemy out of a peer for something she or he was not guilty of? Has your joy ever been robbed due to someone else's bitterness? James 1:19 (NRSV) says, "You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger." If we let him, God uses situations to pluck out old wounds from within us, so that we can heal and become more righteous. When we are healed, we can help others heal, too.

Wounds manifest in the most unexpected places. For example, criticism from your boss could prod a hidden wound in your heart from a childhood event that caused you pain. Surely you weren't expecting that reaction from yourself—just as you weren't expecting the reminder of the wound. (And ideally, you would like to be treated with kindness if you were visibly upset.) Similarly, an unfiltered comment you make to someone could create an unexpected unpleasant reminder for her, as well.

Of course, we can't anticipate every situation and outcome . . . but how differently would we interpret others if we understood that most reactions we receive are not personal, but deeply rooted reminders of hurtful times?

How much more would we grow as leaders if we used those reminders to heal? How different could leadership look if we understood that every hurtful comment potentially exits from and speaks to a wound? How could grace for others and yourself change how you lead?

This mutual understanding of grace will create a better community around you. We are all products of our experiences, which makes us a lot more alike than we realize. If you notice behaviors from those around you that could be rooted in a wound, share your story where it may overlap. Pray for them. Choose not to be offended. Not only will you lead better—you will follow better. Making this choice of grace over offense is a bold, yet rewarding, leap.

Romans 8:28 (NRSV) says, "We know that all things work together for good for those who love God, who are called according to his purpose." The enemy wants to use our wounds to create division and steal joy. God, however, will bless our environments if we use our experiences and reactions to collectively improve them. We can find that joy when we stop looking at people as the enemy. ■



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PHOTO: ANNA MARUM

# The Importance of *Doing Nothing*



PHOTO: ANNA MARUM

WRITTEN BY *Dr. Jolene Erlacher*

When stress mounts, deadlines pile up, and action becomes imperative, what if the right answer is to hit pause?

Recently, I re-watched the movie *Christopher Robin* (2018). As the lights from the screen flickered off, I just lingered in the dark room, absorbed by my thoughts. The words of Winnie the Pooh kept running through my mind: “Doing nothing often leads to the very best of something.” These words poignantly reminded me of a Scripture verse I had read just a couple of days before. In Exodus 14:14, Moses told the people of Israel, “The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

If I am honest, “doing nothing” and “being still” are not among my best skills. Two of my top themes on the Gallup CliftonStrengths assessment are Achiever and Activator. These strengths do not naturally lend themselves to slowing down or taking a break. A dear friend of mine, in trying to help me, once made a note for my fridge that said, “Achieve rest.” Years later, it is still hanging in my kitchen, evidence that I continue to need its important reminder.

Regardless of our strengths or personality, as leaders, most of us

find ourselves navigating pressures, expectations, and deadlines that dictate busyness and drive us to achieve, accomplish, and impress. As a result, life can quickly become a series of tasks to complete, problems to solve, and people to please. We can easily lose focus of what is most important and eliminate the space needed to see the best gifts, innovations, and miracles in life. The busier we are, the more pressures we face, the greater our challenges, the more we need to embrace Pooh’s powerful insight that sometimes doing nothing leads to the best somethings!

In Exodus 14, we find Moses facing a significant leadership challenge. Having successfully led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt, after confronting Pharaoh multiple times, he finds himself in a new challenge. The people are camped near the sea, and the Egyptians have changed their minds about letting them go. The enemy army descends around the encampment, trapping the Israelites. As is to be expected, the people panic. They begin accusing Moses of



“THE LORD WILL  
FIGHT FOR YOU;  
YOU NEED ONLY  
TO BE STILL.”  
EXODUS 14:14



bringing them out to die in the desert. It is hard to blame them. Panic seems like a pretty natural response to their circumstances. Yet in Exodus 14:13–14, Moses tells them, “Do not be afraid. Stand firm and you will see the deliverance the Lord will bring you today. . . . The Lord will fight for you; you need only to be still.”

Instead of going into fix-it mode—gathering weapons, organizing the people for battle, building a defense—Moses goes to God. In that act of being still and listening to the Lord, God’s plan, one that is much better than any Moses could have dreamed up, is revealed. In Exodus 14:16, God tells Moses, “Raise your staff and stretch out your hand over the sea to divide the water so that the Israelites can go through the sea on dry ground.” I am struck by the fact that God’s plan required a lot less energy and effort than any strategic plan Moses could have generated in response to this seeming crisis.

Too often, when faced with leadership stress, overwhelming demands, or an apparent crisis, I assume the answer lies in my doing more and working harder. Like Christopher Robin in the movie, when faced with a deadline, I skip my lunch break, work on the weekend, or cancel my vacation. I scurry about trying to create a solution rather than recognizing that sometimes my most powerful leadership decision might be to try doing a little “nothing.”

Journalist Kate Murphy, in her 2014 *New York Times* article “No Time to Think,” says, “You can’t solve or let go of problems if you don’t allow yourself time to think about them. It’s an imperative ignored by our culture, which values doing more than thinking and believes answers are in the palm of your hand rather than in your own head.” I would add that sometimes the answers are whispered to our hearts. When we fail to listen, in silence and stillness, we may miss the best answers to issues we are facing.

In Exodus 14:17, God reveals the purpose of his plan in parting the Red Sea. It is arguably the most important reason for us to know when to be still and allow God to do something. He tells Moses, “And I will gain glory through Pharaoh and all his army, through his chariots and his horsemen.” Regardless of our leadership context, when we learn how to be still, to listen to God’s voice, to do nothing in our own strength, we get to be a part of seeing God glorified as he does something that far surpasses what we could do. ■

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DAUGHTERS, AND THEIR DOG, REX.



# Where Do You Lead?

WRITTEN BY *Julie Fisk*  
ILLUSTRATED BY *Krista Dumire*

When I ask women where they are leading, I often get a slightly panicked look followed by a firm denial as they tell me all the ways in which they don't lead, have never led, and won't ever lead.

Culturally, leaders are often portrayed as standing alone, both shouldering the responsibility and basking in the glory of their decisions and actions in solitude. Faced with that daunting image of American individualism, coupled with a lack of fancy title, advanced degree, or eye-popping salary, we tend to opt out of any notion of leadership before God can whisper the biblical leadership he has called each of us to.

As women who love and follow Jesus, we are the salt of the earth and lights on the hill, and we are called to be godly influences in the places and spaces we go in our normal, everyday life. That's biblical leadership in its stripped down, nuts-and-bolts reality. This isn't about power as the world knows it. This isn't about competition with or replacing men. This is about fulfilling the God-call on our lives—being women whose words and deeds intentionally point others to Jesus on the soccer field sidelines, among a sea of cubicles, in the cul-de-sac, and in the boardroom.

Rather than look to earthly leaders, let's look at whom God chose to lead. One of my favorites is Moses: born to an enslaved people, abandoned (by necessity) by his mother, raised by a princess, afflicted with a stutter, and known to be a murderer, he was cowering in the wilderness when God confronted him in the form of a burning bush. That's quite a list of disqualifying characteristics! Moses argued at length with God, convinced others were better equipped to be used by God than he. God knew better. And Moses, at last, trusted God.

We pick up the story in Exodus 17. With the Amalekites preparing an attack on the Israelites, Joshua and his army were sent to meet the enemy in battle while Moses took up a position on a nearby hill with Hur and Aaron at his side. As long as Moses kept his arms stretched toward the heavens, Joshua and his army prevailed; however, as Moses' arms

grew weary and began to sink toward the earth, the Amalekites rallied and the battle turned against Joshua. Seeing this, Aaron and Hur found a rock for Moses to sit on, and then Aaron and Hur each supported an arm when Moses could no longer summon the strength to do so on his own. As the sun set on these three men with arms raised toward heaven, Joshua's army overtook and defeated the Amalekites (see Exodus 17:8–13).

Is it not a breathtaking vision of the difference between biblical leadership and what our culture often portrays as leadership? God cares nothing for pedigree; he looks at the heart. God has a plan for each of us to be the tangible hands and feet of Christ in the circles where he has already placed us, and we need to stop disavowing the call of God on our lives.

And he calls us to lead in community, not solitude. We need Aarons and Hurs and Joshuas (leaders in their own right, with their own God-calling on their lives) who come alongside us, each playing their own role in God's story and in ours, and we are to do the same for the women around us.

He calls each of us to a journey—a race—of faithful stewardship of the giftings and resources he has put within us. This is not a competition, and there is no race “winner.” This is an ongoing collective effort to be women who use our God-gifted resources and talents to make an eternal impact in our few short years in this temporary place. We are told of the great cloud of witnesses who stand in the heavenlies (see Hebrews 11), shouting encouragement to those of us who are running our own faith races, who are striving to be women who reflect Jesus in word and deed to those around us—even in the most ordinary moments of our lives.

I am going to ask the question again: Where do you lead? Before you dismiss the question with a list of all the ways in which you are not qualified, take a moment to ask Jesus where he is currently sending you as his influencer—his tangible hands and feet—during this season of your life. Then ask Jesus to show you where you currently play the role of Moses and where you play the role of Hur, Aaron, or Joshua. ■

HE CALLS US  
TO LEAD IN  
COMMUNITY,  
NOT SOLITUDE.



\*JULIE FISK WRITES BOOKS ENCOURAGING WOMEN TO LOVE GOD AND LOVE OTHERS IN THEIR DAILY LIVES. JULIE AND HER HUSBAND ARE RAISING THEIR CHILDREN TO DO THE SAME, AND THEY SUCCEED, FAIL, AND RELY UPON CHRIST AND HIS GRACE TO FILL IN THEIR GAPS. YOU CAN FOLLOW JULIE ON SOCIAL MEDIA UNDER THE RUTH EXPERIENCE.



# Faith Stories

01

"HONESTLY, I'M BEING LED BY GOD EVERYDAY TO BE A GOOD EXAMPLE TO MY CHILDREN BY WATCHING WHAT I SAY AND THE TONE I USE TO SAY IT! THAT TONE CAN GET OUTTA CONTROL (INSERT SWEAT LAUGHING EMOJI)."

@HMAND  
HEATHER ANDERSON,  
AGE 35, RICHFIELD, MN

02

"GOD WAS CALLING MY HUSBAND AND ME TO A NEW POSITION AS LEAD PASTORS AT ZOE CHURCH IN BURNSVILLE. THE THOUGHT OF LEAVING EVERYTHING WE KNEW AND OUR HOME CHURCH FOR THE PAST FOURTEEN YEARS WAS TERRIFYING, BUT WHEN GOD SPEAKS, WE MUST OBEY! WE TRUSTED HIM, AND HE IS TAKING CARE OF ALL THE DETAILS!"

@AMBERLINZ1  
AMBER LINZ, AGE 36,  
LAKEVILLE, MN

03

"A FEW MONTHS AGO, I FELT LIKE I HAD TO STEP DOWN FROM A LEADERSHIP ROLE I WAS REALLY PASSIONATE ABOUT. LOOKING BACK, I CAN SEE THAT NOT TAKING THAT ROLE LET ME FOCUS MY EFFORTS ON PROJECTS I WOULDN'T HAVE HAD TIME FOR OTHERWISE. GOD WAS GUIDING ME THROUGH THE WHOLE PROCESS, AND IT IS SO EVIDENT."

@JOSIE\_GROVES  
JOSIE GROVES, AGE 20,  
SPRINGFIELD, MO

04

"I WAS LED BY HIM TO QUIT MY FULL-TIME JOB, WHICH LED ME BACK THE LONG WAY TO WORK PART-TIME (SOMETHING I WANTED) IN THE SAME OFFICE—WHICH I LOVE! I KNEW THIS WAS THE RIGHT THING BY PRAYING AND SENSING THE TIMING WAS RIGHT, AS WELL AS THROUGH CONFIRMATION FROM A TRUSTED FRIEND."

@KHANLON94  
KARA HANLON, AGE 46,  
ISHPEMING, MI

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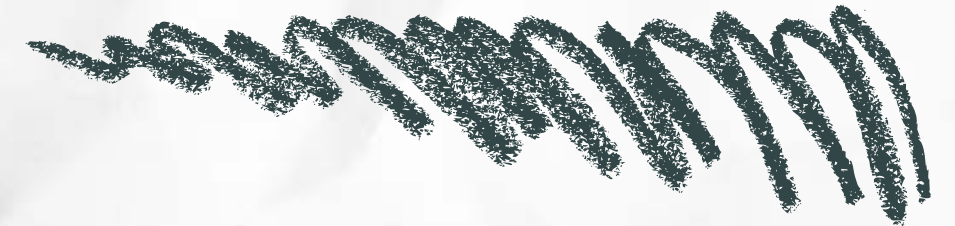


# Amp Up Your Leadership with Better People Skills

What makes a great leader? More and more, studies show that emotional intelligence (EQ) sets leaders apart, not IQ. Emotionally intelligent leaders inspire through self-awareness, self-regulation, motivation, empathy, and social skill. These leaders are aware of emotions—their own and those of others—and guide those emotions in the right direction.

Emotional intelligence is too important to neglect, so here are five ways to increase your leadership EQ.

WRITTEN BY *Krystal Gail*



### 1. SELF-AWARENESS

- Journal about one difficult situation and one positive situation you faced each week. What did you learn?
- Make a list of your personal and professional values. Do they align?



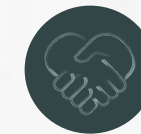
### 3. MOTIVATION

- Set yourself up for success by asking if your personal and professional goals are achievable and timely for this season.
- Have an abundance mindset. List the resources you have available to accomplish your goals and conquer your challenges.



### 2. SELF-REGULATION

- To increase awareness of your feelings and other people's, make a list of descriptive and nuanced emotional vocabulary words.
- Consider the attributes you want to see in your team. How do you lead by example and exhibit these qualities?
- Notice the emotional climate of your next meeting. How can you enhance it in a positive way?



### 4. EMPATHY

- Respond to conflict with curiosity. Before you react, first pause, listen, and seek to understand others' point of view.
- Volunteer! Transformation happens when we show up to serve without expecting anything in return.



### 5. SOCIAL SKILL

- Lead your next conversation with the interests of that person. Don't know? Ask.
- What verbal and nonverbal cues make you feel affirmed and connected to others?
- Identify someone around you who could benefit from your investment. How can you add value to his or her life?

# Stop Waiting for a Call—You Already Have *a Purpose*

WRITTEN BY *Shiloh Gideon-Sjostrom*

I chuckled a little when I saw a social media post with #worldchanger next to a sweetly smiling baby. *Such a weight for the little one to carry*, I thought.

I understand the desire we have to see ourselves and our children as people who will leave a positive mark in this world. To fulfill our calling, be change agents, or follow our destinies all seem like noble goals. I remember when I first moved to the United States from India to attend Bible college, students and faculty would routinely ask, “What is your calling?” I didn’t know what to say because this question was new to me. “I guess I’m called to this college to study,” I’d say tenuously. Was I supposed to have “a call” in order to have purpose?

Of course, knowing God has called you to a specific task for a specific season is a wonderful gift. But what if that calling never comes? Or you may feel the calling is there but you don’t see it being fulfilled the way you sincerely hope. The outsized emphasis on having a calling has left many feeling rejected, elevated unqualified people, and instilled disappointment in so many. Some of us have sadly resorted to clinging to simplistic memes like “Make your own dreams come true” or “Create your own destiny.” How feeble and hollow those phrases sound when we contrast them with the words in 1 Peter 2:9: “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light.”

Christian sociologist James Davison Hunter coined a phrase that has recently become quite meaningful to me. “Faithful presence” is the idea that believers should



PHOTO: NICOLE FLACK

utilize their gifts and talents within every sphere in which they find themselves, with the sole purpose of bringing glory to God. So let’s take this opportunity to change the focus from searching for calling and instead pay attention to our gifts, talents, and interests. These are the special abilities God has entrusted us with, and it becomes our responsibility to invest time and resources to cultivate those talents. Just as in the parable in Matthew 25, whether we have been given one, two, or five talents, we need to find a way to make those talents grow. It doesn’t matter if you are a student, an entrepreneur, a bus driver, a teacher, an intern, or a homeschooling parent, because Jesus has already chosen you and appointed you to bear fruit (see John 15:16).

Like Johann Sebastian Bach, who ended each composition with *Soli Deo gloria; Jesu Juva*—“to God alone be the glory; Jesus help me”—let us fiercely refuse to fulfill a destiny of our own making. Instead, with the help of Jesus, let us practice faithful presence everywhere we go and continually remind people to look up at the cross. This is how we become #worldchangers. ■



Jesus has already  
chosen you and  
appointed you  
to bear fruit.

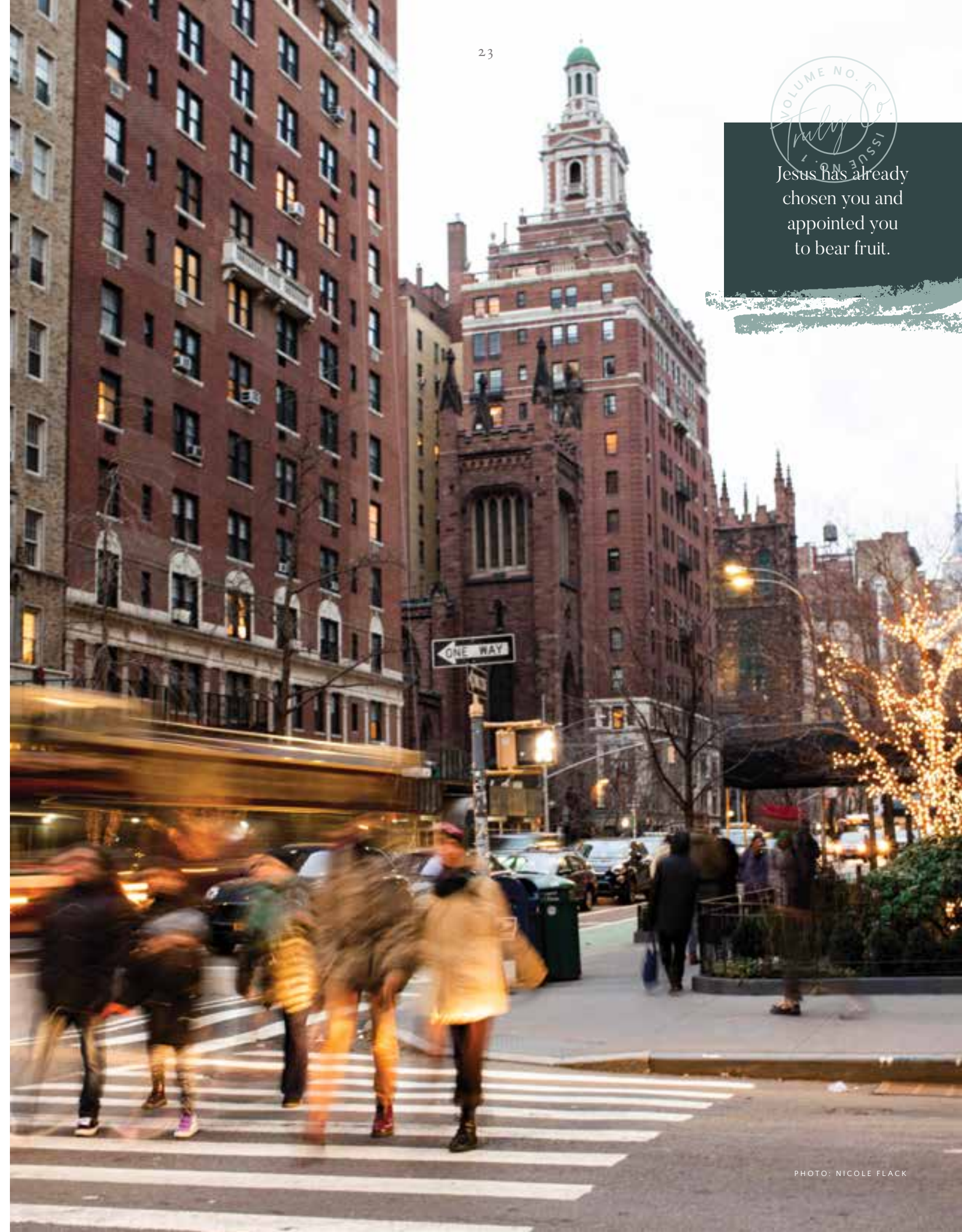


PHOTO: NICOLE FLACK

# LEADERSHIP LESSONS from JESUS

WRITTEN BY *Lindsay May & Adriel Anderson*

No one would argue that Jesus wasn't an amazing leader. This one man who physically walked the earth more than 2,000 years ago influenced the entire globe (without a social media presence, people!). He fully embodied servant leadership, modeling behavior that has been reflected upon by leaders and organizations everywhere. But we think there is more to Jesus's leadership example than what is often emphasized. The following are a few simple, practical things that we can keep in mind as we live out our own leadership.

## 1. HE LET HIS FOLLOWERS FAIL.

He didn't swoop in to rescue them when he knew they weren't going to make the perfect decisions or when they were in tough situations. Jesus didn't save Lazarus from death, he let his disciples struggle with the things he said, and he asked his followers unfathomable questions. Life's most valuable learning sometimes can only happen through failure.

## 2. HE SOUGHT OUT PASSIONATE PEOPLE.

For his core group, he didn't seek the ones who would gain him favor and influence. Instead, he surrounded himself with the ones who had a teachable spirit and the courage to move forward. As a result, his disciples were nimble and effective.

## 3. HE WAS OKAY WITH A MUDDIED REPUTATION.

People talked about him, and he knew it full well. (How awful would it be to know everyone's deepest thoughts about you?!) He called people to repent, while also being thought of as a partying lawbreaker. But he kept his focus where it counts: he was more concerned with pleasing his Father than pleasing the people around him. Because of this, he was secure in his actions and didn't aggressively justify everything he did.

## 4. HE ALLOWED MISUNDERSTANDINGS.

Jesus was often found teaching and answered those who came to him with earnest (and even disingenuous!) questions. But if the crowds or his followers misunderstood, Jesus didn't rush to clarify or change his messaging. This gave him a committed core group of followers who were chasing after him to learn more, instead of the other way around.

## 5. HE PUT LOVE BEFORE ALLEGIANCES.

Jesus hung out with "sinners" and had dinner with religious elites. He had extreme political opposites (Simon the Zealot and Matthew the tax collector) in his core group of disciples. Also, scandalously for the time, women actively participated in his ministry. He healed Jews and Gentiles, men and women and children. He healed a beggar (to great rejoicing!) and moments later had dinner with tax-collecting Zaccheaus (to an entire town's extreme dismay). Jesus loved without distinction, without fear of conflict, and with simultaneous grace and truth. Love without walls meant he was not limited by class, social standing, or even others' expectations. He could move among people with freedom to do his Father's will. ■

Everybody is a leader to somebody.

No matter where your sphere of influence is—home, neighborhood, school, workplace, or church—God has placed you there for a purpose. You are meant to intersect your life with the people around you, and thereby influence them. May our influence be positive and filled with love, pointing everyone around us to Jesus. This is the inspiration behind our leadership issue cover shoot. We hope you see a glimpse of yourself in these real-world women. Friend, business owner, mother, sister, neighbor, co-worker in Christ, YOU are a leader.

>>



RAEGAN VEGH  
*college student*

CORI LEIK  
*health and fitness coach*

BRIANNA KNOWLEN  
*hairstylist*

YARELY RIVERA  
*spa owner and esthetician*



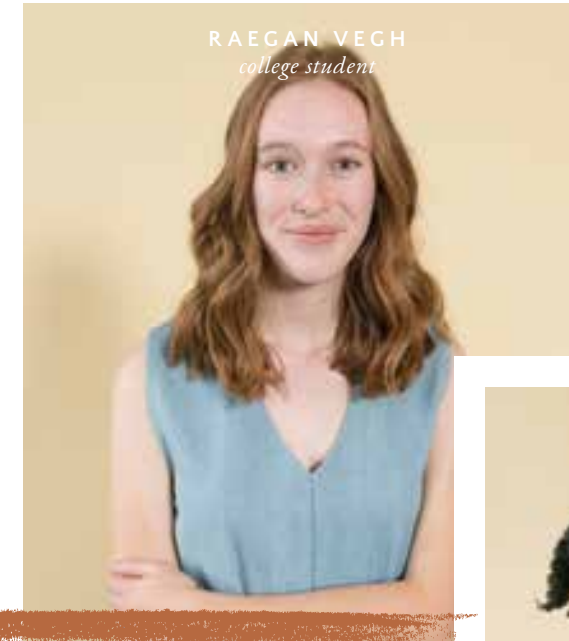
God has placed you where  
you are for a purpose.



NATALIE BAUMAN  
*registered nurse*



RAEGAN VEGH  
*college student*



BHAR BAGUTTI  
*addiction management coach*



CRYSTAL BEILKE  
*ministry leader*



PHOTOGRAPHY BY *Nicole Flack*  
DIRECTION AND STYLING BY *Madi Reimer*  
STYLING BY *Jen Nylin (Jenny in the City Boutique)*

## THE AMERICAN BRAND OF

"Beauty"  
IS BROKEN

And why it matters for leaders.

WRITTEN BY *Melissa Louise Johnson*  
ILLUSTRATED BY *Krista Dumire*

I believe I have been brainwashed.  
Maybe you have, too.

If you have grown up with America's version of beauty, you may know what I mean. Every young girl learns who is considered beautiful—the Barbies and Disney princesses of the world, of course. Those youthful women with impossibly large eyes, slim figures, and idealized proportions. Aesthetically flawless and false caricatures of humanity.

So we've learned what "beautiful" is and we see how our culture favors it. We absorb the explicit and subconscious messages through every advertisement and infomercial, and we strive after attaining or maintaining that standard.

There is a script for beauty in America, what your image or wardrobe "should" be. Interestingly enough, that script saturates other areas of our lives, too. What you should or shouldn't eat, what exercise is best, or what cleanse will improve your health.

We have been taught to strive for a certain kind of beauty—a very broken brand of beauty. You see, this matters to your life as a leader because it matters to the life of your soul. I believe the soul is our ultimate radar for all things truly beautiful and sacred. It is the deepest part of us that is tuned in to the voice of God.

The problem with American beauty is that it can easily become all encompassing. It can dull that radar. Caught up in the broken game

of beauty, we can easily become obsessed with what we "should" be versus who and whose we truly are.

Our best, most authentic leadership comes to life when we embody our true selves: when we tune in to the loving voice of our Creator or pay attention to the things that make our hearts soar with joy; when we notice the issues that make our hearts ache, calling us to action in the world. Those are the signs of life.

When you no longer pay attention to the cues of your deepest self, you lose touch with your true self. Ask yourself, are you hungry, tired, lonely, needing restoration? What makes you feel truly alive? When you notice those cues, you are then poised to experience True Beauty. Simply put, I believe that True Beauty is the life of God at work in us and all around us.

Our best, most authentic  
leadership comes to life  
when we embody  
our true selves.

So while the American brand of beauty tells the story of shame, that we need to keep striving to be "enough," the story of True Beauty tells us we are enough and have been all along. We have been created in love by the Author of beauty.



So we know True Beauty when we see it in the world—when we see love, goodness, kindness, gentleness, justice, or staggering beauty in the creation around us.

The funny part about that kind of beauty is that it's everywhere and it's astounding, but we so often miss it. I know I do.

Perhaps we need new eyes.

Advertisements on our radios, televisions, and smartphones get so much airtime. They proclaim the American version of beauty in the precious real estate of our eyes and ears all day long.

I have experienced firsthand the gravity of pursuing American beauty in my own life. Several years ago I realized how that pursuit was eroding my soul's radar and my deepest self. I lost touch with who I truly was.

As I got caught up in all of the shoulds and trying to be the American brand of beautiful, I realized the lie that is American beauty. It is purposefully elusive, based on selling products, and robs me of my ability to notice and be immersed in True Beauty. It robs me of my intuition, the gift of knowing my true self, who God has created me to be.

How we think about beauty matters.

It matters in our lives and it matters in our leadership. And we are all leaders in our own way. We each have a sphere of influence. A sphere where we can advocate for True Beauty. As models to the next generation, to our own children, in the church, in our places of work, we have the power to rewrite these harmful cultural narratives and offer a hope-filled, life-giving alternative to countless girls and women.

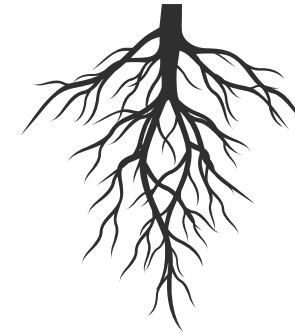
My hope for you, and for women in general, is to know and experience that True Beauty is so much bigger than any cultural construct, so much bigger than "thin, toned, and tan." True Beauty blows the American brand of beauty out of the water and beckons us to a splendor we can only imagine. Will you join me in rediscovering that kind of beauty? ■

\*MELISSA LOUISE JOHNSON IS A MARRIAGE AND FAMILY THERAPIST, A SPIRITUAL DIRECTOR, AND AN ADJUNCT PROFESSOR AT BETHEL UNIVERSITY IN ST. PAUL, MINNESOTA. SHE IS THE FOUNDER AND HOST OF THE IMPOSSIBLE BEAUTY BLOG AND PODCAST, DEDICATED TO REDEFINING BEAUTY AS "THE LIFE OF GOD AT WORK IN US AND AROUND US." LEARN MORE AT IMPOSSIBLE-BEAUTY.COM AND ON INSTAGRAM @MELISSA.LOUISE.JOHNSON.



THE GROVESTAD FARM | NORTHFIELD, MN

PHOTO: BECCA GROVES



# Pruned for the *Harvest*

WRITTEN BY *Becca Groves*

When my husband and I planted our fruit orchard four years ago, we were told that for the first three years we should pick off the tiny fruits each spring. This was to ensure that the tree would pour all of its energy into growing strong roots instead of growing fruit.

So each May we sadly picked the young fruit, knowing we would reap no harvest that year, even while working so hard to tend to our growing trees. Those first years we faithfully watered the trees every other day, hauling buckets of water in the back of our truck back to the orchard. We mulched every tree and built tall fencing to protect them. We staked every one and in the winter pruned the branches.

Maybe it is because I am a visual learner, but watching our fruit trees for so many years has me wondering if the dreams in our hearts—the fruit we believe is coming—are taking their time because our merciful God is waiting for our roots to grow strong.

Jesus promises that if we remain in him, we will bear much fruit. If we try to force the fruit before the roots are ready, we very well may not be able to support the weight of the harvest.

This spring the plum tree was positively stunning with white blossoms, and since we had waited the three years, we let the fruit grow to full size. By August the branches were bursting with golden fruit. My husband brought our whole family out to the orchard to eat our first plums together, and when we took our first bite, the juice dripped right down our chins. We laughed and everyone picked another to eat. For weeks we enjoyed our abundant harvest, seeing clearly how all of that tending and quiet growth was worthwhile, producing a strong tree, fruitful and abundant.

There may be seasons in our lives that appear unfruitful and unproductive, but as we've learned from the fruit trees, that might not be the case. More likely, as we abide in our creator, we are in a season of growth that is unseen and underground, strengthening our foundation for a harvest yet to come. "If you remain in me and I in you, then you will bear much fruit" (John 15:5). ■



LED THROUGH THE  
*Holy Land*

WRITTEN BY *Lindsay May*

It's one thing to hear about the great leaders of the Bible, but another to experience it firsthand. I recently had the opportunity to travel to the Holy Land and see firsthand the places where ancient leaders like Abraham, King David, Peter, and Jesus lived and breathed. For me, it brought Scripture to life and transformed formerly black-and-white text into three-dimensional color. I didn't travel 6,208 miles to find proof that God exists, but in the end, the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob met me on the same holy mountain and sacred places of our spiritual ancestors. I felt deep gratitude for the hard work these spiritual pioneers accomplished, which has allowed me to understand God's heart for me and for this world. The work and faith of these great leaders in their generations gave me greater understanding of the impact I can have in my own.

EIN GEDI, ISRAEL | PHOTO: LINDSAY MAY



## Pave the Way for Another's Future *Victory*

WRITTEN BY *Elle Stablbut Roetzel*

There is nothing more exciting than receiving the vision for where God has called you. But then it happens. The resistance. It comes to stop you, to keep you from accomplishing your goals, leaving you discouraged and broken beside the road of unfulfilled dreams. The resistance can come from internal limitations and mindsets or from the enemy putting up roadblocks. But as you continue to press through, you will gain new ground and become more resilient.

There are many examples in the Old Testament of pushing through and taking ground. Moses was called by God to deliver his chosen people out of slavery and into the land that God would give them. The road was not easy, and Moses was breaking new ground with every step. Moses took his ground, and when Joshua was called to lead, he took it to the next level, completing what had been revealed to Moses' heart.

King David also took ground as he chased after God's heart. He wanted to build a permanent dwelling place for God's presence, but God assigned David a different role—to war with the surrounding countries in order to bring peace to the land. Because of David's obedience, his son Solomon's starting point was a country at peace. This allowed him to build the temple, completing David's vision.



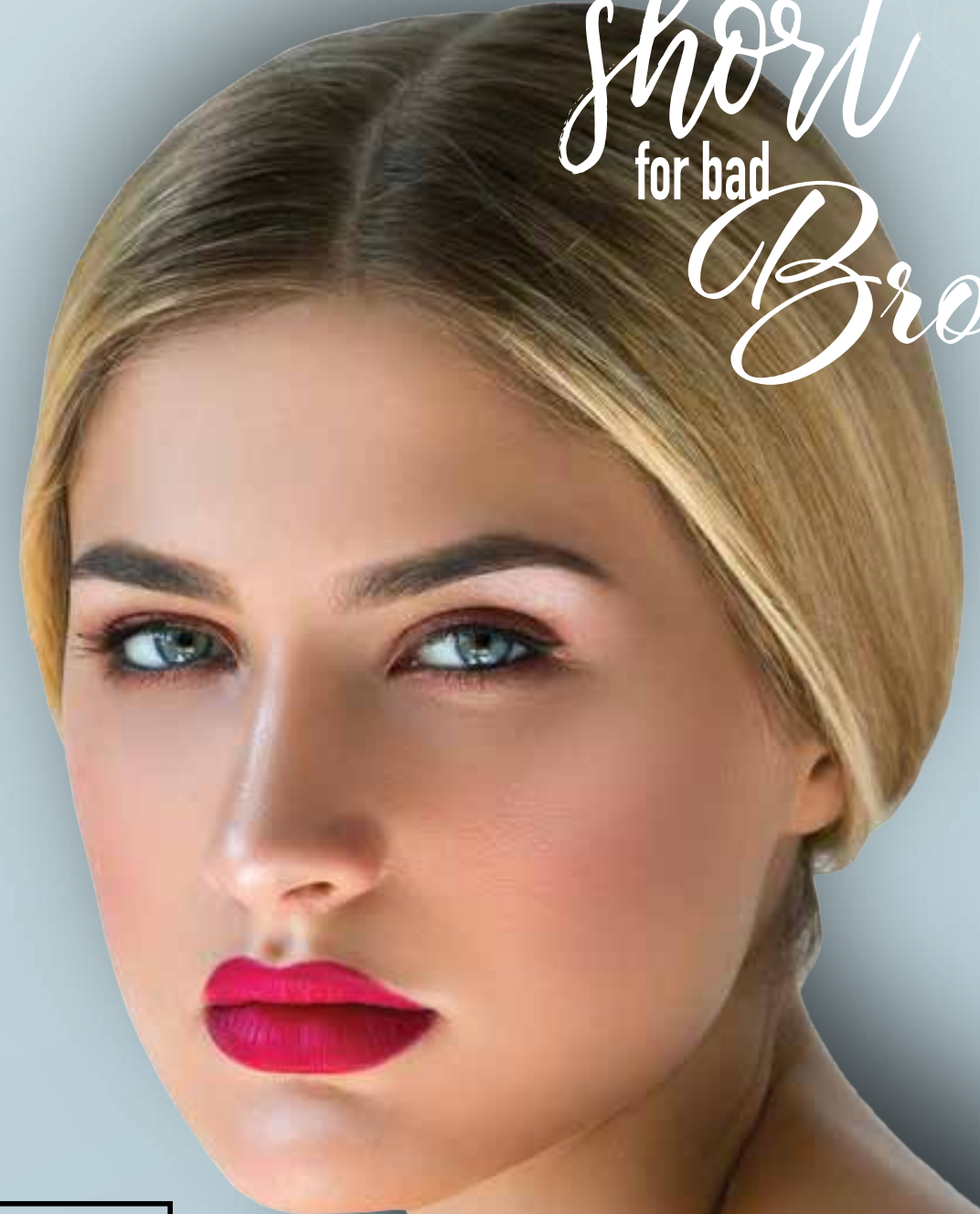
PHOTO: TARAH KREUTZIGER

Neither Joshua nor Solomon fought for the land they stood on when they stepped out to lead. Without Moses and David breaking through and taking their ground, Joshua and Solomon would not have had their starting places.

The land you claim as a leader is not only for yourself but also for those coming behind you. By watching you press through resistance, other leaders will be trained and ready for their time to move the dream and vision to the next level. What's more important, the ground you take is their triumph, too. Do not be tempted to hold them back or keep them from the land you possessed. Your land is everyone's victory.

As a leader, break through the resistance that comes against you in order to both take your land and release it, as your legacy for the leaders coming behind you. What you accomplish will become a much greater victory as they stand on your ground to reach new heights. Emerging leaders will rise as you lift them to the next level. ■

Life is too  
*short*  
for bad  
*Brows*



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# The Truly Co on Leadership



BHAR



RACHEL



LINDSAY

FAVORITE LEADERSHIP BOOK, BLOG, OR PODCAST?

DARING GREATLY BY BRENÉ BROWN

BOOKS AND PODCASTS BY JOHN TOWNSEND AND HENRY CLOUD

ZAPP: THE LIGHTNING OF EMPOWERMENT BY WILLIAM C. BYHAM, PH.D.

WHAT LEADERSHIP STYLE DO YOU MOST IDENTIFY WITH?

COACHING. I LIKE HIGHLIGHTING INDIVIDUAL STRENGTHS OF PEOPLE I WORK WITH OR HAVE RELATIONSHIPS WITH.

AUTHORITATIVE WITH A SPLASH OF COACHING. I LOVE CLEAR GOALS AND DIRECTION, BUT IF I STRUGGLE, I VALUE SOMEONE'S HELP.

DEMOCRATIC. I LOVE COLLABORATION, DELEGATING AUTHORITY, AND LETTING OTHERS SHINE IN AREAS WHERE I WOULD PERFORM SUBPAR.

WHAT ONE QUESTION ARE YOU ASKING YOURSELF LATELY?

WHAT SHOULD I BE DOING NEXT?

WHO CAN HELP ME?

GOD, HOW CAN I BEST SERVE YOU TODAY?

WHAT ONE QUALITY DO YOU VALUE MOST IN A LEADER?

I LOVE A PASSIONATE LEADER DRIVEN BY HER GOAL AND WILLING TO DO ALL IT TAKES TO ACCOMPLISH THE GOAL.

INTEGRITY, CLARITY, TENACITY, VULNERABILITY, SPIRIT...LEADERSHIP IS MANY THINGS, AND FOCUSING ON ONE SWINGS THE PENDULUM TOO FAR.

EMPOWERMENT—THE WILLINGNES TO TRUST THOSE AROUND YOU TO HELP ACCOMPLISH THE VISION.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM YOUR GREATEST FAILURE?

THERE IS ALWAYS STRENGTH TO GET BACK UP AND DUST MYSELF OFF—AND TO REACH OUT FOR HELP!

THERE ARE TIMES WHEN THINGS JUST DON'T WORK. THAT'S OKAY.

THE OUTCOME OF THE SITUATION IS **NOT** MY IDENTITY.

HOW DO YOU DECOMPRESS?

TIME ALONE FOR QUIET RELAXATION.

READING, BRITISH TV, BATHS, BEING QUIET.

SPIN BIKE AND PRAYER. AND NETFLIX WITH MY HUSBAND, PLUS ARTICHOKE DIP AND TORTILLA CHIPS.



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ADRIEL



MICAH



NATASHA

FAVORITE LEADERSHIP BOOK, BLOG, OR PODCAST?

THE 21 IRREFUTABLE LAWS OF LEADERSHIP BY JOHN C. MAXWELL

HOW TO LEAD WHEN YOU'RE NOT IN CHARGE BY CLAY SCROGGINS

THE ASK A MANAGER BLOG BY ALISON GREEN

WHAT LEADERSHIP STYLE DO YOU MOST IDENTIFY WITH?

AFFILIATIVE. ENCOURAGEMENT AND CAMARADERIE CAN CREATE POSITIVE, SELF-MOTIVATED TEAMS.

COACHING. I LOVE SEEING INDIVIDUALS SET GOALS, REACH GOALS, AND WORK TOGETHER TO HELP IDENTIFY THEIR GIFTS.

STRATEGIC AND DEMOCRATIC. TEAM MEMBERS HAVE DIVERSE TALENTS AND SKILLS, AND I TRY TO FIND THE BEST FIT FOR RESPONSIBILITIES.

WHAT ONE QUESTION ARE YOU ASKING YOURSELF LATELY?

IS IT WORTH MY SANITY TO KEEP THE KIDS AWAY FROM OUR WHITE COUCH LONG ENOUGH TO SELL IT? (HINT: IT WASN'T.)

WHAT SHOULD I BE ASKING GOD FOR AND PRAYING FOR IN THIS SEASON AS I DESIRE MORE OF HIM?

WHERE SHOULD I RELINQUISH CONTROL?

WHAT ONE QUALITY DO YOU VALUE MOST IN A LEADER?

GOOD LISTENING. WHEN LEADERS DON'T TAKE TIME TO LISTEN, I QUESTION IF THEY ARE COMMITTED TO AND VALUE THEIR TEAM.

AUTHENTICITY

I CAN'T NARROW IT TO JUST ONE MOST IMPORTANT TRAIT. BUT I REALLY APPRECIATE FLEXIBILITY AND APPROACHABILITY.

WHAT DID YOU LEARN FROM YOUR GREATEST FAILURE?

I NEED TO HONOR THE WAYS GOD MADE ME.

GOD CAN TAKE ANY BITTER MOMENT AND MAKE IT A SWEET TEACHABLE EXPERIENCE.

EVEN THOUGH I WANT TO DO IT ALL, I CAN'T.

HOW DO YOU DECOMPRESS?

NETFLIX! ALSO BEING WITH FAMILY, PODCAST LISTENING, WALKING, READING, CREATING.

I LOVE TO REFURBISH FURNITURE, TRAVEL, AND BAKE.

TV/NETFLIX, AUDIOBOOKS, PODCASTS.

# Invisible Leadership with *Real Results*

WRITTEN BY *Adriel Anderson*

If you spend your day changing diapers and redirecting toddlers, are you a leader? If your silent prayer moves mountains, but people give credit to a bulldozer instead, are you a leader? If you encourage others who go on to greatness, but you do not, are you a leader?

It's easy to deceive ourselves into thinking that leadership equals, and even requires, recognition. Not to mention a social media platform. When we think of leaders in the Bible, we think of those clear standout leaders like Moses, Paul, David, and, hello, Jesus. But there are so many people in the Bible whose godly leadership changed the sweep of the biblical story, yet they aren't depicted in Sunday school flannelgraphs. People like the Hebrew midwives (who saved Moses' life; see Exodus 1:17), Phinehas (whose zeal for God spared all of Israel; see Numbers 25:11), and Joanna (who funded Jesus so he could, you know, save the world; see Luke 8:3). Lately, though, I find myself thinking a lot about Barnabas.

He doesn't get a lot of mentions in Acts, but Barnabas made an enormous difference through his humility and support of others. You see, it was Barnabas who persuaded the apostles to welcome post-conversion Paul, the once-terrorizer-of-churches (see Acts 9:26–28). And it was Barnabas who planted the famous church at Antioch and then invited Paul along on what would be his first missionary journey (see Acts 11:22–26). Where would we be today without Paul's ministry planting churches or writing the New Testament? Barnabas gave Paul a foothold to do both.

Barnabas and Paul continued together until they argued over giving a second chance at ministry to a young believer named John Mark, who earlier had quit on them.

Paul moved on, but Barnabas took on the task of discipling John Mark (see Acts 15:36–39). Years later, John Mark went on to write the Gospel of Mark. It was the first written gospel, and it aided the writing of later gospels. The Gospel of Mark mattered immensely then, and it still does now. What if Barnabas didn't leave his prestigious partnership to give John Mark another shot?

Sometimes it feels as though no one sees what we do. And sometimes we obediently surrender our position to God and wonder if it was worth it.

But Barnabas reminds us that when we take risks to serve people, not positions, we're on the right track. He also exemplifies that we don't need to be remembered or noticed to make an enormous difference. So change those diapers, say those silent prayers, and encourage others to greatness, knowing that no act of obedient leadership is hidden from God. He sees it all and uses it all. And one day, when all hidden things are revealed, he will reward us for all of it. ■

EXPERIENCE FIRSTHAND HOW A FOCUS IN FAITH  
AND ACADEMICS CREATES A ONE-OF-A-KIND  
LEARNING EXPERIENCE.



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OUR PRAYER FOR YOU

You are a leader.  
You were born for this  
exact moment in time.  
This is your generation,  
your opportunity.

Today is a gift—  
let no moment be wasted.  
Don't hide your light.

Follow God's lead;  
stay in step with him.  
A life of faith takes courage,  
so take heart, sisters!  
You aren't alone.

Lead well as you are led by  
the One who gave you life.