



Message Transcript

Leadership Expectations

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Pastor Jeff:

Father in heaven, we give You all the glory, honor and praise for who You are. God, we thank You that, Lord, every time Your word is opened, whether it's read, studied or faithfully and accurately proclaimed, Lord, that You have a word for us. So Lord, our prayer this morning is speak for we are ready to hear what You have to say. Lord, we believe that when You speak, You comfort us, You challenge us, You encourage us, You admonish us, You build us because You're in the process of transforming us into the likeness of Your son Jesus Christ. So Lord, our prayer today is that You would have Your way with us. Now for all those who agree, who will listen to the word, who will believe what Jesus is saying to you and who will by faith put into practice what He shows you, will you agree with me very loudly this morning by saying the word Amen. Amen.

When it comes to leadership, there's something in the heart of every human being that tends to think that if we were leading in a certain capacity that we could do it better. It starts when we're young and we watch our parents as they're leading us, and we begin to think, "One day when I'm a parent, I'm going to do things completely different than my parents are doing because I know better." Sometimes we think that when we get married and we see other families that have children, I remember what it was like when Kim and I first got married and we would go to a restaurant and we would see children, they'd be on the ground playing and we would say stuff like, "That is never going to happen when we have our children," only to have our children, and there's just times where you're tired and exhausted, and you got two little ones

crawling around and you're the one being talked about by everybody else in the restaurant. It's like, "I don't care. It's okay," right?

We have a tendency to think that when we're not the one leading, that if we were leading, we would do it better. It's okay to feel that way. It's okay to think that there's different ways that you want to do it, but when you're sitting in the seat of leading, you realize very quickly that maybe there's more to this than you initially thought. Kim and I often joke that we were marriage experts before we got married and that we were parental experts before we had children because there's this situation that when you are finding yourself in a position of leadership, that what you thought was one way is actually very different and it's much more comprehensive than what you thought it was.

That leadership is not just a title of authority that allows you to make sure everything happens your way. Leadership is a position given by God so that you can be an influence and a steward of what He wants to accomplish in and through that group of people that you're leading. So whether you're called as a pastor or whether you're called in a church to lead in a ministry or lead in a small group or whether you're called to lead in your family as a husband or as a wife, whatever you're called to lead and called to steward, when you find yourself in that place, you're going to realize very quickly it's a little bit different than what you had initially thought.

If you've ever wanted to know what you can expect when you're in a position of leadership, the Lord has a word for you today, especially when you want to lead in His way. I want to encourage you to open your Bible up to Exodus 17 as we look at that

text today, and just to bring you up to speed while you're turning to Exodus 17, we've really come through in a miraculous era because what we've seen God do is to deliver all of Israel through the Red Sea.

He was amazing. They were trapped. They had no hope, and yet the God of all hope delivered them. As Moses held out his staff and the water's parted, and not only did they make it across on completely dry ground, but all of Pharaoh and his armies were swamped so that there were dead bodies all over the place and Israel was so fired up, they began to sing praise and worship to the Lord. Then as they continued in their journey, they realized they didn't have water, they didn't have bread, they didn't have meat, they weren't finding a place of rest. So what did God provide? He provided water, He provided manna, he provided meat, He provided the Sabbath so that they would have everything they need.

So here's two things that you can know about Israel before we even get in the text today. They've seen God's marvelous hand in deliverance and they've seen God's marvelous hand in provision. They've experienced it personally and majestically in such a way that you would think they know this now, and guess what? They're a lot like us. They're still going to have some challenges, and that's where our story picks up in Exodus 17.

Hear the word of the Lord. It says this. "Then all the congregation of the sons of Israel journeyed by stages from the wilderness of sin according to the command of the Lord and camped at Rephidim and there was no water for the people to drink. Therefore, the people quarreled with Moses and said, 'Give us water that we may

drink,' and Moses said, 'Why do you quarrel with me? Why do you test the Lord?' But the people thirsted there for water and they grumbled against Moses and said, 'Why now have you brought us up from Egypt to kill us and our children and our livestock with thirst?'"

Isn't it interesting? What do they need? They need water. We know we need water. That's a legitimate need that we have, but haven't they already seen God provide water? I mean, they found a place where there was a pool, but the water wasn't good. It was bitter. So God had them in obedience, put a tree in and made it sweet and they drank, and then God provided streams of water, and now guess what? Their journey, and the Bible says that they were journeying in stages. They journeyed in stages. That means they pulled up their tent pegs and now they're continuing to go. Why? Because God will never leave you in the place that you're at. God is always taking you on a journey.

Now, I won't embarrass you, so this is a rhetorical question. Keep all your hands down, but if I were to ask you how many of you really enjoy change, some of you would raise your hand, but you don't enjoy change. Nobody enjoys change unless change brings you more comfort, but more often than not, change brings less comfort than the comfort that you're already living in. All of us are creatures of habit. All of us are creatures of comfort. Even in church, if somebody's happened to sit in this very seat that you sit in every Sunday, you're uncomfortable with that, right? We don't like change unless it's to our benefit and unless it's to our comfort.

So what's going on now is something Israel's seen before. Now this time they don't see any water, there's not a bitter stream, there's no streams, but instead of seeking the Lord, instead of saying, "God, You're the God who delivered us, You're the God who provides. We know You're here. Let's have a prayer meeting. Lord, what are You going to do this time? How are You going to take care of us? We know You love us." What do they do? They complain and they quarrel and they gripe at who? Moses.

Let me give you your first leadership lesson. There's going to be five leadership expectations you can have. Here's the first. When you lead for the Lord, you can expect this. Number one, blame and criticism for legitimate problems, which you helped create but cannot solve. You're going to experience blaming criticism for legitimate problems, which you helped create but you cannot solve.

Why do they have this problem? Because Moses is leading for the Lord and he's trying to get them into the promised land. Deliverance wasn't the end goal. Deliverance was the beginning to get them on a journey, to get them to where God had promised their forefathers He would take them. When God saves you, that's just the beginning. That's new birth. He puts you on a journey to take you where you need to go, and yet sometimes as soon as we get saved and we get comfortable, we think, "This is it."

Now, what's going on? Moses, because he's being obedient to the Lord, Moses, because he's doing what God asked, takes them on a journey, and as they go on a journey, where Moses has led them has left them without one of their basic needs,

which is water. Sometimes when you lead, the very thing that you're leading is going to create problems for the very people that you're leading.

One of the reasons that God does that is He wants not only you to know but the people that you're leading that all you can do is point them to the one that can help, that you don't have the answers but God does. It's one of the principles of leadership because here's what we falsely think about leadership when we're young. Whether we're thinking about a coach or a teacher or a business owner or a pastor, anybody that's in a position of leadership, we automatically expect them to have all the right answers and to make all the right decisions at all times for all people.

We wouldn't put that expectation on ourself, but we put it on others. Kids, you put it on your parents. You want your parents to be perfect and make all the right decisions just the way you think they should be made, and you think the right decisions are what you think should happen, and oftentimes you're wrong, right?

The same is true in our leadership. The reality of leadership means that God begins to take you on a journey to lead His people in such a way that you don't know how to do it. It's true as a pastor. It's true as a husband. It's true as a wife. It's true as a mom. It's true as a dad. It's true in the academic world. It's true in the business world. It's true in any single sector that you would look at somebody that has been given spiritual authority to lead by God. They're not an expert at it. They have to learn how to do it.

What you can expect when you lead people, when you step out and you want to

lead for God, whether it's planting a church, whether it's beginning to lead a small group, whether it's starting to serve in ministry, whether it's beginning a business that the Lord asks you to do, whether it's marrying the person God asks you to marry, whether it's having children and bringing them into this world, you are going to realize at some point in time, sometimes relatively quickly, you don't have a clue how to do this.

The very thing that you're doing is creating problems for the ones that you're leading. It's why sometimes in a moment of anger, your kids might say to you something like this, "I didn't ask to be born into this family. It's not my job. You're the one that created me. You're the one that brought me into this world. I didn't ask to be part of this," right? What you have is when you're leading people, oftentimes people, when they're spiritually challenged, do not have the spiritual maturity enough to look inwardly and see what God's trying to do in them, so instead, they inevitably blame their spiritual leaders. Children blame parents, students blame teachers, players blame coaches, parishioners blame pastors.

When you find yourself in a position of criticism and blame, as we've already talked about, that is dictating your spiritual immaturity, and it's also letting you recognize that that is not putting God on the throne. God is the provider. Israel knew God was the provider. If they really believed God was the provider, they wouldn't have been complaining about not having water. They would've talked to the God who was present with them and prayed that He would just provide water because that's what our God does. He's an abundant God that is overflowing.

Prior to being a pastor, I did full-time itinerant evangelism. What that meant for

me is I would preach at churches, camps, prisons, retreats, evangelistic crusades, but they were all one off time preaching. So I would show up. My job was usually preach the gospel, tell people that God loved them, had sent His son Jesus to die for them, who rose from the dead and offered life in His name, and then invite people forward. So routinely for Kim and I, as we traveled around, it was not uncommon to see 15 to 25 to 300 to 400 people come to know Christ in a service or something like this, and then everybody was all fired up and we would get patted on the back and told, "That was great. We love you guys," and then we would drive away.

Then she would tell me about, "Did you hear about what's going on in the church?" and I'm like, "Yeah, somebody told me about this." We would be driving away saying, "Aren't you glad we don't have to be part of that church?" So we go preach in another church and just do it. Much easier to guest preach or pinch hit than it is to be the person that stands there week after week, month after month, year after year and know people that you love, that you are leading, that in front of them you're learning how to lead and they're watching you do that, right? That's what's going on here.

Here's what you can expect if you didn't know this. If you're going to lead for the Lord, you can expect blame and criticism. It just comes with the package. I had no idea when we started the church the ways in which people would criticize, but I've learned over time. I've been criticized for all sorts of things. I've been criticized in my preaching for not being practical enough. People said, "You're just too biblical." Other people say I'm not biblical enough, I just teach the prosperity gospel. Some people say, "You're too tough on sin." Other people say, "You're not tough enough on sin."

Some people say, "You preach too short." I'm just kidding. Nobody's ever said that. Just trying to sneak it in and see if you're paying attention.

We're a small church and I was meeting with everybody, we're 50 people. Some people would say, "You didn't meet with me enough this week." Then as we've gotten to be a larger church where I can't meet with everybody, some people have said, "Oh, you're just a big church pastor and all you care about your ego." I can't win, but what I've learned is when I hear blame and criticism, to filter it because some of the things that people are complaining about, whether it's worship or groups or men's or women's or preaching, there's a hint of truth in what they're saying. There's ways God wants me to respond and grow and don't just be dismissive, but the reality is there's no possible way to lead God's way in any venue where you can keep everybody happy 100% of the time, and too many people try to do it, right?

If you're going to lead for the Lord, I promise you, when you step into that leadership and God prompts you to take that step of faith, and you're doing it out of the goodness of your own heart, I've seen over and over in small groups where people have been part of a small group and they have expectations. You don't realize that you have expectations, but you have expectations for what that group should be. You learn what those expectations are when you lead because when you're in a group, it's no big deal whether you come every week or not, but when you lead a group, you expect everybody there to be there every week and be on time and be prepared and come thankful that you're leading the group, and that never happens ever, right?

When you step into kids' ministry you expect, "Well, I'm giving up my time to four-year-olds and certainly they're going to be thankful for the way in which I lead them," and I don't get the thanks that I'm getting, right? All those different things, and God does that, and God has us plant a church or start a ministry or do different things to teach us as a leader. As I'm leading God's people, "I can't solve your problem, but I can point you to the one who can, and the problem that you have, it is legitimate, and the way that you're feeling is real and I can't solve it for you, I'm just being honest, but I'm taking you on this journey because God can."

That's what was going on in the life of Moses, and they're grumbling against him. They're complaining against him. They're quarreling with him. This goes beyond, "Hey, we're going to die out here." They're saying now, "It's your fault. You are the problem. You are the one. You are the reason that we're going to die." So you can expect that. So don't think there's something wrong when you experience blame and criticism for legitimate problems which you help create but cannot solve.

Meaning this, if you're going to go into politics, there's going to be some blame and criticism the day one that you take over. If you're going to lead in a school and you're going to be with students, there's going to be some blame and criticism. If you open a restaurant, you start a business, whatever you lead, there's not going to be 100% of the people ever that are like, "We are so thankful for you." So don't expect that. Expect blame and criticism. That comes with doing what God is asking you to do.

Secondly is this. When you lead for the Lord, you can also expect an increased

dependency to seek the Lord and then go public with what He says. You can expect when you're leading for the Lord, if you're doing it His way, this increased dependency on Him and to go public with what He says. Notice what happens here in verse four. So Moses cried out to the Lord. He cried out to the Lord. Now, let's stop there for a second. It doesn't say Moses got away, knelt down and prayed. Prayer is good. What is he doing? He is crying out to the Lord. What does that mean? He is burying his soul to the Lord.

Moses is not just coming saying, "Dearest Lord, thank You for leading us into the wilderness. May You provideth for us." I mean, he's not talking that way because he spoke Hebrew, but he's not talking that way. The reason is is because he's pouring out his heart because of what's going on and he's leading the people exactly where God wants them to go. They don't have what they need. The reason they don't have what they need is because he's the one that told them to move and they need what they're asking for, but he can't provide it. So what's he doing? He's crying out to the Lord. He's burying his soul. He's telling the Lord, "I don't know what to do. Lord, I need your help. Lord, I am completely dependent upon You because if You don't come through, I am in big trouble."

You say, "Well, how do you know that?" Because the text tells us that. It says that he cried out to the Lord. Why? Saying, "What shall I do to this people? A little more and they will stone me. They're going to kill me, God. They're sick of me."

Now, why did Moses lead the people? Do you remember why? Did he sign up for the job? Was he wanting to be the deliverer of Israel? No. God called him. We find out

from the very beginning of the story, even when he's floating down the Nile, that God had a plan for his life. We see him even after he murdered an Egyptian and flees to the wilderness that God provided for him as a shepherd. We see when he's 80 years old at the burning bush, that's when God calls him. So why is he going? He's going because, "God told me to go help this group of people be delivered and get to the promised land. That's why He put me on the earth. So I'm doing everything God's asking me to do and the very people I'm doing it for want me dead." That's what's going on.

So you'll have an increased dependency on the Lord and you'll go public with what He says. So he cries out to the Lord saying, "They're going to stone me." Then the Lord said to Moses, "Pass before the people and take some of the elders of Israel and take in your hand your staff with which you struck the Nile and go." So he's going to say, "Hey, take some of your elders. I want you to go out in front of the people. I want you to hold that staff, the one that you struck the Nile with when you turned it to blood. I want you to take that out in front of the people."

Sometimes when God shows us things or we're going through a tough time or people are being critical of us, you know what we want to do? We want to hide. We want to become more private. We want to back up. We don't want people to see our insecurities. We don't want people to see that we don't have it all together. Oftentimes God's like, "Okay. Here's what I want you to do. Now I want you to go take leaders and go stand in front of them and do exactly what I told you."

So Moses is going to do that, "Take some of the elders, some of the leaders, take that staff in your hand. Remember the power's not yours, it's Mine," and what does God say? "Behold, I will stand before you there on the rock at Horeb and you shall strike the rock and water will come out of it that the people may drink," and Moses did so in the sight of the elders.

Now, we read that verse and like, "Okay. Praise God." Has anybody here been asked to strike a rock for thirsty people in hopes that water would come out of it? You talk about one step of faith. I've never heard about this other than this story in the Bible. This is the only one I'm aware of where God asks somebody to do this and Moses was obedient. We read that God did it and we're like, "Yeah, that's what God does," but Moses had to have the faith to take the staff, take leaders and strike the rock, and what did God promise? He goes, "I'll go stand on the rock. I'll go before you."

When God asks you to do something, He always goes before you. He always goes with you. He'll never fail you. He'll never forsake you. He'll always come through with what He shows you He's going to do, but Moses had to do it. Moses could have said, "That sounds like kind of a crazy idea, and if I go strike a rock and tell them water's coming out and no water comes out, they're going to take that rock and stone me with it," but that's what he does. He trusts what the Lord tells him. So he's dependent upon hearing the voice of the Lord and then doing what the Lord says.

Notice what he named the place. He named the place Massah and Meribah

because of the quarrel of the sons of Israel and because they tested the Lord saying, "Is the Lord among us or not?" So the people were wondering, "Yeah, we've seen God do things, but is He present now? Is He able to provide now?" Massah means testing, Meribah means quarreling. He named the place testing and quarreling. That's the name of the place. Didn't probably do good on a portrait of the city or Chamber of Commerce going forward, right? You want to move to testing and quarreling? That's what he named the place.

Notice this. He cried out to the Lord. The Lord showed him what to do and he did what the Lord wanted him to do. That's essential for us. When I got into ministry, my prayer life changed. It was no longer just a simple prayer life, it was, "God, if You don't show up, I'm in big trouble." I remember becoming a youth director at a church of about a hundred people thinking, "I got this. This is going to be good. I'm going to lead kids to Christ, lead their families to Christ," and I got there to this church of a hundred people and guess how many kids we had? Four, and guess what happened? Nothing. Nobody wanted to come.

I remember one day we had 10 kids in Sunday school and I was thinking, "There's only 10 kids? and everybody was high fiving each other like, "We've never seen this many people in the church ever before. This is awesome." I'm like, "You guys don't come." They're like, "No, this is boring. We don't like it."

There was this group of women that prayed in our church on Wednesday nights. There were five of them. They were very old women. They're about 45 to 50 years old. I was 24. They invited me to come pray with them. I remember I went to this group of

women that prayed, but they prayed differently than how I'd seen prayer before. They started praying, and when they were talking to God, they were talking to Him as if what they were praying was actually going to happen. Then I would see what they were praying for would come to pass.

So they started asking me, "What do you want to see?" I said, "I want to see more kids come to our youth group," and more kids started coming. I told them, "I want to see kids start getting saved." Kids started getting saved. I then said, "I want to see parents of these kids get saved," and I started leading parents of the kids to the Lord.

Then they said, "What else do you want?" So I was like, "This is great. I will subcontract out all my prayers to these women so that I can go do ministry," but what I didn't understand at the time was prayer is not about God answering, prayer is about your growth of intimacy and fellowship with the Lord and what He's trying to build in and through you. What I learned as I began to pour out my heart to the Lord and tell Him what I wanted and tell Him about my disappointments and tell Him about the things I was excited about, God began to meet me in a way where our relationship deepened and our love for one another deepened. God already loved me unconditionally, but I started to grow in my love for Him.

Now I'm not subcontracting my prayer out. The reason that first Tuesday on both of our campuses and online is the most important meeting of the month is if there's anything I can teach the people God's having me lead is if you can learn to seek the

face of the Lord, He will meet you in deeper ways than you ever knew possible, Amen, that that's foundational for your growth in Christ. It's an increased dependency upon Him in going forward.

Now, it's interesting here because if you think about Moses striking the rock like, "What's the rock? Why that rock?" I mean, in some ways, any little rock would've done because God asked him to strike the rock, but if you fast forward to 1 Corinthians 10 where he's talking about Israel and talking about how they provided an example to us, in verses two, three and four it says that all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea and all ate the same spiritual food and all drank the same spiritual drink for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them and the rock was Christ.

What do we see? We see Jesus showing up in the wilderness in the middle of nowhere to be the one who is the provider and the one who's present, the one who says, "I will never leave you or forsake you," the one who says, "I'll be with you always to the very end of the age." You say, "Well, where's God?" He's among us. If you're a believer, everywhere you go, there God is and He will always protect you and He will always provide for you and He will always be present in your life, and that's what he was trying to teach them.

It was topographical about what was going to happen, striking the rock and the water flowed. What did we have in the New Testament? Christ got struck and what flowed from Him as He rose from the dead and sent who? His Holy Spirit so that we would have constant nourishment to feed on the Holy Spirit.

So how do you know that? Because the New Testament talks all about it. Do you remember when Jesus met the woman at the well in John 4, and all she's asking for is a drink of water from the well because she thirsts? Jesus said to her in John 4:13, "Everyone who drinks of this water," talking about the water from the well, "will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I give him shall never thirst, but the water that I will give him will become in him a well of water springing up to eternal life," and what does she say? "Sir, give me this water."

Just a couple chapters later in John 7:37-38, Jesus said, "If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me as the scriptures say from his inmost being will flow rivers of living water." What do we get a picture of in the Old Testament? Jesus Christ being struck and dispensing that which is essential for us to live. Amen. That's who our God is, that we're dependent upon Him.

See, when we're leading, it's a position of spiritual authority that is dependent upon the Lord Jesus Christ. It's interesting here because even after Moses has done what God asked and they're provided for, you would think that at some point in time these people would be like, "Moses is great." I mean, when you read through the Bible, there's very few human, I mean, Jesus is the character. There's no one greater than Jesus, but if you're looking from a human standpoint, Moses is one of, if not the greatest leader in all the Old or New Testament. He's phenomenal, and yet their hatred of him continues.

You remember when he sent 12 people to spy out the promised land and all 12

came back and 10 said, "We cannot do this. We look like grasshoppers in their site. Why did you bring us here and all this?" Joshua and Caleb too said, "No, we got to take it. This is what God has for us. Let's go," and because they weren't obedient to the Lord, they waited 40 more years in the wilderness, but do you realize what happened at that time? I don't have time to get into the whole story today, but you can read it in Numbers 14. I'll just read this one verse.

Numbers 14:10, "When the 10 came back and gave the bad report," it says this, "but all the congregation," talking about Moses, Joshua and Caleb, "but all the congregation said to stone them with stones. Then the glory of the Lord appeared in the tent of meeting to all the sons of Israel." So what are they talking about months down the road? "Let's still kill them." The congregation always wanted Moses and his followers dead. God shows up at that point in time and here's what God decides. He goes, "Maybe I should just kill them all and we can start over," and Moses says, "No. People have seen the cloud by day. They've seen the pillar at night. They've seen your goodness. If you kill them, they will say that you're a bad God and you couldn't get them into the land. Don't do that. I'll pray for them, God."

What you see is Moses' heart for his people because any good leader, no matter what venue you're in as a Christian in the church, in the business world, as a coach, as a mom, as a dad, I'm telling you, you have to have a love for those that you're leading or it doesn't do any good because if Moses didn't have a love for his people, and God would've showed up at the tent to meeting with all that power and Moses would've said, "They want to stone me again," and God said, "Well, stand back, I'll kill them all,"

if Moses didn't love his people, Numbers 15 would've been, "And Moses stepped back and God went vroom," and Moses said, "Praise the Lord."

You see what happens is when you lead for the Lord and you're a parent, even when your kid's wayward, you love them. What happens is even when they do the wrong thing, you still care for them. What happens as a pastor is even when people are rebellious, you care for their soul. What happens is when you're in the business world and employees are disgruntled with you, but you see their best, you want their best. You have to have a love for people. Moses was developing a love for his people even though they wanted him dead. So that's what's going on here, but I promise you, there'll be an increased dependency upon the Lord to seek Him and go public with what He says.

One of the ways that you can grow if you want to see God at work is to read missionary biographies. One of them is by Jay Hudson Taylor called *The Spiritual Secret*. Read it a number of years ago, read it a few times, but in that book, he talks about the fact that before he was ever going to be sent overseas, which he knew God was calling him to do, he said, "If I don't believe God can provide for me here, how am I going to believe God's going to provide for me there when I don't know anybody?" So he got rid of everything he owned and moved into the inner city and there's story after story, after story, after story where God came through just at the right time convincing him that he provided, which is what thrust him onto the mission field.

What I've seen is what is cliché and people say all the time but it's true that God is rarely early but He's always right on time, and that sometimes God is building our

spiritual muscles of trust. When people blame and complain, it doesn't mean that they're necessarily wrong, it means there's a hint of truth, but it causes you to be dependent upon the Lord like, "Lord, what do You want me to do, and how do You want me to respond, and how do I show love to the people that You're helping me lead so that they can get what they truly need?" That's part of what it means to be a leader. You can expect blame and criticism. You can expect increased dependency.

Third is this. When you lead for the Lord, you can expect ongoing opposition and attack for you and for those that you're leading. When you lead for the Lord, if you're going to do it in God's way, whether it's from the pulpit or in the business world, as a mom, as a dad, as a husband, as a wife, you can expect ongoing opposition and attack for you and those that you're leading.

Notice verse eight. It says, "After all this," it says, "then Amalek came and fought against Israel at Rephidim," Rephidim. Rephidim means place of rest, place of rest. Isn't it interesting that God takes them to the place of rest and they don't have water, and God takes them to the place of rest and now they're coming under battle?

You say, "When's it going to end?" Never. If you lead for the Lord, those little battles and those little oppositions and those little attacks never stop. They only increase over time. As a young pastor when we planted this church and people would ask me, "How's it going?" I would share the two or three things that were really cooking at the time that were challenging for me. I would say something like this, "Well, we got this going on and this going on and this going on, but as soon as we're done

with those, boy, it's going to be smooth sailing." I don't say that anymore.

Now, what I'll say is something like, "We got these things going on and God's good in them, and even when these things go away, there'll be a whole another slew of problems we didn't even know we had." Sometimes when I'm praying with people that are close to me, I'll pray like this, "You know what? I'm just tired of these problems. Bring us new problems because I'm tired of working on the same one, and if I'm missing what You're trying to teach me, help me understand what You're trying to teach me so we can move on to some new challenges," but opposition and attack will always accompany when you try to live for the Lord.

If you're single and you get married and you want to have a Christian marriage, there'll be opposition to it. If you're a Christian couple and you want to have kids and raise them in a godly way, there'll be opposition to it. If you want to plant a church and do it God's way, there'll be opposition to it. You want to start a business and do it God's way, there'll be opposition to it. You want to be a coach and do it God's way, there's going to be opposition to it. There's no way that you can do it God's way and avoid challenges.

Here's what I would say. For some of you that have been doing it God's way and it's not a result of sin in your life but there's incredible oppression, incredible challenge, incredible attack, here's a word of comfort for you. God loves you so much and sees so much good in you that He's entrusting you with something so great because He believes that by your dependence upon Him, He can bring you through it. So consider it all joy when you're going through those circumstances, and I'm talking about the ones

that you don't like right now that you're in and that you would've never picked. That's the Lord in your life. They never go away. It's always going to be a challenge. There's never going to come a time where it's not.

I mean, I know, if I were Moses, I'd be sitting there saying, "I wish I could provide water. I can't, but my God can. I wish I could provide protection. I can't, but my God can." When God leads you to a place, He can cause problems in the people that you're trying to lead, and there'll always be opposition and attack. Here's why. Because God's people are always in training to develop more spiritual muscle, and you never graduate from the school of discipleship.

There's never going to come a time where you're ready to lead for the Lord. If you're listening to this message today and say, "Well, this is a good reason why I don't lead anywhere," praise the Lord. That's not the intent of the message. This is the intent of the message is to lead because everybody's called to lead. This is just what you can expect when you do. I've had people tell me from the time that they joined our church, whether it was week one or sometime after that, just all the things that broke loose in their life.

People have said things to me like this, "Pastor Jeff, before we came to BRAVE, everything was going okay in our life, but ever since we've come to BRAVE, it's unearthed. All these things in our marriage have been really challenging," or, "Ever since we've come to BRAVE, there's stuff going on with our kids that weren't going on before and it's become really challenging," or, "Everything was great, but now at work

it's become really challenging," or, "Financially we were set, but all these things happened and it was really challenging."

We even tell people when they're going to become elders or they're going to come on our staff, we'll say things like this, "Just know by taking a step of faith, you're going to experience a level of spiritual attack you just haven't experienced yet." Every time we tell somebody that, they always nod and say, "Yeah, I get it. I get it, I understand," and then they come and they become an elder or they join our staff and then they say stuff like this, "Man, my daughter's sick now," or, "I can't seem to be able to get over this hump, and we've never had these problems before," and on and on and on to which I say, "Welcome to the family," right?

I mean, there's something about going after things God's way that is not comfortable but oftentimes is challenging. That's what He does and that's how He grows us. So we'll pray to the Lord like, "Lord, I want to grow. I want to know your word. I want to be better at evangelism. I'm going to be better at serving," and we think He's just going to download some information and we're going to be better. What He's doing is like, "I heard you. I'm bringing some challenge into your life that you're not going to like, that's going to help answer the prayer that you've been praying," and that's what God continues to do.

Now, when I heard this and I was a younger believer, I thought it was like pure poppycock or something like that. I mean, people would say, "Hey, every time we go to share the gospel, something breaks loose, something's wrong, the power goes out, whatever." I never believed any of that stuff until I started leading for the Lord.

Remember the first night we did an evangelism night at our church that we had, we were doing a big evangelism night. I invited a friend in. He was coming to play the guitar and sing and do all these other things, and when he did, wouldn't you know? Five minutes before we started, the whole power on the entire block went out and somebody said, "Man, spiritual attack."

I'm like, "No, the power went out. It's not spiritual anything." They had to run, get generators to make the night work, but when I saw that happen over and over and over and over, and every time we went to present the gospel, things went hayward and it went haywire, I was like, "There's something to this."

Ask my wife and I now. When we first got married, if I was going to be preaching on Sunday, on Saturday there was usually something that got between us and I would tell her it's spiritual attack, and she would say, "No, you're just being a jerk," which sometimes she was right, but now we've gotten to the place where we know on Saturday when I get up, if I'm going to preach on Sunday, something's going to happen. There's going to be something that goes wrong between her and I or a misunderstanding or one of our kids or something or somebody's going to need to stay up late or I'm not going to get sleep. It's just going to happen and we know it's coming so we pray for it.

I've seen it on the mission field. I remember being in India one time, which traveling on the roads in India is dangerous as it is just to drive. One time we were in India, one of our guys got sick and had all sorts of heart problems. We had to rush him

to the ER, but to get them there, we had to drive on the wrong side of the road to get him there. So not only were we going where there are no laws, we were going in between cars coming at us. I remember thinking, "Lord, this is because I'm going to preach the gospel."

Now, the more attack I see and the more opposition I feel, the more sometimes I feel like we're right in the center of exactly where God wants us to be. It's not about avoiding that. It's about realizing when you step out for the Lord, you will always be opposed because the enemy doesn't want Christ kingdom advanced. So you can expect that.

Fourth is this. When you lead for the Lord, here's a fourth expectation. You can expect an absolute need. It's an absolute necessity to choose godly men, you can fill that blank in, godly women who will fight for you and with you. An absolute need to choose godly men and/or women who will fight for you and with you. You need relationships.

We sometimes think that because of the way that we're raised, that Christianity is between Jesus and me, but it's Jesus and we. God always has worked in community. God always works on the team. He never works with just an individual. The more isolated you try to make yourself, the less effective you will be in the kingdom.

Notice what happens here, verse nine. So Moses said to Joshua, it's first time Joshua gets introduced. He's going to be introduced as a warrior, which tells us who he's going to be going forward. He says, "Choose men for us and go out and fight

against Amalek. Tomorrow I will station myself on top of the hill with the staff of God in my hand." Joshua did as Moses told him and fought against Amalek, and Moses, Aaron and Hur went up on top of the hill. What did Moses have the ability to do? He had men around him that he knew well, that he could deploy, that he could entrust, men that he believed in, and men that believed in him. So when it came time to fight an enemy and it came time that he needed help, he knew who to call and who to call by name and who to send out for that specific skill.

Howard Hendricks used to always ask, "Where are your men?" to the guys. Ladies, where are your women? Who do you have in your life that will fight for you? Who do you have in your life that will fight with you? Who do you have in your life that loves the Lord so much they want to see the Lord's vision in your life built? Who do you have? Those are people I'm talking about not structures. Those are people I'm talking about not structures. Moses was calling Joshua, Aaron, Hur.

So notice what happens, verse 11. So it came about when Moses held his hand up that Israel prevailed and when he let his hand down, Amalek prevailed. So when they go to battle, Joshua takes Israel out. Moses is up on a hill. He's holding the staff, the same staff that provided water, the same staff that performed all the plagues, the same staff that parted the Red Sea. As long as that staff is up, Israel's winning, but guess what? You and I weren't designed to hold our arms in the air all day long. So guess what happens to Moses? His arms are going to get tired. As long as his arms are up, Israel's winning. When his arms go down, Amalek starts winning.

Notice verse 12, "But Moses' hands were heavy. So then they took a stone and

put it under him and he sat on it. Aaron and Hur supported his hands, one on one side, one on the other, thus his hands were steady," until when, "until the sunset." They did it all day. So Joshua overwhelmed Amalek and his people with the edge of the sword.

Which of those three guys was most important? Was it Joshua who was doing the fighting? Was it Moses who was seeking the Lord or were the two guys that were holding up his arms? All the above is the answer because what happens is when Moses can't do it anymore, they said, "Take a seat." So you can see Moses sitting down on a stone and then there's Aaron on one side probably with Moses' elbow underneath this way and Hur on the other side with Moses' elbow underneath this way and they just held it there all day long because this is my job to support the leader, to support the one that's seeking the one that's going to give us the victory. That's my role. Other people's role was to go fight. Everybody had responsibility and Moses knew them by name, so he knew who to call on to do what he needed them to do.

Here's my question. Who are your people? Who has your back? There's one thing about saying, "I need an accountability partner." There's one thing about saying, "I need a mentor." If you're really going to lead for the Lord, you better have people in your life that really, really know you well, that will speak into your life, that you'll listen to. Now, I get this question a lot and I think it's somewhat of a fair question. People will ask me this question sometimes, "Who holds you accountable, Pastor Jeff." In other words, "What keeps you from going off the deep end?" I can explain it structurally. I can talk about how we have shepherding elders in their role, and I can talk about stewarding elders in their role, and I can talk about our supervising elders in their role,

and I can talk about how we've set it up for accountability coming from three different directions and all this stuff, but accountability never happens by structure. It always happens by willingness in relationship.

No matter what structure you set up, there's no guarantee of fidelity and faithfulness in that structure. There isn't, is there? Just because you're married, does that mean you'll never be unfaithful? No. What causes you to not be unfaithful? Because you need other people speaking into your life. You need other people that you know well enough. So yeah, I have all the structures, but I've seen guys in my role that I know by name, that I've known personally that have fallen out of good graces because why? It's not because they didn't have good structure and it's not because they didn't have good men around them, but guess what they didn't want? They didn't want to listen to what those guys were saying because they thought they knew better. May it never be.

Kim and I pray all the time. If I have one goal of pastoring this church is that I'd finish well. Here's what finishing well looks like for me, that when I'm done ministering, my wife still loves me, my kids still love me, and I've been faithful in the word of God the entire time with integrity. That's finishing well, but that doesn't happen because we set up a good elder structure. I have people in my life that I let speak into my life, people in my life that can tell me, "You don't smell good right now. The way you said that wasn't good," that I listened to because I know that they're right. I have a handful of them.

On Friday night, I was together with a couple different couples that I've known, one for 15 years, one for 40 years. It's one of the few places I'm at that I'm their pastor but I don't feel like I'm their pastor because they know everything about me from my past, and they can speak into everything about me. I need that in my life, but guess what? You need that in your life too. Who loves you enough to tell you when you're not being a good husband? Who loves you enough to tell you when you're not being a good wife? Who loves you enough to tell you when you're not spending money right? Who loves you enough to tell you that the way in which you said that was wrong? Who loves you enough to tell you that you have bitterness in your heart and you need to deal with that? Who loves you enough to tell you the things that you really don't want to hear?

I can't say that, "Yeah, when I hear that it's so wonderful. Praise God for my good friends," but do I need it? 100% because I've watched too many people in every sector, not just ministry, I'm just more focused on that, but I've seen it in the coaching world, I've seen it in the business sector, I've seen it in the political sector of all sorts of people that think they're better than anybody else, and yet we all know that we've sin and fallen short of the glory of God.

So you can't air your dirty laundry with everybody, but who can really speak into your life? Who will let you do that? Who will you let do that into your life? I'm telling you, the more you walk with the Lord, you will have an absolute need for that because whatever God calls you to, what He's calling you to is greater than anything you can accomplish for yourself. Who are the people that are going to help you? Who are the

people you're going to listen to? Who are the people that are going to help you get that done?

Here's the way I'd say it to you. The culture you choose will determine your future. In other words, be careful who you pull close to you and be careful who you surround yourself with because who you hang with will have a greater impact on you than you will ever have on them. Kids, I'm telling you who you hang out with when your mom and dad say, "You don't want to hang out with that person," they're trying to help you long term. I'm telling you as your pastor if you hang out with all non-believers, it's not going to help you long term.

I remember when I was a immature believer at the University of Illinois, just very young in my faith, and I was challenged by some people like, "Hey, why do you go out to the bars and why do you hang out with people like that?" and I would say this, "Because I'm an evangelist, man. I'm a cool Christian. People like hanging out with me. They don't like hanging out with you."

They're like, "No, you're just spiritually immature. You don't know what it means to walk with the Lord," and as they started walking me through, I started hanging out with a group of different people. When I started hanging out primarily with Christians, everything in my heart begin to change. I still had a passion for the lost, but I knew how to live it out so I looked different than they did.

Who speaks into your life? Who do you let talk into your life? Wasn't planning on saying this. I didn't say this first service, but it bears sane. Husbands, do you let your

wife talk into your life? She knows you better than anybody and she's right about 99% of the time, only 99% of the time, but she's right about 99% of the time. Do you let her talk into your life? Do you listen to what she has to say? She knows you. She loves you. She married you. She has to put up with you. Listen to her.

Who are the people that you will let speak into your life? Do you have those? If you don't, pray that God brings some of those people in your life. You have an absolute need for that going forward.

Then finally is this. Here's one thing that you can expect. You can expect a deeper intimacy with God by experiencing His power and His victory. When you lead for the Lord, you can expect a deeper intimacy with God by experiencing His power and His victory.

Notice verses 14 and following. It says, "Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Write this in a book as a memorial and recite it to Joshua that I will utterly blot out the memory of Amalek from under heaven.'" So two things are going on there. Number one, God's making a prophetic statement, which when God says something, it always comes true. He's going to wipe out the Amalekites. Under King David, He did exactly that, but He's also telling Moses, "Write this down in a book." In other words, "Keep journaling, Moses, because the stuff that you're seeing and the stuff that you're writing about, I'm going to use that someday." It's really the first indication we have that Moses was taking notes all along this journey so that the Holy Spirit could use that to pin what we have in our scriptures today. Really cool.

Verse 15, Moses built an altar and named it, "The Lord is my banner." God has a lot of names in the Old Testament for Jehovah. This is Jehovah-Nissi, "The Lord is my banner," and he said, "The Lord has sworn the Lord will have war against Amalek from generation to generation. You're always going to have problems with him, but ultimately, I'm going to wipe him out." Do you realize you're always going to have problems in this world, but ultimately God's going to wipe out evil? It's a promise. It's coming.

Now, "The Lord is my banner," when I think about that, I think about a piece of cloth and further Hebrew literature would say that's what it is. It's more of a cloth, but here, the way this is being said is Jehovah-Nissi, "The Lord is my banner," it's saying literally, "Yahweh is my signal pole." It's that pole around which an army can rally or regroup or return for instructions.

Isn't that what the Lord is? Isn't He that place that we go to as His people that we can rally around, that we can regroup, that we can return for instruction? Isn't that who the Lord is? That's what it means that the Lord is my banner. It's, "Come to me all of you who are weary and heavy laden, I'll give you rest. You're my army. You're my team. Come to me. I'll help you in that."

When you see the Lord in victory, when you see the Lord demonstrate His power, it'll grow your heart closer to Him. Sometimes we think intimacy simply means this, "I'm just getting quiet time with the Lord and it's so sweet." I've had sweet times with the Lord in private, I really have, but there's something about seeing the Lord work

what He says He's going to do where you see Him perform in power a miracle, you see Him perform a victory, you see Him do what you've only read about He was going to do and now you see Him do.

You start tithing and you see, "I'm not losing anything. I'm gaining everything by this." You join a community of people and you say, "I needed these people in my life because I'm actually growing in my faith and it's helping me develop." You see God when you read about the fact that He heals and all of a sudden you see Him heal you or somebody else on this side of heaven and you think, "My God does heal," or you're asking for some sort of spiritual gift that you didn't think could happen and He gives you that spiritual gift on this side of heaven, you're like, "God still works the same way He always does." When you see God work, it grows your intimacy and your love and your heart for Him, and that's what we want to see.

I remember being young in the faith and I'm like, "I hear people talk about God healing, but I don't know that He really does that." I've seen God heal people on this side of heaven. Yeah, God really provides for people on this side of heaven. If you're faithful in your stewardship and you're a generous giver, God will overflow it. I've seen God do that. God will deliver people from demons on this side of heaven. I've seen God do that. The more I've seen God do, the deeper my intimacy becomes with Him and the more I want to see Him do it in the lives of other people. That's what's going on here. That's what leadership looks like.

Do you know why this is so important? Do you know why this is so important? Because for some of you that say, "Well, I'm not a leader." Yes, you are. Some of

Jesus' last words on the planet were what? "All authority in heaven on earth has been given to Me, therefore go. Make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to obey all that I've commanded you, and I'll be with you always to the end of the age." What's He saying in this commission? "You're my leader. You're my people. Go do this."

As I was thinking about this text and thinking about these five phases of leadership, here's who I think about. I think about my Lord and savior. Did Jesus experience blame and criticism for legitimate problems which He helped create? Absolutely. Did Jesus experience an increased dependency to seek His Father during the time that He was on the earth and to do what He says? Absolutely. Do you remember the night that He was in the garden? "Dad, this is going to be hard. Dad, I don't know that I want to go through this, but not My way, Father, Your way. You want me to go to the cross? I'll do everything that You ask Me to do. I'll go public with this," and He did.

Did Jesus experience any opposition or ongoing attack from those that He was leading? Just daily all day long. Did He have an absolute need to choose godly men who would fight for Him and with him? Yes. Even though they were sinful and abandoned Him, that's who He deployed. That's why the church exists today. Did He grow a deeper intimacy with His Father even though He was one with the Father and said, "Hey, if you've seen Me, you've seen My Dad," yeah, but all throughout the text of the New Testament in the gospels, what do we see Jesus doing? Sneaking away to be with His Father because He wanted to hear His voice and do what His Father was

telling Him to do, which is why He said, "I only do what I see My Father doing."

You say, "Oh, I want to be like Jesus." Well, step out in faith. I don't know what that looks like for you. Again, I'm not telling you, "Hey, you need to remember all five of these points." Maybe there's one specific point that the Lord's put on your heart today that He's encouraging you with, but He loves you. I mean, the gospel says this that God the Father loved you so much that He sent His son to be the savior of the world. Amen. I mean, the reason God is commissioning you is because first and foremost, He wants to have relationship with you. God the Father sent Jesus into the world so that He could die on the cross for all your sin.

He didn't ask you to get religious, He just wanted to be in relationship with you, and He was sharing with you there's no way you can have a relationship with the Father except through Him. He died on a cross, but guess what? Three days later, He rose from the dead. He's as alive as He's ever been. He's been offering new life to all who had turned from their sin and turned to Him, and you can have relationship with Him both now and forever more, and by coming into relationship with Him, you will realize that you've been fearfully and wonderfully made, that you've been called before the foundation of the world, and that God has purpose greater than you ever knew that He wants to work through your life.

As you step out in faith and experience these leadership expectations, all it's going to do is grow your heart for Jesus. All it's going to do is make you love Him more. So if you're here today and you've never trusted Christ, let's make this your

time. Let's make this your day. If you know Him, I want you to think about where the Holy Spirit has told you, "Here's where I want you to take a step of faith. This is what it looks like for you," and that you be obedient to taking that next step of faith because that next step of faith is what's going to grow you. Amen. Amen.

Would you stand with me? Father in heaven, we give You praise, glory and honor for who You are. Lord, thank You for this leadership lesson in the wilderness. Thank You for what You're teaching us about who You are and how You're trying to have us grow to be like Christ. If you're here today, you never placed your faith and trust in Jesus and you want to have a relationship with the living God, a real relationship where you can know Him and hear His voice, then here's how you can pray.

Say, Father, I know that I'm a sinner. I know that I've done wrong. I know that I'm in need of Your grace, but I believe Jesus Christ died on the cross for my sins. I believe He rose from the dead, and while I don't know everything, I know that. So I want to turn from my sin today. I'm done with this part of my life and I want You to come in. I want You to be the Lord of my life. Come in my life, Lord Jesus. Lord, I just pray that those who prayed that would experience your Holy Spirit's presence and power as You indwell them forever. Then, Lord, for those of us who know You, Lord, show us the next step of faith. Help us trust You. Help us understand there's nothing strange happening to us when these things happen. This is just a sign that we're growing as leaders and disciples for Christ. Father, we give You all the praise. We give You all the glory. We give You all the honor in Jesus' mighty and matchless name. Amen and Amen. Can we give God praise this morning for who He is?

