

Spiritual Leadership

by Samuel Logan Brengle

Spiritual leadership is a thing of the Spirit, gained by many prayers, tears, confessions of sin, heart-searchings, and humblings before God.

Topics: "Spiritual Leadership", "Divine Authority"

Description

Samuel Logan Brengle emphasizes that true spiritual leadership is a divine gift, not determined by human status or education. He illustrates this through biblical examples like Joseph, Paul, and Moses, who achieved greatness through their relationship with God rather than worldly accolades. Brengle stresses that spiritual leaders must pay the price of humility, prayer, and self-surrender to maintain their connection with God. He warns that neglecting this divine relationship can lead to a loss of spiritual authority, regardless of past achievements. Ultimately, he encourages aspiring leaders to seek God earnestly, as true leadership is rooted in a vibrant spiritual life.

Transcript

The soul-winner must have the power of spiritual leadership, and spiritual leadership is a thing of the Spirit, and not of birth, or rank, or title, or education, or circumstances. Here is the secret of the power of humble Salvation Army officers from the lowly walks of life.

Joseph was a youthful prisoner in an Egyptian dungeon, but he walked with God, and was "a prosperous man," for God was with him, and one day he reached his rightful place next to Pharaoh's throne (Gen. 39 and 40.)

Paul was a prisoner under Roman guards on board ship, hastening to Caesar's judgment bar; but one day God's winds made the sea to boil, and winds and waves smote the ship, and when men's hearts failed them for fear, Paul, by right of spiritual kingship, became the master of all on board. (Acts 27.)

I knew a Lieutenant, a quiet, modest, thoughtful, prayerful, faithful, humble, holy lad, of moderate ability, stationed with an Ensign, at whose feet the Ensign and his wife sat for spiritual counsel, though the Lieutenant knew it not. They hung on his God-wise words, and remembered his example, and treasured his spirit, and talked to me about his saintliness and Christlikeness long after he, as Captain, had left them for a corps by himself.

They commanded the corps, but he held spiritual supremacy because he walked with God. and God was with him and in him.

Spiritual leadership is not won nor established by promotion, but by many prayers, tears and confessions of sin and heart-searchings and humblings before God, and self-surrender and a courageous sacrifice of every idol and a bold and deathless, and uncompromising and uncomplaining embrace of the Cross and an eternal, unfaltering looking unto Jesus crucified. It is not gained by seeking great things for our selves (Jer. 45:5), but rather, like Paul, by counting those things that were gain, loss for Christ. Hear him: "What things were gain to me those I counted loss for Christ. Yea, doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung that I may win Christ. (Phil. 3:7, 8.)

That is a great price, but it must be unflinchingly paid by him who would be not merely a nominal, but a real spiritual leader of men -- a leader whose power is recognized by three worlds and felt in heaven, earth and hell. Moses gained this spiritual leadership among Pharaoh's palace halls and Sinai's solitudes and fastnesses, when he "refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the pleasures of sin for a season; esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt."

Spiritual leaders are not made by man, nor any combination of men. Neither conferences, nor synods, nor councils can make them, but only God.

Spiritual power is the outcome of spiritual life, and all life, from that of the moss and lichen on the wall to that of the archangel before the Throne, is from God. Therefore let those who aspire to this leadership pay the price, and seek it from God.

Who made Elijah and John the Baptist -- hairy, uncouth men of the wilderness and desert -- prophets who awed kings and swayed nations? God.

Who took Moses from the universities of Egypt and the palaces of Pharaoh and after drilling him among flocks of sheep on the back side of the desert for forty years, made him the meek, but unconquerable leader of two millions of slaves, and the lawgiver and fountainhead of jurisprudence for all time? God.

Who took the baby Samuel and put into his mouth prophetic words to the aged priest Eli, and made him spiritual leader of Israel? God

Who took the boy David, trained to feed harmless, patient sheep, and put courage into his heart, and nerved his arm to fight the lion and the bear and the giant, and gave him skill to lead Israel's armies, so that the women sang: "Saul hath slain his thousands and David his ten thousands," while the elders, after the death of Saul, came to him, saying, "In time past, when Saul was king over us, thou wast he that leddest out and broughtest in Israel, and the Lord said to thee, thou shalt be a captain over Israel?" God.

And why did God single them out and distinguish them, and give them this power above other men? Because God was to them the supreme Fact.

They believed God, sought God, feared and trusted and obeyed God. Read the Psalms and see how God fills the whole heaven of David's thought, desire and affection, and you will cease to wonder at his leadership. It was based on spiritual life, power and fellowship with God.

This spiritual leadership, once attained, can be maintained. Witness Moses, Elijah, Paul, Fox, Wesley, Finney and General Booth, and ten thousand leaders in humbler spheres who still bear "fruit in old age," and continue "fat and flourishing;" like a white-haired old saint of eighty years, on whom I called, who, after I had prayed, burst into prayer, and said: "O Father, I testify to Thee, and the angels, and these young brothers, that old age is not a time of dotage and second childhood but the springtime of eternal youth."

I hear comparatively young men complaining and expressing. fear that when they get old they will be set aside and superseded by younger and more virile men without a tithe of their experience, forgetting that it is not long service and experience that makes spiritual leaders, but vigorous spiritual life, and that if set aside, it will be because they have not kept step with God, but have neglected the divine life, the Holy Ghost in them, Neither conferences. nor synods, nor councils, nor commanders, can make a man acceptable to the people, however long his service and varied his experience, if he has lost the spirit of prayer and faith and fiery-hearted love, and the sweet simplicity and trustfulness and self-sacrifice of his youth, and is now living on past victories and revelations and blessings. But fresh anointings of the Spirit and present-day experiences will make him acceptable, though his eye be dim and. his back bent, and his voice husky with age. It was with Finney, and Whitefield and Wesley, and so it may be with you, O my brother!

There have been ministers who in their prime fought holiness and refused the baptism of the Holy Ghost, or who, having received the baptism, neglected and lost it, who filled big pulpits and drew fat salaries, but whose influence gradually waned and whose old age was full of complainings and disappointments and bitterness and jealousies, and whose sun went down behind clouds, if not into a starless night, because they neglected God

And I know men -- old men -- full of God, who were persecuted in their prime for Jesus' sake, but who had salt in themselves and kept sweet and delighted themselves in the Lord, whose bow abides in strength, whose sun is shining in fullness of splendor, and who are filling the world with divine messages that men are eager to hear. Know this: that not long service and experience will save you from becoming a back number, but God in you will. God is always up to date. It is God men want.

What service had they performed, and what experience had Moses, and David, and Daniel, and Paul, when God set them up as leaders? None. But they were in touch with God; they were pliable to His will, teachable, trustful, obedient, courageous and uncomplaining.

They were full of God. And know this, you who fear the time is coming when your services will no longer be appreciated or wanted, and you will be thrust into a corner, that a man full of God cannot be thrust aside. If he is put into a desert place, then all the countryside and Jerusalem will flock to the desert place, as they did to Jesus and John the Baptist; and if he is thrust into a corner, then the world will stop and bend its ear to his corner to hear his latest message from God. They thrust Paul into prison, but he spoke and wrote words of life and power that burn with unquenchable fire of the Holy Ghost, and are doing more to direct the thought, inspire the faith and inflame the affections of men today than ever before. The Jews and Romans thought they had done with him when they cut off his head as that of a dog, but, after two millenniums his influence still increases, and forever will.

And so they thought to silence Madam Guyon in the Bastille, and John Bunyan in the filthy Bedford jail. But who can silence the thunder of God's power, or hush His "still small voice," when He chooses a man to speak through him? Their silent prisons but become public telephone stations, connected with the skies.

The other day, in one of our great cities, died an old man, long since past three score years and ten, a minister, who at the age of forty-seven, broke down so utterly in health from overwork, that for five years he never read a chapter from a book, not even from the Bible, but he held fast his faith in both God and man, kept his love all aglow, and at last died full of years and was mourned by hundreds in all parts of the globe who had been saved, sanctified, inspired and qualified for service by his words and life, and the agencies he set in motion for the sanctification of the church and the salvation of the world. And, by odds, his greatest work was accomplished after he had passed three score years. God was with him.

But while this spiritual power and leadership may be maintained, yet it is a subtle thing that may be lost forevermore.

When Saul was little in his own sight, he was made king, but, when lifted up he became disobedient, his kingdom was rent from him and given to another. And is it not this we are warned against in the words: "Hold fast that which thou hast, that no man take thy crown?" The bishopric of Judas was given to another. The one talent was taken from the "wicked and slothful servant," and given to him that had ten.

I know a Christian worker surrounded by a number of other bright, earnest, teachable, spiritually ambitious young workers, who looked to him for direction and guidance. He invited them to his home for an evening, and when they waited for soul food, coffee and cake were brought out; and when they expected prayer and counsel the chessboard was produced, and the opportunity of the evening slipped away, and the strong bonds that united them in God were relaxed and weakened, if not in one or two cases broken, and while his official and titular leadership was recognized his commanding spiritual leadership was gone, alas! I fear forever.

As electric wires, in order to carry the subtle current, must be insulated, so must men who hold spiritual leadership and who would transmit to their fellows spiritual power and life.

"But ye beloved, building up yourselves on your most holy faith, praying in the Holy Ghost, keep yourselves in the love of God, looking for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal life..... Now unto Him that is able to keep you from falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God, our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 20:25.)

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