

## **Highlights of Pastor Rob's Leadership Launch Challenge**

### **August 22, 2009**

Leadership is tough, but leadership in the local church, in our church, may be one of the most challenging assignments in life. Why? Because of what is at stake and what it takes to be an effective leader. However, we push through because of the amazing mission we have been given by God to make disciples and the resources He provides for us to lead.

### **The Most Important Thing in Your Life**

Our future as a church isn't a function of our new campus, our preaching or our music; it's a function of our commitment to discipleship and our effectiveness at discipleship. If you are a follower of Jesus Christ, the most important thing in your life isn't your job; it's seeing your job as an opportunity to make disciples. It isn't your family, but seeing your family as a brief window in time to make disciples. It isn't your health or sickness, but leveraging your circumstances to make disciples. Nothing we do is more important. So let me remind you—as impressive as our new facility is, what really impresses God is our discipleship.

### **The Three Keys to Leadership at WBC**

Your effectiveness as a leader this year depends upon attention to three things: your morality, your mission and your mandate.

### **Morality**

You have probably heard about the sexual scandals and adultery that have rocked Washington, DC. Lately, former Missouri Congressman Charles Pickering, Nevada Senator John Ensign and South Carolina Governor Mark Sanford, all conservative Republicans, have confessed to adultery. Just three weeks ago Jenny Sanford and her four children moved out of the Governor's mansion.

But political scandal isn't news, is it? What's news is that all three men were involved in and connected with Christian ministry in DC and a few were boarding at a Christian boarding house called "C-Street." My point: they were leaders, they were connected to ministry and they were living a lie. Don't do that!

### **None Perfect**

None of us are perfect. None of us are without sin. I only know of one man who was never defeated by lust. But if we are going to make a difference for Christ, we have to come clean, walk in the light and not live a lie. Look at Paul's exhortation in 1 Thess. 4:3-8:

³It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; ⁴that each of you should learn to control his own body<sup>in</sup> in a way that is holy and honorable, ⁵not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God; ⁶and that in this matter no one should wrong his brother or take advantage of him. The Lord will punish men for all such sins, as we have already told you and warned you. ⁷For God did not call us to be impure, but to live a holy life.

Therefore, he who rejects this instruction does not reject man but God, who gives you his Holy Spirit.

Paul is saying leaders must be self-controlled, not perfect, but in control, holy, honorable and willing to openly and honestly battle sin and temptation by the power of the Spirit. Paul is saying your morality matters. If you have a problem with pornography, stop pretending, bring it to the light and get help. If your pride, greed and anger are out of control, if you need help, get it. We can't honor Christ if we live habitual sin, if we live a lie.

### **Mission**

The second key to leadership is our mission. John Calvin was born in 1509, so now 500 years later, in 2009, there's a lot of press on John Calvin. I want you to know it was the Protestant Reformer Calvin, not a Catholic who said, "God is our father and the church is our mother." According to the New Testament, Calvin was right. The church is the divinely appointed human agency of God's global plan of redemption.

Here at WBC, our particular mission is love God, grow together and reach the world. What I want you to know is that these are the three great disciplines of discipleship: love God—the discipline of worship; grow together—the discipline of community; reach the world—the discipline of mission. It's the discipleship-making process and the result of the disciple-making process. What outcome are we looking for? Healthy churches, healthy followers of Christ are involved in worship, community and mission.

In my prayer journal as I pray through our mission for our church I pray that we would live vertically, love radically and sacrifice deeply. I also pray that we would think theologically, relate lovingly and serve passionately. I want you to pray with me like that.

Our opportunities are enormous, we have been given a moment in time that is very brief, thoroughly sacred, and thoroughly infused with the supernatural. Stated another way, our mission calls people to be worshipers, be in groups and be servants.

### **Mandate**

The third key to leadership is our mandate. Col 1:28-29 says:

We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ. To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me.

### **What is our Mandate?**

Notice the what, the why and the how. What is our mandate? It's the first half of verse 28. To proclaim Him, the personal pronoun is key. We don't proclaim ourselves, we proclaim Christ. Disciplers deliver Christ, through the ministry of the word, (that's "proclaiming") significant and meaningful relationships (that's "admonishing"), through life experiences (that's "wisdom"). Disciplers are gospel-centered—all the arrows point to Jesus! So many

Christians today focus on what we are to do. Paul is calling us to higher ground. Paul is calling on us to focus on what Christ has done. Christianity isn't something we do; it's a miracle we receive. What is it we receive? The wonder of the loving lordship of the crucified Jesus Christ. Wasn't this Paul's point earlier in the chapter?

From Col. 1:15-20:

He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation. <sup>16</sup>For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things were created by him and for him. <sup>17</sup>He is before all things, and in him all things hold together. <sup>18</sup>And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. <sup>19</sup>For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, <sup>20</sup>and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross.

Listen to these words from Michael Horton's book *Christless Christianity*,

“Our intuition tells us that if we just hear more practical preaching (that is, moving exhortations to follow Jesus), we will improve. When this becomes the main diet, however, we do not find ourselves improving. We neither mourn nor dance. But bring me into the chamber of a holy God, where I am completely undone, and tell me about what God has done in Christ to save me; tell me about the marvelous indicatives of the gospel—God's surprising interventions of salvation on the stage of history despite human rebellion—and the flickering candle of faith is inflamed, giving light to others... Even as a Christian, my faith will actually be weakened when it is assumed that I already know the gospel and now I just need a steady diet of instructions. I will naturally revert to my moralistic impulse and conclude either that I am fully surrendered or that I cannot pull this off and might as well stop trying. When my conscience leads me to despair, the exhortation to try harder will only deepen either my self-righteousness or my spiritual depression. In other words, it will draw me away from my location in Christ and gradually bring me back to that place where I am turned in on myself.” (pgs. 132 and 130)

Our mandate is to point people to Jesus! Our incredible opportunity is to point people to our majestic God who condescended in Jesus Christ to save those who cannot save themselves. Paul's point here is that in our emphasis on living for Christ, we must not lose our focus on Christ. The healthiest churches in America aren't necessarily the biggest. They are the ones growing disciples because they are Christ-centered.

### **Why?**

Why do this? So people might mature spiritually. Verse 28b says:

<sup>28</sup>We proclaim him, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone perfect in Christ...

What does it mean to be mature spiritually? To be Christ centered, to be united with Christ or “in Christ.” It’s being Christ-like. It’s the fruits of the Spirit. In light of the rest of the New Testament, we are back to our mission statement. It means that we live vertically, live in the presence of Christ love radically, and sacrifice deeply.

### **How?**

This is verse 29:

<sup>29</sup>To this end I labor, struggling with all his energy, which so powerfully works in me. Paul’s answer is sanctification. Here it’s described as a wonderful mix of God’s sovereignty and human responsibility. He mentions that human price first —“to this end I labor”. I pray, take risks, give of my time, talents, treasure. I work as if it all depends on me, but live knowing that it all depends on God.

Here at the end of verse 29, Paul shifts to the divine side when he writes, “Struggling with all his energy which so powerfully works in me.” Go back four pages to Philippians 2:12-13, where Paul says the same thing:

<sup>12</sup>Therefore, my dear friends, as you have always obeyed—not only in my presence, but now much more in my absence—continue to work out your salvation with fear and trembling, <sup>13</sup>for it is God who works in you to will and to act according to his good purpose.

In other words, we work hard. We believe hard. We do hard things, big things, because we believe in a big God. This is our discipleship mandate— to point people to Christ that they might mature in Christ.