



I

LIVED IN JAPAN DURING MY JUNIOR HIGH SCHOOL YEARS. MY FATHER SERVED IN THE UNITED STATES ARMY, AND FOR THREE YEARS HE WAS STATIONED IN A SMALL TOWN CALLED ZAMA.

WHERE WE LIVED WAS A BEAUTIFUL PLACE, BUT IT WAS STILL AN ARMY INSTALLATION ENCLOSED BY BARBED WIRE. THE BASE LOOKED LIKE ANY VINTAGE AMERICAN TOWN, BUT OUTSIDE THE FENCES WAS THE MYSTIQUE OF JAPAN. I LOOKED FORWARD TO OUR TRIPS OFF BASE AND INTO THE COUNTRYSIDE.

One summer day, all of us kids jumped into the car for a ride into the cool mountains surrounding Tokyo. We stopped

at a lookout point that offered a breathtaking view of one of the lush valleys. The mountains were blanketed with cedar trees, and the valleys stretched as far as we could see, each one reaching out to a sleepy village.

We decided to stop for lunch. On one side of the road, a little Japanese woman was selling *bentos*, Japanese box lunches. On the other side, a man dressed in a traditional *yakata*, or “happy coat,” caught my attention. He was selling tiny birds. He held a dozen or so bamboo cages, each one containing a small bird that resembled a finch.

“*Irrashai-mase!*” he called. “Welcome! May I help you?”

“How much for one bird?” I asked.

“100 yen each,” he called back in Japanese.

In those days, 100 yen was worth about 36 cents. Such a deal! I handed the vendor a 100-yen coin, and I selected one of the bamboo cages containing a tiny finch. As I began to walk back to the car to show off my new purchase, the man called out after me.

“*Sumimasen!* (Excuse me!) Don’t forget to bring the cage back when you’re done!”

“Bring back the cage when I’m done?” I questioned. “I’m not planning to eat the thing. I just want to take it home as a pet.”

“Oh no,” he replied. “You don’t understand! The bird and the cage are not for you to take home. The 100 yen is to take the bird to the edge of the valley and release it, so it will be able to fly freely!”

Quite frankly, that was about the last thing in the world I had on my mind. Release the bird I had just bought with my hard-earned money? Ridiculous! That was the dumbest thing

I had ever heard. But! didn't have much of a choice in the matter. The man was keeping a close watch on me to make sure he retrieved his cage.

I guess the more I thought about it, the more novel it

sounded. *Why not?* I figured **it** was worth a try! So I walked over to the edge of the ravine overlooking the valley below. I opened

the cage door and gave the bird a couple of nudges. Edging its way suspiciously toward the door of the cage, it suddenly launched into flight with a jubilant chorus of tweets and whistles. I watched the bird fly over the valley and swirl its way back toward me as if to respectfully say “**Thank** you.” Then it soared so high that I lost it in the sun. Within moments, the bird had disappeared.

I returned the cage to the vendor, who bowed in the gracious Japanese form. I didn’t return home with a bird, but I did take with me something much greater. I learned a profound lesson that has remained with me to this day, and it later would forever change my perspective about serving people. Looking back on the experience now, I would have paid 100 times more if I knew how important that moment would be to me years later. That day I learned the precious lesson of being a dream releaser.

## **“TELL ‘EM I DIED RICH”**

The story is told of two miners who spent half their lives looking for gold in the Pacific Northwest. Under the scrutiny and criticism of the townspeople, the two miners pressed on, believing in their ability to strike it rich. These two unrelenting miners became the joke of the town, as week after week, they would return from their labors empty-handed. Nevertheless, they pressed on with a deep confidence that someday they would find what they were looking for.

One sultry afternoon, after months of painstaking digging in an old mine shaft, they finally hit pay dirt! Huge nuggets of gold were visible from a rich, undiscovered vein. Furiously,

the men began pulling nugget after nugget from the grip of the earth.

No one knows whether it was a faulty support pole, the exuberance of the shouting or the gradual loosening of the dirt that caused the collapse, but the sound of loud, piercing cracks in the timber brought the two men to an abrupt halt. Suddenly the mine shaft caved in, and tons of dirt pounded both men to the floor.

One of the men lay injured on the ground, holding tightly to a nugget he had claimed. The other miner, still able to move, pulled himself up, yelling, “Come on! We’ve got to get out of here before the whole thing collapses! I’ll help you! Get up! Leave the gold. We don’t have a second to lose!”

The injured miner, still clutching the gold nugget tightly to his chest, said, “No. Just leave me here. I found what I’ve been looking for. I’ve spent my life searching for this vein, and I’m not about to let it go now. Leave me here. You go! Get out of here.”

“Don’t be foolish! We’ve gotta get you back!” his partner replied. Just then, the rafters trembled again, spilling more dirt into the dust-filled shaft. “If I leave you here, you’ll surely die! What will I tell your family! What will I tell the folks back in town?”

The badly injured miner wheezed his final words between strained coughs, as dust filled the collapsing chamber.

“Just tell ‘em I died rich,” he whispered with a final breath. “Just tell ‘em I died rich.”

## **DREAM RELEASERS**

The Church is laden with treasures, dreams and precious gifts,  
yet too many precious souls are going to their graves with songs

left unsung, gifts yet unwrapped and dreams unreleased. Too

many of God's people are dying rich! Like the Japanese fmch, treasures and dreams need to be released. In every person's heart is a dream of what he or she can become for the Lord—a dream that sees them making a difference in the world, in their families and in their churches.

God calls each and every leader to be a dream releaser. There is nothing more spectacular than seeing people's dreams released and being used for the glory of God! There's just no greater joy.

That's just what Loren Cunningham did at Youth With A Mission. He released the dreams in thousands of young people's hearts to go into the mission fields, and their dreams came to pass. Through his vision and leadership, Loren mobilized scores of young evangelists who today are still bringing the good news to unreached people groups.

Mother Teresa did the same in Calcutta. God had deposited the gifts of mercy and servanthood into the hearts of thousands of willing servants; but before Mother Teresa entered the scene, those gifts lay dormant. She found away for those dreams to be discovered, developed and deployed in reaching the poorest of the poor in Calcutta.

We all have dreams in our hearts just waiting to be released. These gifts, if mobilized and aligned toward a common, God-glorifying purpose, can transform any congregation into a powerful army for the Lord.

## **BUILDING A LEADERSHIP BASE**

May I offer a word to pastors and leaders? One of the most critical keys to doing church as a team is to build an ever-

increasing core of servant-leaders. You were not designed to do church

alone. You are not a one-man band. No one is. It's no fun trying to play all the instruments yourself and sing, too!

Let me illustrate it this way. Imagine that I hold out before you a one-square-foot piece of cardboard, and onto it I slowly empty a bucket of white sand. The sand will accumulate, and as it does, a pyramid of sand will form. Now what will happen if I pour another bucket of sand onto the cardboard? The amount of sand will increase until the cardboard can hold no more. So what will happen to the excess sand if I keep pouring? That's right. It will overflow the edges and cascade onto the floor. The cardboard base can only hold so much.

Now what if I empty, not just another bucket, but a whole barrel of sand onto your cardboard? Will it hold any more? Obviously not! Forgive my pressing of the issue, but now I am going to back a truckload of sand into the room and dump it. Now does your cardboard hold more sand? No! (But the floor is now a mess.)

What do we have to do to hold more sand? You've got it. We have to expand the base!

The leadership in any church can be likened to that piece of cardboard. The larger the base, the more sand you can hold. If your leadership base is small, it doesn't matter how much sand you pour onto it. It will be impossible for you to hold any more sand—until you increase the size of the base! That's the secret to what many churches call dosing the back door. Some church leaders feel as if their doors are turnstiles through which people come in but never stay. Visitors can't seem to become part of the life of the church, so they leave. Increasing the leadership base by building a solid core of

leaders is primary to a church's foundation for the future  
The first step in building a core of leaders is to believe

that they are there. You must believe that God would never  
call a

leader to oversee a ministry without providing everything necessary for its fruitfulness and success! Many pastors and ministers have the best reason in the world for why things just aren't happening like they should at their churches: 'We have no leaders!' But God is not so cruel as to call you to build an ark without providing the necessary materials for its completion.

*God will provide all you need to fulfill what  
He has called your church to do.*

God will provide all you need to fulfill what He has called your church to do. But first, you must believe that the leaders are there. Why? Because they are! Look for them. Find them. They might be right under your nose, but if you are not looking for them, you'll never see them.

If I am looking for my shoes, but I don't believe that they are in the closet, then I won't look there. Likewise, WI don't believe that there are great potential leaders in my church, I won't look there to find them!

## **GOD HAS ALREADY PROVIDED**

In Exodus 15:22-26, we find the children of Israel making the first of many complaints after being delivered from bondage in Egypt. They have crossed the Red Sea and traveled inland until they ran out of water. The hot sands of the Sinai are

baking the Israelites until they are parched and thirsty. After a few miles, they come upon a small lake, but the water is bitter and unfit to drink. Like the bitterness of the lake, anger, grumbling and disgust are unleashed against Moses and Aaron, as the people cry, "What shall we drink?"

Then Scripture gives us a beautiful gem for every leader

Then he cried out to the **LORD**, and the LORD showed him a tree; and he threw **it** into the waters, and the **waters** became sweet (Exod. 15:25).

Moses cried out to the Lord, and when he did, God showed him a tree. Now read this portion again, and you will discover that God didn't create a tree then and there for Moses to find it. The tree had always been there! God just showed it to him.

Moses and Aaron must have walked by that tree dozens of times without ever recognizing its potential! The people may have eaten lunch under that very same tree. They probably even complained from under the shade of that tree.

The people were complaining because God hadn't provided an answer to their dilemma: extreme thirst **in** the desert heat. Yet all the while, their answer was right under their noses! (Or, rather, right above their heads.) But because they were too busy complaining about what they didn't have, their eyes were blinded to what they *did* have! So many of God's people through the ages have been so preoccupied with what God had not provided for them that they were oblivious to the wondrous gifts He *had* given them.

Let God show you the tree. It's there, and so are your leaders. You may be having lunch with them this week! You

may be fellowshiping with them today, but you will never

|

be able to see them until you believe that they are there.

## **YOU GOTTA BELIEVE THEY'RE THERE!**

A dear pastor friend and I were talking over lunch one day. He was having trouble finding quality leaders in his church. He was on the verge of burnout from undertaking many of the ministry responsibilities himself

“If I had a bigger church,” he observed, “there would be more leaders to choose from. But right now there just aren’t any!”

My reply to him came in the form of a question. “When you look at a forest, what do you see?” I asked.

“Elementary, Watson,” he quipped. “Trees!”

“That’s your problem,” I replied. “All you see are trees. You’ve got to see more than trees. You’ve got to see the houses!”

I could tell that he wasn’t quite tracking with me.

“Let me explain,” I continued. “When I look at a forest, I see houses. I see beautiful dressers, rocking chairs, bed frames, cabinets and desks! They’re all in the forest, and they’re beautiful!”

From the look on his face, I could see he was beginning to reevaluate our friendship or at least question the benefit our having lunch together. But before he could jump to any premature conclusions, I hastened to my point

“No, you won’t find them already completed. But the potential is all there! Sure, you’ll still have to cut and sand and varnish the wood, but it’s all there. Everything you need to furnish your entire home is in that forest. You just need to see more than trees in order to be motivated to harvest the wood. You have to see their potential! You gotta believe there’s gold in them thar hills if you’re gonna muster up the

energy you need to mine it out!”

When you believe that they are there, you’ll be surprised at how many wonderful leaders start showing up!

### **CHAPTER FIVE STUDY GUIDE**

1. List three dreams you have tucked away in your heart that have yet to come true.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  
2. What factors are hindering each one from coming to pass?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  
3. What are some of the reasons we fail to see our own potential?



# DEVELOPING SERVANT LEADERS PS

*Give me **one** hundred preachers who fear nothing but sin  
and desire nothing but God, and I care not a straw whether*

*they be clergymen or laymen, such alone will shake the gates of hell and set up the kingdom of God upon earth.*

**JOHN WESLEY, 1703-1791**



O

NE OF THE GREATEST ROLES OF A PASTOR IS TO BELIEVE IN THE PEOPLE UNDER HIS CARE. THIS ONE QUALITY ALONE CAN DO MORE TO DEVELOP EMERGING LEADERS IN A CHURCH THAN ANY CLASS OR GROUP STUDY. WE ALL NEED SOMEONE TO BELIEVE IN US, TO SEE THE BEST IN US AND TO HELP US BRING IT FORTH! SURE, WE MAY HAVE MANY FAULTS THAT STILL NEED TO BE CORRECTED, BUT WHAT WE NEED ARE PEOPLE WHO WILL LOOK

## BEYOND OUR GLITCHES TO SEE GOD'S BEST.

In Mark 2, we find a story about Jesus seeing the best in people. The story opens with four zealous friends of a paralytic man, whom we'll call Reuben. The friends have heard talk of a carpenter from Nazareth who is teaching at Peter's house in Capernaum. Now, a visiting teacher is not all that unique; guest rabbis often taught in the neighborhood synagogues. But what catches the attention of these four friends are reports of Jesus healing sick and hurting people, and they think of their friend Reuben.

That evening, with their friend on a stretcher, they begin the journey to Peter's house. However, the weight and awkwardness of the load delays their arrival. By the time they reach the home, a crowd has filled the living room and overflowed into the backyard, leaving no room for latecomers.

Refusing to have their hopes dashed, the most creative among them comes up with a risky idea. "I know what we can do!" he says. "Let's climb up on the roof and make a hole! You heard me. Make a hole! Then we can let Reuben down on the stretcher right in front of Jesus! That'll get His attention, won't it?" Without wasting any time, the four friends clamber onto the roof with ol' Reuben in tow, and they proceed to execute Plan A with a passion!

I have no idea where they mustered up such courage! There was such a sense of urgency that they didn't even stop

to calculate what the repair bill would be for Peter's roof. If they had known the reputation of this rough fisherman and his volatile outbursts, I doubt that they would have carried out their scheme.

Nevertheless, poor Reuben soon lay helplessly dangling in front of the guest speaker. Above, four pairs of eyes curiously gazed through the newly crafted skylight. The room fell into an uncomfortable silence, as everyone held their

breath, awaiting the reprimand of the Master. After all, what would the scribes think? What would the Law demand? Would the Teacher chide the zealous, unthinking friends? Would He demand they immediately undertake repairs to Peter's roof?

Jesus' response holds for us a leadership principle that is worth a pound of gold. Instead of chastising the zealous friends

for their ill-planned exploit, He looks straight at them, and the Bible captures the moment with these words:

And Jesus *seeing their faith* said to the paralytic, “My son, your sins are forgiven” (Mark 2:5, emphasis added).

Jesus could have chided them for their extreme measures or lack of preplanning. He could have pointed out their tardiness due to their own procrastination and late departure. Instead, He saw their faith! He saw the action of Reuben’s friends for what it was and called **it** faith.

## A LEADER SEES WHAT’S BEST

Look for faith in those around you. Look for evidence of God’s presence, not evidence of His absence. In each of us is a measure of faith, a desire for God’s best. Every person has a yearning to do well, to make a difference. God created us that way! Those dreams may yet be inside each every person in your church, though they may be somewhat fragile.

You may even notice novice attempts to fly, to get those dreams off the ground. Sometimes those attempts may resemble the dance of a disoriented albatross more than the takeoff of an F-22 fighter jet. But encourage them, even if the plane fails to make **it** off the tarmac. See the faith and the heart behind what they’re attempting to do. While the execution of those dreams may still require further development, the potential that remains inside each of us is a precious commodity to God! See your people through the eyes of Jesus and watch! You’ll begin to see miracles increase in your church and a corresponding decrease in justifications for why

they are not happening.

Some of the greatest discoveries come about when people readjust their eyes to see what’s best about a situation rather than what’s worst. I heard a story about George De Mestral walking his dog one afternoon when the dog got loose for a moment and ran off through some tall grass. When George finally retrieved his wayward pet, the dog was covered with burrs tangled in his fur. When he arrived home, George could have cursed the dog while cutting the burrs out. Instead, he curiously took a cutting of the fur and viewed **it** under his microscope. Amazed at the gripping characteristics of the burrs, he studied them further. George’s curiosity and his willingness to see the potential in a sticky situation ultimately led him to invent Velcro!

## HOW TO PLEASE GOD

Let me make a disclaimer here. As wonderful as **it** is to have leaders who believe in us, in the final analysis, **it** is the responsibility of each and every person to develop his or her own gifts. Jesus gave us a clear teaching on investing what God has entrusted to us:

And the one also who had received the one talent came up and said, “Master, I knew you to be a hard man. . . I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground, see, you have what is yours.” But his master answered and said to him, “You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank,

and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest. Therefore take away the talent from him,

and give it to the one who has

the ten talents. For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away” (Mart. 25:2429).

I have heard many applications of this story, but one message rings true: You can’t please God by not investing what you have been given! We must use our gifts, not bury them. I would rather risk all for God and come up short than to never make the attempt

## **DEVELOPING YOUR GIFTS BY TAKING A RISK**

Leaders develop their gifts by considering the consequences and going for it anyway. There are no shortcuts. If it’s for God, don’t ask, Why? Ask, Why not?

Jesus tells us that we cannot please God by playing it safe. Are you willing to risk what you have for the sake of the Master? Too many of us are afraid, so we bury our gifts, and we wonder why we never grow or increase in our giftedness and influence. One of the keys to the success of the Early Church was that they were men and women who “risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ” (Acts 15:26).

One of my favorite Bible verses is Proverbs 14:4: ‘Where no oxen are, the manger is clean, but much increase comes by the strength of the ox.’ In other words, strength will always bring with it problems, but that’s normal! Don’t be afraid of making mistakes. If your goal is to keep a clean manger, then

you won’t need (or want) any oxen. But if your desire is to make a difference with your life, then you need to be ready and willing to clean up a few piles of doo-doo.

You see, if you’re afraid of messes, if you’re afraid of failing, if you’re afraid of risking, you’ll never get anywhere. As a baseball man once said, you can’t steal second base with your foot still on first. You’ve got to be willing to venture off the bag, take the lead and go for it!

In Hawaii, we often hear advertisements beckoning potential travelers to Las Vegas for a weekend of gambling. The fares are very reasonable, and hotel rooms are available at bargain prices. Of course, the plan is to lure you to drop your hard-earned dollars at the roulette tables or watch them disappear into one of the many one-armed bandits that line the casinos. Each year, millions flock to these hollow promised lands to risk their savings in hopes of striking it rich. We think nothing of taking risks with our money, even though we know there is a far greater chance of returning home empty-handed than there is of returning a millionaire.

C. T. Studd, a great preacher and missionary of yesteryear, once said, “The gamblers for gold are so many, but the gamblers for God are so few. Where are the gamblers for God?”

We risk our lives each time we fly in an airplane. We take a risk when we invest in a stock. We take a risk when we get married. We take a risk when we buy a house. I think it’s high time we take a risk for God! He’s so much more worthy (and secure) than any earthly investment

I remember a little poem that reminds me that life is about taking risks:

There once lived a man who never risked,



He never tried.

He never laughed,  
He never cried.  
Then one day, when he passed away,  
His insurance was denied.  
They said since he never really lived,  
Then he never really died!  
—Anonymous

You can develop your gifts only by using them. Sure, you may be required to take some risks—the risk of making a mistake, the risk of faltering or stammering if you speak, even the risk of failure. Go for it anyway! Don't wait until your gifts are fully developed

*Gifts don't ripen like a bunch of bananas when put in a dark place.  
Gifts that are hidden away only get rotten.*

before you put them to use. That just won't happen, because gifts don't ripen like a bunch of bananas put in a dark place. Gifts that are hidden away don't ripen; they get rotten!

## **“TAKE ME OUT TO THE BALL GAME!”**

For example, let's say that during a revival campaign, you

received the gift of, well, er, the ability to play professional base-  
ball. (Just for the sake of dialogue, mind you.) Hands were laid on your head, and this rare and wonderful gift was bestowed on you. But even though the gift is now in you, you still look the same, act the same and walk the same. So what do you have to do to see this gift come to pass? What must you do in order for it to blossom and mature? You have to play baseball!

So you put on a uniform and go to the ballpark. You've never even swung a bat before. The coach steps to the pitcher's mound and you to the plate. He throws the first pitch, and you swing with all your might—and miss it by a mile. You fall mightily. Do you quit now? No! You stagger to stand, dust yourself off and take another pitch.

The coach encourages you. "It's in you! Swing again. I know it's in you!" So you take your stance in the batter's box, and the second pitch comes whizzing by and smacks into the catcher's glove. You didn't even see it go by! "It's in you," the coach says again. "Swing the bat next time. Swing the bat!"

The third pitch is hurled. You close your eyes and swing with everything you've got.

***KABOOM!***

The ball rockets off the sweet spot of your Louisville Slugger and sails into the outfield.

"That's it!" shouts the coach. "I knew you had it in you. Keep it up, now. Keep it up!"

As the months go by, you continue training. The balls are going further and further. And when you take the field at shortstop, nothing gets by you. You're turning double plays

and then triple plays! You begin to love this sport! Every day, you can be found on the baseball diamond, fielding grounders or hitting home runs.

Now fast-forward about three years. Your reputation as a promising rookie has spread, and a couple of scouts from the

Atlanta Braves fly in to see one of your games. They watch you hit, field and run the bases like a pro. In the fourth inning, you turn a spectacular double play, and one scout leans over to the other and remarks, “*Now, that kid has a gift. He has a gift!*”

And he’s right, but how did your gift become developed? How did it come to its fullness?

You had to play the game!

This principle applies to doing church as a team. You must use your gift! Even though you miss a few grounders or drop the occasional pop-up, stay in there. I know it’s in you because God put it there! When you strike out, get in there and swing again.

Say yes more often than you say no. Get involved. If after a while, you find your piece of the puzzle just doesn’t fit, simply move to another position, but keep serving! Pretty soon you’ll be dazzling them in the field and knocking the ball out of the park, and people will look at you and exclaim, “Wow! You are so gifted! How did that happen?”

And you’ll reply, “I just played baseball.”

## **BUILDING YOUR CHARACTER BEFORE BUILDING YOUR MINISTRY**

When I was a relatively new Christian, I taught several morning Bible studies to a group of seven or eight men. We often met at restaurants, where we would pore over the Scriptures and pour coffee into us for an hour or so before going to work. Looking back, I recall that I learned more from

teaching than *I* ever gave out. I think that God had me teach those studies not so much for what would happen *through* me as much as what would happen *in* me. You see, God is less interested in what you’re *doing* and more interested in what you’re *becoming*.

As I look back over the years, I recall many times when my involvement in something had little to do with what I could contribute but a lot more to do with God building my character! Sometimes the Lord will place you in a position for a season because He knows there are some things that need to be developed inside you. When you get involved, God will instill character or virtue in you through the process—perhaps endurance, submission, people skills or positive attitudes.

Here is a letter from a book I wrote to my children called *Gems Along The Way*:

Dear Amy, Aaron and Abby,

I saw a lady’s four-carat diamond ring the other day. Wow! Was that ever impressive! The diamond must have been worth \$20,000! (I’m not a diamond appraiser or anything, but after considering it for a moment, I felt strongly that such a diamond would surely detract from the natural beauty of your mother’s hand, so I didn’t buy it)

Anyway, the gold band was a simple one, with a few smaller diamonds on either side. Holding the diamond in place was a setting that included maybe five or six prongs.

“My!” I thought “That setting had better be strong! It’s holding on to \$20,000!”

Although the setting doesn’t get as much attention as the diamond itself it is equally as important. Any wise

jeweler would never put such a precious jewel in a poor or weak setting. If he did, then one small bump and the gem

would be lost! The strength and quality of the setting will determine the security and staying power of the gem!

Character is like that setting. God has promised us such wonderful gems! Yet without the basis of character, His promises would be lost or forfeited at the first bump! The Holy Spirit's desire is to produce character in each of us prior to the setting of the gems. Whether those gems are marriage, an influential position, a ministry, finances or a family, each of these will require character. This is the setting that needs to be developed prior to the placement of the gem.

Strengthen your setting. Build your character. Learn to forgive, to be diligent, to be honest Learn to stay steady and faithful, to keep commitments, to go by what you know and not necessarily by what you feel

Here's a simple definition of character that I heard along the way: Character is the ability to follow through on a worthy decision long after the emotion of making that decision has passed.

God will refine your metal until it's pure gold. He will shape your character until it's strong and trustworthy. Then when God sees that the setting is ready, He will be faithful to place His very best gems in your life! That's when you'll shine!

Love,  
Dad

Over the long haul, ministry should charge you up. You'll build character along the way, but if week after week you come away from ministry drained, then stop! Reevaluate what may be causing this and find a remedy. Don't keep running on empty! Sometimes it may be God working on

your character, and sometimes it may be time for you to move. Either is fine. Just be sure that if you move, you are always following the leading of the Lord and not running from a problem.

In the past, I have experienced overwhelming feelings on the job that had nothing to do with my placement They had more to do with my character development than with my gifts or passion. What we often define as burnout may actually be the result of personality conflicts or a problem with submission to authority. These are character issues that God wants to deal with once and for all! If we bail out, the lesson will only have to be repeated in another setting—second verse, same as the first

This is where accountability through friendships has become a lifesaver for me. I need people watching out for me, and I need to do the same for others. Develop relationships along the way that are deep enough that you are willing to allow these friends to speak into your life. Being committed to one another's success is essential for doing church as a team. If we could do that for each other (you may sing this next line), what a wonderful world this would be!

## SECURITY CHECKPOINT

Developing servant-leaders requires one major ingredient: **security**. Pastors, if you are not secure as a leader, you will find it virtually impossible to attract, develop or retain other leaders. You cannot do church as a team while battling insecurity. Good leaders must be able to build confidence in others.

Secure people encourage others and enjoy their successes.

They can appreciate and applaud the achievements of those they have put into positions to succeed. Secure leaders are neither territorial nor possessive. They are willing and able to

surround themselves with people more qualified than themselves.

Insecure people, on the other hand, feel that if they are not controlling everything around them, then they are not doing their job. They fear criticism and they worry about what others think. Such people can never believe that others are competent enough to do the job. Hence, they seldom delegate anything at all! Leaders must always remember that everyone will make mistakes and that mistakes are often the best classrooms in the world.

Take a look at yourself as a leader. You will do well and score high if you catch people doing things right and show a genuine excitement for their accomplishments. It is well said that we would be surprised how much can be accomplished when we don't care who gets the credit!

A secure leader	An insecure <b>leader</b>
Encourages others' attempts	Sabotages others' efforts
Points out others' strong points	Brings attention to others' faults
Overlooks flaws	Uses others' flaws as ammunition
Readily admits own mistakes	Is defensive and justifies mistakes
Gives away credit to others	Demands or manipulates credit
Rejoices when others succeed	Is jealous of others' successes
Is excited when others do it better	
Is willing to risk to improve	
Is content to remain anonymous	
Is quick to build teams	Is easily intimidated
	Plays it safe to retain position
	Requires others to notice
	Wants to do things himself

Take a look at this 10-point checklist and see how you fare:

What kind of leader are you? How did you score? Are you someone who enjoys catching your people doing something right? Can you easily give credit away and show genuine excitement at the accomplishments of others? How hard is it for you to build a team? Let's take a look at how these things can be done in today's church."

## PASSING BATONS

As you read through the Gospels, you will notice something interesting about the leadership style of Jesus: He began passing batons to His disciples early in His ministry. By the

sixth chapter of Mark, He is already choosing a dozen men to succeed Him! Just as in a relay race, passing the baton in ministry isn't meant to be a sudden last-ditch effort Plan on it Start passing batons early in your ministry.

When I began studying the early missionary efforts to Hawaii, Titus Coan became one of my heroes, as did Hiram Bingham. These men served the people of Hawaii during the early and middle 1800s. Now, Coan and Bingham did hundreds of things right in reaching the Hawaiian islands, but they also made two costly mistakes that hindered the future of their ministries.

Their first mistake was allowing their second generation to be lost—their own children grew up without a deep and genuine faith. There may have been many reasons for this, but suffice to say the missionaries' plates were so full that they probably had little time left for their own children. That is a poignant lesson foralofus.

The second costly mistake I noticed was that these men passed the baton too late in life. Just before his death, Titus Coan passed the mantle of leadership to a few potential leaders. They carried on as best they could but, inevitably, the mission diminished and the vision faded.

It may take only a moment to pass a baton, but it takes much longer to pass the heart of that baton. When doing church as a team, passing out batons early ensures that no one burns out and that we all share the joys (and sorrows) together. At New Hope, we don't pass batons as a precursor to the end of one's ministry. We pass batons as a way of including others in the race!

You don't pass the baton in a relay race when you are already pooped out! You pass it at the very apex of your stride. The same is true in doing church as a team. Invite others into your ministry. Pass batons. Include new people, and don't be intimidated when others do it better! God will always have a place for you, and the greater a servant you are, the greater the joy you'll experience. If your gift is to build platforms for other emerging leaders, when they are successful, you will be called to build more!

One of the fastest and easiest ways to pass batons is through shadowing. Shadowing is simply following someone around who has been serving, in an area of interest to you. It is a way of introducing new people into a ministry, and we recommend this approach in almost every volunteer ministry at New Hope. It's a low-risk orientation that gives budding "ministers" a glimpse of what is being done and how. It's also an opportunity for everyone to build new friendships along the way!

The three stages of shadowing are

**Stage 1—I do. You watch.**

**Stage 2—We do together.**

Stage 3 You do. **T** applaud!

When my daughter Amy was a senior in high school, she ran on the relay team in track. I watched as the team practiced one thing again and again. They would all line up, facing the same direction, about an arm's length apart from each other. Then, while running in place, they would practice passing the baton from one runner to the other. When the baton was passed from the back to the front, they repeated the process until the passes were perfect. The reason? In a relay, the race is either won or lost in the passing of the baton.

## **PASSING OUT BATONS AND RUNNING TOGETHER**

Passing the baton is a function of our willingness to allow God to use us fully in ministry. Answering our call and using our gifts includes being led by the Holy Spirit to help others become successful! This is part of what it means to do church as a team.

Unlike a relay team, however, you pass batons to *all* the team members. Then you run together! You don't pass a baton and then quit. You stay with the team, and you run in unison. I guess this would be better described as passing out batons.

When we look at the larger picture of God's plan for the church in a community, we can see that passing out batons is crucial. Building a team that runs together is important. Learn to pass out batons, and do it early. Don't wait until the end. Invite others into your area of ministry and readily applaud their successes. Fight the tendency to become territorial or

possessive. That will only wreak havoc and discourage new and emerging leaders. An open invitation to get involved is

crucial for developing an atmosphere of growth and teamwork. Passing out batons

allows each of us to begin by first serving one another. Have you ever wondered why Jesus sent out His disciples two by two? I believe it was because He knew that the gospel would best be seen and understood in the context of relationships. As people witnessed the love, friendship and camaraderie of the two messengers, this gave credence to the message!

## START BY SERVING EACH OTHER

Although serving the Lord and others is best done in teams, one of the ways to make this happen is by first serving the others on your team! Some call this *lateral serving*, in which serving one another is given equal importance with serving to get something accomplished. This is the esprit de corps of a church.

Lateral serving is the opposite of the attitude that says “That’s not my ministry” or “That’s not my responsibility.” It’s a willingness to occasionally do someone else’s job and do it with great joy. It is seeing a task that has been overlooked by others and gratefully filling in. I have heard lateral serving described as “the art of making good on someone else’s mistake.”

In doing church as a team, we have learned the importance of “cross training”—training outside our specialties so we can step up and step in when others need a break or they simply need our support. Everyone has times when their flame dwindles, and that’s when we need each other the most.

Someone once said that you never diminish the flame of your own candle by lighting the flame of someone else.

I like that.

## CHAPTER SIX STUDY GUIDE

1. List three of the greatest fears that people have about getting involved in ministry.
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.
  
2. What remedies can you give that would dispel each of these fears?
  - a.
  - b.
  - c.