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Presentation Transcript
Leading by Example
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The title of this presentation is *Leading by Example*. And it's part of the third topic in this series on *Church Health*. The third topic is called *Empowering Leadership*. So this presentation focuses on the importance of example as one way to empower people.

When we think about empowering people, we usually think about giving people power to do something. That's what the word means – or permission to do this or that, you know. Yes, you *can* go out and set up a program to take care of the poor – something like that. But if we think about *motivating* someone to do something they've not done before, or to do something that's difficult, then there's much more that's needed besides permission. I know lots of people who have permission to do things that would be good for them or for others, but they don't do them. So there has to be more to it than that.

We had a family at the clinic where I work and they have a nine-year-old boy. Among other things, the mother was complaining of being overworked. One of the things she wanted was to see her son clean up his room, and put his clothes in the hamper, and then put them away after they were washed. So we started working on that – on a program that she could employ to help him do those things. But the program wasn't working. Well, not long after we started the program, the person who was the case manager on that case mentioned, in supervision, that their house was a chaotic mess. The mother was depressed and so was the father, so everything was just too hard. We were talking, in supervision, about how the mother's efforts to get her son to clean up his room were being sabotaged by that disordered house. He could hear her words, but the example he saw – that he was learning about what the house was supposed to be like – that's what he was actually following. He was following the *example* that they were setting.

So I asked the parents to picture their son's room neat and clean with everything put away – just the way they would like it – standing in the doorway, looking into this pristine, neat, clean room – and then turn around and walk through the living room as it is today, and then into *their* bedroom. And I asked them if they thought he was ever really going to clean up his room given the way the rest of the house was. We all know it's just not going to happen. It's hard enough to get them to clean it up when the rest of the house is perfectly clean. But if it's a trash heap, there is certainly not going to be any effort on

his part. He knows that he doesn't really have to do it – or that's what he thinks. And he thinks that that's the way houses are. He's only nine. He's not been in a lot of homes, so that's just how he thinks it supposed to be. But if you come from a family that keeps things neat, then you have a much better chance of your son getting in step and complying with those things. It's all about the example that's set. Not *all* about, but a lot about.

So, if she wants to empower, or motivate, her son, then she's going to have to lead the way, isn't she? Remember last time, when we started this topic on leadership, we said leadership is knowing the right thing to do, and then doing it. It all really *begins* there.

Well, in the previous presentation, introducing *empowering leadership*, we talked about the importance of *knowing* the right thing to do, and today we're going to talk about the *doing* it part – you know, the two things of leadership – knowing what the right thing is and then doing it.

Last time we talked about Jesus' example, and we saw that He asks us to sacrifice, but He sacrificed *first* and *more* than all of us. He didn't delegate the sacrificing to us while He sat up on His throne watching. He came down here.... You know, you use that term, "He was on the ground" – right? – leading the way. Do you know where that term *on the ground* comes from? It comes from the military.

I watched this movie, *We Were Soldiers*, about the 7th Cavalry in Vietnam – the first airborne helicopter army that went into Vietnam to fight. They picked this commander, who was a historian. And he knew that Custer was the head of the 7th Cavalry years before. And he knew that the Vietnamese had butchered the French and run them out of the country – that they were a formidable foe. He was afraid that they were going to be massacred, just like Custer was. So he trained his men as best he could, and he gave a speech at the start. He said, "When we go in there, men *will* die." He said, "There isn't anything I can do about that. But I will promise you this one thing – that my foot will be the first one to hit the field of battle and it will be the last one to leave. And I will leave *no* one behind. Living or dead, *everybody* is coming home." That kind of says it all, doesn't it? About knowing the right thing to do, and doing it, and making a *commitment* to do it.

What did the apostles learn about Jesus' example? About Him coming down here *on the ground* and fighting the battle *with* us, instead of sitting up in heaven and directing everything? Instead of watching satellite imagery from a command center somewhere else, while other people died? No, that's not what He did. He came down here and He lead the way.

Christ is going to come back. And where will He be? He'll be at the front of the army on a white horse. That's what we're told.

1 Timothy 3:2. Here's Paul talking to Timothy, instructing him about what the ministers, that Timothy is going to ordain, should be like in the future.

1 Tim. 3:2 – *Now the overseer – he says in verse 2 – must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God’s church? He must not be a recent convert or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil’s trap. Deacons, likewise, are to be men worthy of respect, sincere, not indulging in much wine and not pursuing dishonest gain. They must keep hold of the deep truths of the faith with a clear conscience.*

I mean, we’re getting a really strong picture here of what a leader in the Church of God is supposed to be like. It does mention that he’s supposed to be able to teach, and then everything else is about example. It’s about leading the way in the Christian life, isn’t it?

You know, I know lots of people who think they fall into this category. But you know, when it comes to example – where the rubber meets the road – is when the sacrificing starts. It’s easy to set an example to come to church, and dress up, and shake everybody’s hand and smile, and all of that stuff. But when it’s hard to set the example is when the sacrificing starts.

Did you know that Paul said the apostles carried a death sentence? He knew that God was so intent on them following the example of Jesus, that He was going to require them to die just as Jesus died, in service. And it’s okay for Him to require that, because He went *first*. It kind of makes taking a salary cut for the work’s sake look like a piece of cake, doesn’t it? That, for a long time, was the full extent of my sacrifice, it seems like. We spent time and all, but.... When the rubber meets the road, that’s when some people are not able to continue to set the example.

Let’s talk about some contemporary examples of leadership setting the example. If I tell people that they need to begin talking to the children and teens in the congregation, which I do all the time, I have to be able to do that myself *first*. If I tell people that’s what *they* should do, and I’m not doing that myself – if I can’t do what I’m talking about – then I’m not able to empower people to do that.

Another example. I’ve talked before about the clinical director at Southwest Family Guidance Center. His name is Craig Pierce. I’ve worked for him for three years and he’s been really good to me these last three years. When I thank him for all his generosity several years ago, he talked about the *abundance mentality* – how he believed that if he was generous and supportive, it would all come back to him. Well, two weeks ago, I gave him sort of a test – I didn’t intend to, but I knew it would be – because I told him that it was time for me to move on – other opportunities were calling. And so I wanted to let him know, with lots of time to plan, that I was going to be leaving. And I told him how much I’d learned from him while working with him. He said that he would be sorry to see me go, but he felt *good* knowing that I had learned a lot while I was there, and he felt good that I was ready to move on and learn more somewhere else.

So all the talk about the abundance mentality? That wasn't just talk with him. He *really* believes that. He not only talks the talk, but he walks the walk. He really was serious about wanting to produce more mental health workers in our community, because there are so many people in need. He even told me that, if some of the people I'm seeing want to stop going to the clinic and see me in my private practice, he would be glad that they could maintain that continuity of treatment. So that means a financial loss if that happens for him, but he's more concerned about the people than he is about the money.

You may not know how this works in real life, but a lot of times, at these clinics, when a therapist leaves, there is sort of a dog fight, or a power struggle, to *keep* the clients or take them away. That's kind of humorous, because the clients can jolly-well go wherever they want. That's the rule. But not a lot of people function from that abundance mentality.

So what effect do you think his example has had on me? We're talking about leading by example, right? He's another example of how the abundance mentality works in real life – not just for Christian people, although I think he, probably, is one. But his example *inspires* me to follow his way of doing things, because I can see it was good for me and it's good for him, too.

Now, another example is my other boss, Roger Karl. I now work for Two North Family Services. Listen to this story about this guy. He got an MBA early in his business career. He's very smart – graduated from high school at sixteen with 4.0 average. Got an MBA. Made a lot of money in a variety of businesses around town. But he soon yearned to do something that was more directly *helpful* to people. So he dropped all of his high-paying businesses and became a case worker at a mental health facility.

Well, okay. He did that because he found satisfaction in helping people. After a bit, he got a Master's in counseling and got his license to be a clinical counselor. Eventually, he even combined his business and counseling experience, and was the head of the behavioral health for the biggest HMO in the state. Currently, the company that manages Medicaid mental health in this state is in chaos. And he told me as many as thirty in the community, including some people in state government, asked him to put his hat in the ring for the CEO job of this Medicaid managing company that is in crisis. But you know, his heart really wasn't in it, because he'd just started a new business that does some really amazing things.

This company that he started is a case management business that provides help on some of the reservations around the state, where there has been traditionally very few services. Most of the reservations in the state are in kind of remote areas and you don't find a lot of people with masters degrees in counseling licenses living around or on reservations. So there has always been a lack of support for people. So he started this business where he hires people that live near these reservations. He trains them to be case managers. So that provides good support for the people who live on the reservations and good jobs for the people that live on and around the reservations. Have you ever noticed that a lot people don't like to live in town? They like to live out in the country. The only problem is, there is no way to make a living out there. Well, Roger is doing what he can to fix that for some folks.

I was talking to him about his decision to stay with this new company or go to work for the Medicaid administrator and I asked him why he decided to stay with his business. He said that he was told that he probably wouldn't get the job, but he pulled back because he said, "In the end, I got into this line of work to *help* people. And this company is helping people in a way that no other is right now." So he decided to stick with it, because he thinks it is going to get a lot bigger and provide services for lots of folks who really need it and who've never had any availability before.

That's pretty good, isn't it? I think that's a *great* thing. How does his example affect me watching that? Well, I got into this line of work and into LifeResource Ministries because I wanted to help people. I didn't just want to make a living. I wanted to make a *difference*. I think we *all* do. His example shows me that there are people everywhere who have those same ideals. Because we both have those same general goals, it's a lot of fun to work for that guy, because we're always trying to improve how we can serve the community.

So those are some real-time examples from my life. There's another example I wanted to talk to you about though. George Washington. I recently saw the PBS movie, *The Crossing*. I'm not much of a history buff. I learn most of my history from TV, right? Or from the newspapers. But it was an amazing, amazing presentation of the crossing of the Delaware. What a desperate, dangerous undertaking that was! But he set an example – and it wasn't the crossing of the Delaware that I'm talking about – but he set an example later than galvanized the entire civilized world.

On December 19, in 1783, he arrived at Annapolis after the conclusion of the war – just as the British troops were leaving. The country was finally at peace. But the previous eight months had been a terrible time of anguish for George Washington. His army had been discharged and sent home, unpaid and unthanked by a bankrupt Congress. Instead of thanking them and paying them, they were smearing the army for asking for back pay. I mean, these people went out and risked their lives and were promised pay by the government. The government didn't have the money to pay them, so they accused them of being greedy. Because of this failure, some of Washington's young officers lost confidence in him and began to mock him publicly.

On the other side, Alexander Hamilton, was waging a war of words on the Congress, calling them "weak and disgusting to the last degree." They didn't mince words back then. The newspapers picked up on that and the nation quickly became derisive of the Congress and all *for* George Washington. The Congress took refuge in the village of Princeton, New Jersey, where they rejected advice by Washington to fund a small peacetime army and pay back the soldiers some of what they owed. From afar, to the French, who were our allies in the war.... You know, we have a lot of French jokes and we make fun of them, but actually the French went bankrupt funding our revolution. They were the best thing that ever happened to us in the beginning. And to them, when all this was going on, it seemed like the United States was about to collapse. And that's because it *was*. There was so much turmoil over this issue.

So the question was, was there anybody who could rescue the nation from this chaotic situation? Well, many people thought that George Washington was the only one who had enough clout to pull it off. And people urged him to take charge, to dismiss the Congress, and rule as an uncrowned king under the title of President. At the very least, they thought he should appear before Congress and issue a scathing rebuke for their cowardly flight from Philadelphia and their ingratitude to those who fought to defend the nation.

Instead, here's what he did. At noon on December 23, Washington walked from his hotel to the Annapolis State House, where Congress was sitting. Barely twenty delegates bothered to even show up. They probably figured they were going to get a severe tough lashing, so they didn't show. Thomas Mifflin, of Pennsylvania, was the president of the Congress, and he said, "Sir, the United States and Congress are prepared to receive your communication."

Now Thomas Mifflin had been one of the generals who had attempted to humiliate Washington into resigning during the winter of Valley Forge. He was a back-stabber. And he had smeared Washington, and called him a "puffed up egotist," and ridiculed his military capabilities and his leadership. A few months after that, Mifflin was forced to leave the military because it was discovered that he'd stolen millions while he was the Quartermaster General of the US army. So they elected him the president of Congress. So that's the guy that he's talking to, and here's this group of people that absolutely hate him. And he's been advised that he should just send them packing, and take over and solve the problem.

So he stood up, and he took a folded piece of paper out of coat pocket, and he read, "Mr. President, the great events, on which my resignation depended, have at length taken place. I now have the honor of offering my sincere congratulations to Congress, and of presenting myself before them to surrender in their hand the trust committed to me, and to claim the indulgence of retiring from the service of my country." He went on to express appreciation for his countrymen and to the army for their support. And when he got to the part about the army, his hand shook so badly he had to use two hands to steady the paper. He continued. "I consider it an indispensable duty to close this last solemn act of my official life by commending the interests of our dearest country to the protection of Almighty God and those who have the superintendency of them to His holy keeping." That would be the Congress that had superintendency. When he mentioned God's name, he had to stop for long moment. He couldn't say a word. Tears streamed down his face. He had seen time and time again, during his battlefield experience, the miraculous intervention of God to protect his army. When he composed himself, he continued. "Having now finished the work assigned me, I retire from the great theater of action, bidding farewell to this august body, under who I have long acted. I hereby offer my commission and take leave of all the employments of public life."

He didn't do what people said he should do. He didn't take control, although he could have. And that moment, they say – the historians say – is the most important moment in American history – right there at the beginning. The one man who could have dismissed this weak and amoral Congress, and could have obtained *absolute* power for himself, walked away from it. By this visible and incontrovertible act, Washington did more to

affirm America's government *of* the people than anything that's ever been done since that time. Thomas Jefferson said of what Washington did, "The moderation of a single character probably prevented this revolution from being closed, as most others have been, by a subversion of that liberty it was intended to establish."

So people were watching this in Europe. They watched what happened. And what he did *rocked the world* and set the world on a new course of government. What he had done had never been done before. Two days after that, Washington was at home with his family. And he and the country have survived the perils of both war and peace as a result of what he did. Of course, we know what happened. He was elected President. But that was by the people. That was government *by the people*. It wasn't an autocratic, controlling thing. It wasn't some behind the table, wheeling and dealing. It wasn't some overt act of power. That humble act set such an example that it made other nations want to become democracies.

That, by the way, was excerpted from an article by Thomas Fleming, printed in 12/24/07 *Wall Street Journal*.

So, leading by example. What does it work? Well, if you think about the example of George Washington, what he did is at the heart and core of not only our government, but at the heart and core of Christianity – service without control. So his example pointed the way clearly, and set a precedent for others to follow. He set an example. And so we've never had a president try to grab power. It's just not what we do in this country, is it? He set a precedent. Can you imagine what this country would be like if he had done that? It wouldn't be the United States of America.

So leading by example clearly points the way that we need to go. What else does it do? Well, when we lead people by doing something, instead of ordering them around, people have to watch what we're doing. Then they think about it. And they realize, "Oh, this is right," or "It's good," for some reason, and then they start following along. This process allows them to come to their own conclusions about what *they* need to do. It's not somebody forcing it on them. It's them deciding for themselves to follow along and to *do* something. So it feels like independent action to them, which it really is. So leading this way produces a whole crop of this kind of leadership. It is a way of leading that involves the principle of *multiplication*.

By the way, eventually we're going to talk about some natural principles that we can apply to congregational growth that magnify the power of all our efforts. And one of them is called *multiplication*. You know, Jesus sent out seventy guys in teams of two. When they came back, by Pentecost, there were a hundred and twenty people. Then, after that, Paul inadvertently scattered the church, and all these people just went everywhere, and it just exploded. That's multiplication.

It's interesting. I gave a presentation recently talking about the younger ones in the congregation. When I gave it, there was a family with three children in the group. One of them was a fourteen-year-old boy. I noticed after services that the adults were all trying to engage this boy in conversation. His mother got him started telling a story, but all the

adults were really quick to kind of respond, and jump in, and feedback to him, and talk to him. One person started it, and then other people realized, “Oh, that’s how you do it.” So they started interacting with this young guy, too. Soon somebody else saw it and recognized what was going on. They were new to the group, so it was really important that he feel at home. So they were all actually, I think, inspiring each other to get involved with him. That’s that example of leading people without preaching and without coercion – where you just set the example.

There’s a teenager that I’m about to start working with and she has what’s called *reactive attachment disorder*. She’s been so damaged in early childhood that she has no trust of authority figures. She made the statement in the family therapy session I went to at Children’s Psychiatric Hospital, “I don’t trust parents.” Well, that’s a natural thing because all the people that have played the role of parent to her have let her down, except for this most recent one. She was abused by her father, I think, when she was small. I don’t know much about the mother yet, but I know that she never got to bond with her mother or her father. She was adopted when she was seven. Since then, she’s done everything she can to alienate her adoptive mother, who really does love her. And the reason she does that – that’s the *reactive* part – she thinks that this woman really doesn’t love her, because nobody ever has. And so it’s painful to be loved. It just brings up all of that stuff. So she unconsciously does things to push her away. The reason she was in the mental hospital is because she did some really, really, terrible, dangerous things. She’s been very deceitful and manipulative, and worried her mother to the point that she’s actually in a state of poor health right now.

So, I was thinking about my role in helping this family. I think my job is to help her resolve her relationship with her mother. If she doesn’t do that, nothing is ever going to be right. So how can I do that? Can I put a funnel in her head and pour insight in there? No, I can’t. I can get them together and help them sort things out, but until she deals with that unconscious feeling of distrust, she’s just going to keep doing what she’s been doing. So my small part, I think, is that she needs to see consistency from me. I need to set an example. I need to be more adult who’s not going to run when the going gets tough, and who’s going to hang in there with her, and stay beside her. So I have to model that commitment to her. I have to set an example of that. And once she sees, over time, that I’m not going to give up on her, that’s just one more building block in the new outlook that says, “Adults don’t give up on me.” Just telling her that I’m not going to give up on her isn’t going to do it. I’m going to tell her that, but then I’m going to have to stick with it. So I have to model commitment and that’s going to help. That’s going to teach her something.

What else can we say about the effectiveness of setting the example? The only true leadership is moral leadership. Many people are used to the hierarchical leadership – you know, we have to obey the boss – work, some churches. And for years I thought the church should be organized that way – heard lots of sermons about the sovereign throne of God. God looks down from His throne. He’s higher than everybody. He’s overall supreme. But I somehow forgot that Jesus came as a servant. And all that hierarchy is in place in the Kingdom of God, and God is up there over all, but when He came to earth as Jesus Christ – when that Being came down here – He came as a servant and He told us to

be servants, because we can't handle being on top. That's what was so astounding about George Washington. It was that he handled the temptation to be on top. If we're not to be ordering and driving people, what's left to get them to go the right way. Well, it's example. The only *real* leadership, then, is *moral* leadership. People that want to do the right thing will recognize it more often than not. So it's all about doing the right thing, and being faithful in it, and hanging in there, and inspiring others to follow to action.

Another thing about this is, that *anybody* can do it! *Anybody* can do it. If it's the right thing, and you're doing it, that's leadership. You don't have to be ordained. You don't have to have money, power, position. You don't have to be a man. You can be a woman. You can be a kid. You can be anybody.

What else? Is there anything else we can say about it? There's this man Robert Coles. He's a psychiatrist. He's a Harvard professor. He won a Pulitzer Prize for non-fiction. His lifelong study.... Now, would you say that somebody that's a Pulitzer Prize winner is probably pretty much of an intellectual? Harvard professor. Harvard educated. This guy is a true intellectual. Do you know what his lifelong study has been? The moral development of children. He was in New Orleans when they introduced Ruby Bridges to her elementary school. There were six black children introduced in school that year. Five of them went to one school and Ruby was introduced to this school by herself. What he witnessed there on that first day fascinated him. And his lifelong study has been the moral development of children. He's written seventy-five books! I mean this guy is prolific. One of them is called, *The Spiritual Life of Children*. It talks a lot about the *power* of the lived Christian life. Isn't that interesting? Somebody could win a Pulitzer Prize talking about that? I mean, he's a guy that knows how to talk about Christianity in a way that it makes it the way it really is – you know, where the rubber meets the road.

I saw a TV special about his work right after I moved to Albuquerque years ago. He interviewed the two daughters of a single mom, who lived a block from where the mob hit Reginald Denny in the head with a brick. They lived down in Watts – very poor, very rough neighborhood. Yet, these two little girls had *excellent* morals. They were doing well in school. He interviewed the rest of the family and the pastor. And you quickly understood where these little girls developed this character and this sense of morality that they had. The mother talked about how *she* was going back to school to better herself. And their pastor talked about the congregation wrapping their arms around this family that needed help. And the uncle – the mother's brother – said, "Whatever it took to help the girls, he *was* going to be there for them, because that is what you do." So these girls, obviously, were helped by all this support. But more, they were learning to *be* those kind of people, too. You could see it. You could hear it in their voices and by the things that they said.

Robert Coles conclusion is that the lived Christian life is a *powerful* thing for good – that people are changed by it – not just the ones that are living it, but the ones who observe it. People take notice of it. The Word of God – the mind of Christ – is what drives the lived Christian life. That *moves* people. God moves people through the lived Christian life. Ordination, position, and organizations' money – those things don't move people. But the lived Christian life moves people toward Jesus Christ.

I was talking to Gordon Enger, at the Park City Feast, and we were talking about the relational evangelism that he teaches. And he made a really good point. He said, “I don’t have to worry about results. I don’t have to *see* results. All I have to do is what God tells me to do.” Knowing the right thing to do and doing it. “You don’t have to worry about results,” he said. “God takes care of the results. That’s His department. Our department is to *do* what we’re told.” And he said, “We can trust that doing the right thing is powerful.”

If we know the right thing to do and we’re willing to do it, then, through Jesus Christ, we can make a difference. We can set an example for people. And *anybody* can do that.