

love.  
understand.  
serve.

RECAPTURING JOY-FILLED LEADERSHIP

— participant guide —

---

“ *One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.*”

— Mark 12:28-31

---

”

We will be using this passage from Mark’s gospel as a guide for our discussion as we explore how we can experience leadership in a way that fills us with joy.

The guide is broken into three weekly sections, with six daily pages. If you want to take more time — extending your time walking through the guide — feel free to ignore those “week / day” designations. This is meant to be an enjoyable experience, not a stressful one! Likewise, if you are so excited that you want to rush through, then go for it! Each week’s information is broken down into bite-size pieces that will take about 10-15 minutes each day.

### **THINGS YOU MIGHT NEED**

The scriptures used throughout will be from the *New Revised Standard Version* of the Bible. You may want to have another translation (or two! or three!) handy, to see the ways the verses have been rendered in each. You’ll sometimes find differences between versions that can be quite interesting, as translators were forced to choose between several possible English meanings of a Hebrew or Greek phrase. You may also consider investing in a good study Bible with footnotes!

On each page, there are places for you to take notes or jot down thoughts or questions that occur to you. So make sure to have a pen or pencil handy.

And, finally, as you go through the study, if you find you have questions or concerns, don’t hesitate to drop me a line at [hedy@loveunderstandserve.org](mailto:hedy@loveunderstandserve.org)!

So... Are you ready to jump in? Then let’s go!



week one



---

“Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! By his great mercy he has given us a new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that is imperishable, undefiled, and unfading, kept in heaven for you.

— 1 Peter 1:3-4

”

---

*“The church is dying.”*

You’ve probably heard that said. Perhaps not in those exact words, but you’ve probably heard people talking about how much trouble the church is in. How disconnected the church has become from the society around it, how irrelevant it has become. Declining numbers in the pews each week. Fewer and fewer people involved in ministries. Formerly vital missions struggling to keep their doors open as financial support dwindles away.

The Vietnam War, Watergate, church scandals — all these and more have contributed to a breakdown in trust for the “institution,” including that of religion. The economic crises of the past decades have also led to a growing tension in the church, as more people become anxious about their finances and fewer are giving to the ministries of the church.

It used to be that the church had only to open its doors,  
and people from the community would stream in.

No more.

Now when people think of “church,” they’re not usually thinking of a place that is centrally important to their lives. The church is simply one of those buildings you pass by on your way to somewhere else. Perhaps it is a directional marker (as in, “Turn right at Aldersgate Church on Fort Hunt Road”), or a place you visit for a cub scout meeting or yearly flea market. It’s available if you and your family are in the mood to attend a Christmas Eve candlelight service, or as an attractive venue for a wedding. In the autumn, the front lawn is a good place to

pick up a pumpkin, and the parking lot is a convenient location to teach your teenager how to drive.

The church has fewer and fewer stalwart members, and more and more spectator attenders. It is ironic that as the number of programs, missions, and ministries offered in and through our churches has increased, this has led people to more highly value what the church can do for them and what they get out of church, than what they can offer to the church and its community.

I recently heard a lay leader in my congregation describing his knowledge of leadership in the church as “seeing how sausage gets made.” This statement, quite unfortunately, came in the context of an announcement made in a worship service, in which he went on to comment: “And, let’s be honest, *no one* wants to know how sausage gets made.” (Yikes!)

But amidst the doom and gloom portrayed by the media, and the moments of panic induced by a perusal of our church budgets... there is hope! Big, huge, enormous, life-transforming hope!

#### QUESTION:

On a scale of 1 to 10 (with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent), how would you rate the health of your particular congregation at this moment?

#### NOTES



---

“ One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one.’ you shall love the Lord your God.”

— Mark 12:28-29

”

---

All too often we begin our discussion of leadership with the leader: strengths, weaknesses, experiences, and opportunities. Or with the outward actions of leading: presenting with authority, creating teams, networking. But these are not the best — or even the right — place to start. We need to start exactly where Jesus tells us to: “*Love the Lord your God.*”

If we start anywhere else, we will be easily sidetracked. We can forget why we are in leadership, and who it is that we represent in our leadership.

### Love of God.

That’s where we begin... both literally and figuratively.

The Greek word we translate as “to love” — *agapaó* — is completely fascinating. The English version simply does not do it justice: (1) to feel great affection, (2) to feel romantic love for someone, (3) to like or desire, to take pleasure in.<sup>1</sup> *Agapaó* is a much more powerful verb. It is love “based on evaluation or choice, a matter of will and action.”<sup>2</sup>

In arguably one of the most famous of biblical verses, John 3:16, the author uses a variant of *agapaó*:

*“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”*

It is only through God’s self-giving love that our leadership in the church and in the world makes any sense at all. And it is a foundation that can give strength to

a leader even in the most difficult of situations, even in the midst of failure and pain. Because we have a God who knows us intimately — all the good and all the bad — and who loves us anyway.

The way God loves us is a conscious choice, not one based solely on “feeling” as implied in the *Merriam-Webster* English definition above. It is because of *agapaó* that God makes the conscious choice to include us in relationship with the Divine. This decision is not based on our worthiness (we would certainly fail that test) or on our diligent effort (how could we ever work hard enough to earn God’s love?).

In human terms, we could look at *agapaó* as the consistent and unconditional love of a parent for a beloved but recalcitrant child. This is the same type of love with which we are called to love God.

The form of *agapaó* that is used by Jesus in today’s scripture is the future tense with indicative mood — *agapēseis* — signifying an established fact set in the future: this is what you shall do. We are called to make the conscious choice to put God in the center of our lives, and to allow God to guide us each step of the way.

#### QUESTION:

What does it mean to you that God loves you with this kind of *agapaó* love — an unconditional, never-changing, always-present, consciously-chosen love?

#### NOTES



---

“*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things came into being through him, and without him not one thing came into being. What has come into being in him was life, and the life was the light of all people. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not overcome it. ... And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father’s only son, full of grace and truth.*

— John 1:1-5,14

”

---

“In the beginning was the Word.” *En arche en ho logos.*

*Logos* is another wonderful, rich Greek word whose meaning is broader and wider than is possible to translate into English with just one word. *Logos* means “word,” but not in the simple sense of letters arranged on a page, or syllables spoken together. It means an expression of a thought. *Logos* is Divine thought, Divine intention, Divine meaning, put into a word we can comprehend.

In college I was an English major with a German minor. Two of the classes I took were Introduction to the Bible as Literature and Advanced German. In the Bible as Literature we started out reading the Gospel of John. In Advanced German, we read *Faust* by Johann Goethe. I remember being fascinated by the fact that there was a section in *Faust* where the main character is trying desperately to translate this word “*Logos*” from John 1:1.

Faust starts out, “*Im Anfang war das Wort!*” In the beginning was the word. But he is not happy with that translation, as he feels it does not convey the fullness of *logos*. So he makes another attempt: “*Im Anfang war der Sinn.*” In the beginning was the meaning, the reason, the purpose. But again, he is not satisfied. Next he tries out “*Im Anfang war die Kraft,*” the power, the strength, the force. But *die Kraft* didn’t work for Faust either. And so he ends with this: “*Im Anfang war die Tat.*”<sup>3</sup> In the beginning was the deed, the action.

Word, meaning, power, action. *Logos.*



The Word was with God. The Word was God. In the beginning. Everything created through the *logos*, the divine thought expressed in a way that we can comprehend, seen in the gorgeous, complex beauty of our universe. But it didn't end there.

John 1:14: “*And the Word became flesh and lived among us, and we have seen his glory, the glory as of a father's only son, full of grace and truth.*” The Word (*logos*) became flesh and dwelt among us. The word we translate as “flesh” is *sarx* in Greek. *Sarx* means physical body, human nature, from a human perspective.

This is the point that Faust missed in his struggles for one word to define *logos*: word, meaning, power, action. Out of great love, the *logos* made the conscious decision to become a part of creation. The *word*, the source of all *meaning*, the holder of all *power*, became *action* incarnate in this world. And we have seen his glory, his grace and truth and love and light, in the midst of our troubled world.

#### QUESTION:

What would it mean to you to be a leader who “incarnates” the love of God?

#### NOTES



---

“ *Christ is the visible image of the invisible God.*

— Colossians 1:15

”

---

Christ has been intimately involved in creation from the very first breath of time. Christ is eternal and everlasting. It is through Christ that we were reconciled to God. And Christ is the leader of the church.

Christ — our king, our leader — is the visible image of the invisible God. But today’s verse begs the question: how do people experience this visible image of God in Christ, when Christ is no longer walking the earth in physical form?

The simple, obvious, overpowering answer is: people experience the image of Christ *in us*. Their experience of God’s grace, love, patience, understanding, forgiveness, wisdom — all this and more happens through interactions with the followers of Christ. Just as Christ is the visible image of the invisible God, Christ-followers are called to reflect the image of God to the people around us. Through our words and, even more importantly, through our actions, we can actively demonstrate God’s love.



We understand God as Triune: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Each of these is a dynamically interconnected “person”: God as Father, God as Son, God as Holy Spirit.

The theological term “perichoresis” describes how these unique persons relate. The Greek prefix *peri* means enclosing or surrounding, and the verb *chóreo* means to make room for or to contain. The Three are constantly moving in and through each other, and are perpetually indivisible.



Through the incarnation, Jesus, the Eternal Son took on human form, powerfully and inextricably linking the Divine and the mortal. We have been invited to participate in the Trinity’s intimate relationship, partnering with God in healing and transforming the world.

This understanding of the Trinity has a direct impact on our leadership. The Trinity is a full, vibrant community unto itself. The Father, Son, and Holy Spirit do not need humanity in order to fill a vacancy in their spiritual communion. We are not needed to fill a function or to mitigate loneliness. The Trinity created us for relationship out of love and joy.

Bishop Kallistos Ware puts it this way: “The world is not necessary to God; yet at the same time it is in no way peripheral to his being or incidental, for it expresses the self-diffusive love that is precisely at the very heart of the living God.”<sup>4</sup> In his article “Participating in the Trinity,” Paul Fiddes argues that “we need to become aware of the way that we are actually engaging in the triune life of God, sharing in the currents of the personal relationships of God.”<sup>5</sup>

Because of the *agapaó* love of God, we — flawed and imperfect and small — we have been invited into relationship with God.

Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.  
And you. And me.

#### QUESTION:

The Trinity is a difficult concept for us to get our heads around. What metaphors or phrases or techniques have you used to help yourself or others understand it?

#### NOTES



---

“*“You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.” Then the scribe said to him, “You are right, Teacher; you have truly said that ‘he is one, and besides him there is no other’; and ‘to love him with all the heart, and with all the understanding, and with all the strength,’ and ‘to love one’s neighbor as oneself,’—this is much more important than all whole burnt offerings and sacrifices.” When Jesus saw that he answered wisely, he said to him, “You are not far from the kingdom of God.”*

— Mark 12:28-31

---

”

Incarnation is a powerful word for our understanding of leadership. “To incarnate” means to embody or represent in human form; to make concrete an idea or abstract concept; to be the living embodiment of a quality or ideal.

The story of Christianity is a story of the incarnation! It is the story of a God who loves us so much, that God made the irrevocable, game-changing decision to enter directly into creation. To live as a human being, to teach and to heal. To touch and to comfort. To explain and demonstrate God’s love and to bring hope and grace and light to a dark and fearful world.

In our leadership, we are called to follow and emulate the One who is Leader of our lives. Author Michael Polanyi discusses this apprenticeship method of learning in his book *Personal Knowledge*: “To learn by example is to submit to authority. You follow your master because you trust his manner of doing things even when you cannot analyze and account in detail for its effectiveness. By watching the master and emulating his efforts in the presence of his example, the apprentice unconsciously picks up the rules of the art.”<sup>6</sup>

That is how we learn to drive. Even tiny children pretend to drive using their little toy wheels in the car. They watch and they imitate their parent’s movements. (And they will also imitate the language we use on the highway, so watch out!) When you reached the age where you could reach the gas and break pedals, you were not just thrown into a car, and sent out on the road. Someone

showed you how to toggle your right foot between the pedals, how to check for traffic, how to adjust the mirrors, how to safely merge onto a busy roadway.

Likewise, if you wanted to learn baseball, you probably had a parent, or an older sibling, or a coach show you how to hold the baseball, how to swing your arm to throw it, when to release it on the arc. Someone showed you how to hold the bat, where to grip it, how to swing it. They guided you over and over again, until it became muscle memory.

If you learned to sing, you first watched how others held their bodies as they sang. You were taught how to read music, how to use your diaphragm and to project. If you learned to paint, someone showed you how to hold a brush, how to mix colors and apply them to paper or canvas. If you learned to cook, you observed how the materials were collected and prepared, mixed and transformed, then you made your own attempts alongside the person who was teaching you.

The best way to learn is to first observe,  
then to follow someone who knows the way.

#### QUESTION:

What person in your life best taught you what Christian leadership looks like?

#### NOTES



---

“ One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

— Mark 12:28-31

”

---

In their book *Leadership on the Line*, Ronald Heifetz and Marty Linsky write this about the importance of reaching out:

“Leadership is worth the risk because the goals extend beyond material gain or personal advancement. By making the lives of people around you better, leadership provides meaning in life. It creates purpose. We believe that every human being has something unique to offer, and that a larger sense of purpose comes from using that gift to help your organizations, families, or communities thrive. The gift might be your knowledge, your experience, your values, your presence, your heart, or your wisdom. Perhaps it’s simply your basic curiosity and your willingness to raise unsettling questions.”<sup>7</sup>

While this quote sounds like something that would have come from a religiously-centered text, this quote is ironically from a thoroughly secular leadership book. Christians are not the only ones who believe that our leadership is about more than getting the corner office.

But we *are* the ones who believe that human beings have been created in the image of God, and that our purpose is to glorify God with our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

Heifetz and Linsky reference parts of what we have been discussing above: values, knowledge, heart, wisdom. They highlight the myriad ways that

leadership can be demonstrated. All too often we think of leadership in terms of “big ticket items,” such as a CEO heading up a company, a trailblazing entrepreneur creating a brand-new business, the senior pastor at your church.

But we can lead in so many, life-transformative ways — both big and small. And no matter the size or scope of the project, it *makes a difference*.

What matters is that we find the ways God has given to each of us to lead. Each of us has been given unique gifts and talents, and we have the opportunity to partner with God in bringing God’s love to the world.

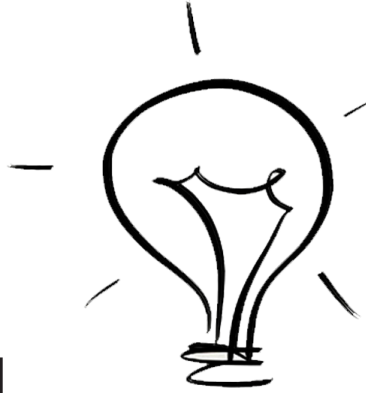
We get to be God’s love made flesh.

God’s love for us extended into a remarkable act: the Divine becoming flesh. Incarnation is at the root of who we are as Christ-followers. As C.S. Lewis wrote: “The central miracle asserted by Christians is the Incarnation. They say that God became Man. Every other miracle prepares for this, or exhibits this, or results from this.”<sup>8</sup> We love and follow the God who came to earth to live a fully human life, and who gave sacrificially of himself. When we give of ourselves to others, we are participating in the self-giving nature of God.

#### QUESTION:

What are ways that you have led this week? How could you lead next week?

#### NOTES



understand.

week two





---

“ Jesus answered, “*The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’*”

— Mark 12:29-30

”

---

If we are called to lead by following and loving God, then the next section of Mark 12 tells us how: “... *with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.*” But what do each of these phrases mean?

The Greek used for heart here in Mark 12, and in the corresponding verse in Matthew 22:37, is *kardía*. In contemporary English parlance, the “heart” emblemizes emotion and feeling. If we see someone on the street wearing a t-shirt that states “I ♥ NY,” then we know that person loves New York. While the Greek *kardía* does have an aspect of emotion, it is broader than that, also speaking to our rationality.

And just as *kardía* is broader, it is deeper than the English “heart.” *Kardía* is used figuratively in Matthew 12:40 to describe physical depth: “*For just as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so for three days and three nights the Son of Man will be in the heart of the earth.*” It means the center, our innermost self. It is the core of who we are.

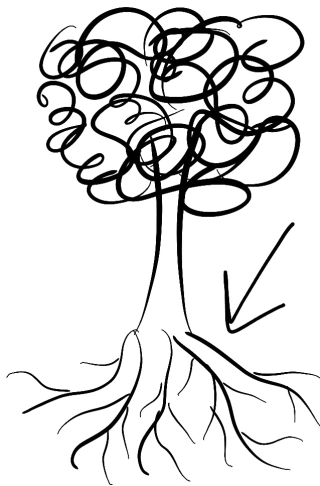
In this section of Mark 12, Jesus is quoting from Deuteronomy 6:5: “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your might.*” The Hebrew word used for “heart” in this Old Testament passage is *lēbāb*, which has a similar meaning to *kardía*: heart, understanding, as well as reflecting the inner self, the central part.

If we are to “love God with all our heart,” then our leadership starts here: with who we are at our core. Our true identity. There has been a debate in recent years over whether — or to what degree — character matters in our political

and institutional leadership. But this debate is moot in terms of what God desires from leaders.

1 Samuel 16:7 tells us: *“But the Lord said to Samuel, ‘Do not look on his appearance or on the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for the Lord does not see as mortals see; they look on the outward appearance, but the Lord looks on the heart.’”*

*“The Lord looks on the heart”* — *lēbāb*. As leaders, our love for God must be an intrinsic, deeply-seated part of who we are. If our leadership is effective on the surface but weak in the core, the truth will out.



Just as a tree requires strong roots to remain healthy, it is only through a strong relationship with God that we can hope to lead in the full and life-transforming way God desires for us.

The roots of a tree cannot be seen, but they are busily working deep in the earth, drawing in nourishment and moisture.

**QUESTION:**

What does “heart” mean to you? If someone asked you to explain what is meant by heart in Mark 12:30, how would you respond?

**NOTES**



---

“ Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’”

— Mark 12:29-30

”

---

The Greek word which we translate as “soul” is *psyché*. It, and its Hebrew equivalent *nephesh*, overlap significantly with *kardía/lēbāb*, with *psyché/nephesh* also referencing one’s inner life. But while the English word “soul” has overtones of the ineffable and abstract, *psyché* has a more practical nuance. It is the “living self with all its drives, not the abstract notion,”<sup>9</sup> and the “earthly existence in contrast to supernatural existence; one’s life on earth.”<sup>10</sup>

With this understanding, *psyché* is how who we are at our core — *kardía* — is put into action. *Kardía* is our deepest identity, and *psyché* is how our identity is reflected in our interactions with the world.

This is consistent with the psychological understanding of the English word “psyche” as “the center of thought, feeling, and motivation, consciously and unconsciously directing the body’s reactions to its social and physical environment.”<sup>11</sup>



*Kardía* is the root of the tree, seen by God alone. *Psyché* is the branches, the leaves, the fruit available to be observed by the world. Without the nourishment provided by the root system, the tree above ground will not be healthy.

Likewise, without the branches reaching out to the sky, without the chlorophyll in the leaves taking in sunlight and transforming it into energy, the root system will not be healthy. If a tree is cut down to the ground, the roots will eventually wither and die.

*Kardía* needs *psyché*, and *psyché* needs *kardía*. Just as the health of a tree's roots can be seen in the health of its trunk and branches, so the health of our love of God can be seen in our words and actions.

Scripture tells us that "*Faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead*" (James 2:17). In his book *Incarnate*, Michael Frost puts it this way: "An inner conviction or feeling is only worthwhile to the degree that it is embodied in action."<sup>12</sup>

Loving God with all our *psyché* therefore means to actively seek ways to have our leadership behaviors increasingly reflect God's grace and love. This is not a sterile, bookish theology, but a lived one.

#### QUESTION:

Think back over this past week. How well have your words and actions demonstrated God's love in your life? Do you feel that your week has accurately reflected the health of your "heart"?

#### NOTES



---

“ Jesus answered, “*The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’*”

— Mark 12:29-30

”

---

*Diánoia* is the Greek word translated here as “mind.” Interestingly, there is no Hebrew counterpart for *diánoia* in the Deuteronomy text, because the mind was considered to be a part of both *lēbāb* and *nephesh*. This Greek word corresponds fairly directly with the modern idea of mind: intellect, comprehension, understanding.

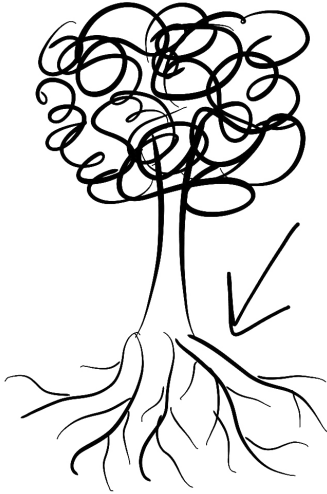
There are almost endless ways to love God with all our mind. Whether we delve into the millennia of Christian and Jewish theological writings, explore the science of nature or the human psyche, or even steep ourselves in secular leadership tomes, we have the opportunity to deepen our understanding of God, and of ourselves.

Kenneth McFayden, author of *Strategic Leadership for a Change*, says this about Christ-following leaders who engage in these intellectual pursuits in a healthy way:

“They believe that the behavioral sciences, leadership theories, and other secular resources contribute important perspectives for congregational leadership. Yet they assess these perspectives through the ‘eyes of faith,’ identify their contributions and limitation, and incorporate their best practices to strengthen ministry. Finally, they believe that leadership is learned. Whatever natural gifts they bring to ministry, they realize that there always is more to learn about leadership. They understand that learning to lead increases their capacity to serve.”<sup>13</sup>

Understanding your spiritual gifts is an important part of loving God with all your *diánoia*. Scripture tells us that the Holy Spirit gives specific gifts to each

Christ-follower. These gifts are to be used with great joy for the common good of the people. Check out passages such as 1 Corinthians 12:4-11, Romans 12:6-8, 1 Peter 4:10-11, and Ephesians 4:11-16.



If *kardia* is the root of who we are, and *psyché* how the health of those roots is reflected in our interactions with the world, then *diánoia* is using our intellectual capacity to push those roots ever deeper, ever wider.

It is easy to see how these three words describing how we are to love God — *kardia*, *psyché*, and *diánoia* — complement and support each other. Together they create a virtuous cycle: learning more about who God is and our part in God’s creation, which in turn leads to a deeper understanding in our core of God’s love, which then results in our reaching out into the world out of the overflow of God’s love.

QUESTION:

What intellectual pursuits are of interest to you? How are you engaging your mind in understanding God more deeply? What resources are available to you in your church or community?

NOTES



---

“ Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’”

— Mark 12:29-30

”

---

The Greek here is *ischys*, corresponding with the Old Testament Hebrew *me'od* in Deuteronomy 6:5. Both words describe the ability of a person, their strength, their might. Whatever our capabilities are, we are to use them for the glory of God. In this way, we demonstrate how we love God with all our *ischys*.

Ironically, this is where many leadership books begin — both secular and Christian. There are countless inventories for spiritual gifts, and a large selection of strength/weakness assessments. A person wishing to know his or her leadership *ischys* will have ample opportunity to do so.

But there is an excellent reason this comes *after* loving God with all your heart, all your soul, and all your mind.

It would be all too easy to take our strengths for granted if we did not first realize that the reason we have abilities and talents is that they are gifts from a loving God.



If *diánoia* has us using our minds to deepen and strengthen our roots, then *ischys* is the utilization of our talents, gifts, and abilities to grow new branches and increase our fruit in the world.

Jesus is our leader, our example... and this is exactly how he led. Jesus's *kardia* — his heart, his core — was firmly rooted in the self-giving love of God. Jesus's *psyché* — his soul — was demonstrated through his gracious words and actions every day of his life.

His *diánoia* — his mind — was shown in his deep knowledge of the Hebrew scriptures, which he both studied and taught. And his *ischys* — his strength, his abilities — were the most perfect to ever reside in a human form.

In his letter to the church in Rome, the apostle Paul wrote: *“I appeal to you therefore, brothers and sisters, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God...”* It is a phrase strange to the modern ear: “a living sacrifice.” But I believe that is exactly what Jesus is taking about in Mark 12.

To lead as a living sacrifice — a breathing, walking-around-the-world sacrifice — means inviting God into all of who we are, reaching out to God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength.

#### QUESTION:

What are your spiritual gifts? How are you utilizing your gifts in the church and world? If you are not sure what your gifts are, have you considered taking a class or an assessment to find out? Why or why not?

#### NOTES





---

“ Jesus answered, “*The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’*”

— Mark 12:29-30

”

---

In order for us to be able to lead with effectiveness and joy, we first must be in a healthy place ourselves. When we are leading from a place of loving God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, our actions have power and grace!

On the following page, you’ll find a grid. You’ll notice that each of the four columns correspond to what we’ve been talking about this week. The columns are like the fuel gauge on your car. If everything in your life in the particular area is going great, perfect, you could not do any better, then your fuel gauge would be at the top: full tank! But if you’re feeling that you are completely depleted, if you have absolutely nothing in that area, then the gauge will be at the bottom: empty tank.

At this moment in your life, where is your fuel level in each of the areas?

*Heart:* how healthy and deep is your relationship with God?

*Soul:* how are your words and actions reflecting God’s love in your daily life?

*Mind:* how well are you using your intellect to learn more about God and who God has made you to be?

*Strength:* how well do you know, and how well are you using your gifts and talents?

Don’t overthink your answers!

Remember that this is just a snapshot of where you are right now.



week two: understand yourself

day five: fuel level check-up

STRENGTH

MIND

SOUL

HEART

- 10 full tank!
- 9 no problem
- 8 almost full
- 7 okay level
- 6 above half
- 5 half tank
- 4 stop soon
- 3 getting low
- 2 on fumes
- 1 empty tank



“ One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

— Mark 12:28-31

”

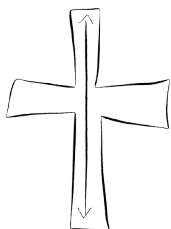
One of the knocks on the Christian church is that we are profoundly inward-focused, that we are only interested in faith inside the walls of the church building.

Putting together the Great Commandment and Great Commission, it would be impossible to mistake God’s intention for us to be constantly stretching our faith, looking outward, and partnering with God to transform and heal the world.

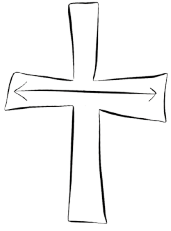
It is true that Christianity has at its core the relationship with God described by Mark 12:30: “*you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.*” With that strong foundation, our actions have power and grace.

But God’s will for our lives does not — and *cannot* — end there.

If you’ve spent any time at all in the modern Christian church, you’ve probably heard about the “vertical” and “horizontal” elements of faith.



The vertical is the faith we looked at in chapters two and three: the relationship between us and God. When our “fuel gauges” are at full for loving God with all our heart, all our soul, all our mind, and all our strength, then we are best able to lead from a place of peace and joy.



The horizontal is the faith portrayed in Mark 12, verse 31: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*” It represents the relationship between us and the people around us.

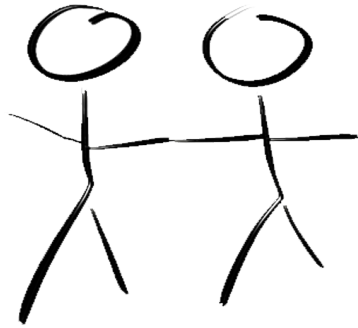
But we do not reach out into the world alone. That is why Jesus’s last words in the gospel of Matthew are so beautiful. Jesus reminds his disciples: “*And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.*”

The great I AM is with us as we seek to “help God’s people take the next faithful step.” We have been given the responsibility — and the joy! — of sharing God’s love with all those around us in ways that they can understand, and drawing them closer to God’s love with our words and actions.

#### QUESTION:

How prepared do you feel right now to step out in faith to lead? What would give you more confidence to do so?

#### NOTES



**serve.**

week three



---

“ Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

— Matthew 28:18-20

”

---

So, what is “leadership”? It’s is one of those terms that gets thrown around rather haphazardly. Depending on the speaker or the context, it can reference radically different concepts: persuasive influence, authoritative arm-twisting, organizational activity.

It can be defined as being vested in a particular individual, being shared within a group, or toggling back and forth between group and individual. It can be symbolic or concrete, structured or loose, forceful or gentle. It can be a relationship or a role. It can be goal-oriented or process-centered.

In his book *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*, Joseph Rost asserted that “leadership is a word that has come to mean all things to all people.”<sup>14</sup>

In an attempt to simplify things, I went back to the basics: a plain old-fashioned dictionary, albeit the modern online version thereof: [www.merriam-webster.com](http://www.merriam-webster.com).

This is the definition of “leadership” that popped up:

- (1) the office or position of a leader,
- (2) the capacity to lead,
- (3) an act or instance of leading.

Okay, that’s a start. But even such a simple definition has its issues, in addition to problematically using forms of the term “lead” within the definition of leadership.

Definition (1) tells us that the only people in leadership are those with the official position of leader, something that you could print on a business card. And if leadership is defined by the ability to lead (definition 2), that necessarily implies that not everyone possesses the ability to lead. Finally (3) if you are not actively engaged in an officially sanctioned leadership position, then you are not actually a leader.

I did not find those definitions terribly helpful or illuminating. So, next I searched the dictionary for the definition of “leader.” A leader is ... are you ready for it? ... “a person or thing that leads.”

Yep. Thanks a lot for that clarification.

Is leadership really that vague, context-specific, and difficult to define? Together we’re going to find out! Over the next few days and weeks, we’ll be taking a deep look at leadership. What it means. Who leads, and how. And most importantly: why.

#### QUESTION:

If someone asked you right now to define “leadership” in less than 30 words, how would you answer?

#### NOTES



---

“ Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

— Matthew 28:18-20

”

---

Today we’re going to take a super-quick pass through words used in the Old Testament to express different aspects of leadership. Many words in Hebrew are interestingly nuanced, and it is telling that the catch-all English “leader” is represented by the varied words below.

The Hebrew word *nasi*’ is frequently translated as leader, prince, captain, or ruler. It has the meaning of “one who is lifted up.”<sup>15</sup> This resonates with many of our stereotypical modern ideas of leaders as the one in the spotlight, the person on the pedestal, the figurehead.

*Nasi*’ is similar to another word translated as leader, prince, ruler: *nagid*. Like *nasi*’, the root of *nagid* also indicates being lifted up, but here specifically being “placed high, conspicuous before a person.”<sup>16</sup>

A form of *nagid* — *l<sup>e</sup>neged* — is used in verses such as 2 Samuel 22:23: “For all his ordinances were before me, and from his statutes I did not turn aside.” The *nagid* leader can therefore be seen as one who is held up before the people to be an example.

The Hebrew *ro’sh* is translated leader, but its literal meaning is “head.”<sup>17</sup> This does overlap with the above two words, as the head is the top — the “lifted up part” — of the body. The understanding of the “head” as the one in charge is reflected in the English language, as well (e.g., department head, headquarters). Variations of *ro’sh* are also used in other contexts to speak of people and things that are the first, the highest, the best.



*Mashal* means to rule, have dominion, to govern.<sup>18</sup> This word, used in Genesis 45:26 to refer to Joseph’s governance of the land of Egypt, is also used in the description of the fourth day of creation: “*God set them [the sun and moon] in the dome of the sky to give light upon the earth, to rule over the day and over the night...*” The flavor of this word is of organization, administration, direction.

In addition to these, there are words translated as “leader” which have a much more confined sense, such as *melek* (“king”) and *sar* (“prince”).

We also have the Hebrew *’ayil*. This word is used in several other places in the Old Testament as simply “ram.”<sup>19</sup> This word is used in Exodus 15:15 as leader, as in “leader of a flock.” This is the only instance of the word being used in this way in the Old Testament, and it is not used politely: “*Then the chiefs of Edom were dismayed; trembling seized the leaders of Moab; all the inhabitants of Canaan melted away.*” But even this once-off, negatively-portrayed metaphor for leadership has interesting implications: the preponderance of Old Testament verses using *’ayil* reference not leadership per se, but a ram used as a sacrifice for forgiveness of sins.

#### QUESTION:

How do you see each of these playing out in the leadership of Jesus you see in the New Testament? How do you see them reflected in the actions of other people in scripture? In our world today?

#### NOTES



---

“ Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

— Matthew 28:18-20

”

---

There are overlaps in leadership descriptions between the Old and New Testaments. The Greek word *prōtos* means first in a series involving time, space or set.<sup>20</sup> In terms of leadership it denotes prominence, influence, and importance.<sup>21</sup> As such, it has similarities with the Hebrew *ro 'sh*, indicating first or best. This word can be seen in English words such as prototype or protocapitalism.

*Ro 'sh* and *prōtos* also have a connection with the Greek word *kephalēn*, meaning “head,” which is used in verses such as Acts 4:11 to denote “first or chief” and in Ephesians 1:33 to describe Christ as the “head of the church.”

*Prōtos* also has similarities with the Greek *archon*. This word for leader shares its root with the Greek *arche* used to begin the Gospel of John: “*In the beginning [En archē] was the Word.*” Like *prōtos*, *archon* indicates primacy: a high official, ruler, commander, chief.<sup>22</sup>

The Greek word from which we get our English hegemony is *hegέomai*. The definition of hegemony is (1) preponderant influence or authority over others, (2) the social, cultural, ideological, or economic influence exerted by a dominant group.

Interestingly, the Greek root has a very different overtone. It does mean to lead, or to have authority, but is associated with wisdom resulting from deep consideration.<sup>23</sup> *Hegέomai* refers to leadership through guidance as a culmination of deliberation of facts and context.

Another interesting, but rare, word for leadership is *kathegetes*. This word appears only twice in the New Testament — both in Matthew 23:10 — and most English translations do not render it as “leader.” Other translations are “instructor,” “teacher,” and “master.” However, “leader” is an additional possible translation.<sup>24</sup> The *New American Standard Bible* translates *kathegetes* in this way: “Do not be called leaders; for One is your Leader, that is, Christ.” If this word is to be included in our understanding of leadership, it would most closely resemble *hegéomai*, as a wise guide.

Contrast this with the term *dynatos*, which, in many ways, mirrors the modern cultural flavor of a leader as someone who possesses power and influence. *Dynatos* is linguistically connected to the Greek word for power and strength, *dynamis*. This is leadership created and maintained through strength and influence.<sup>25</sup> *Dynatos* speaks to the ability — the capacity — to lead.

There are other “leadership” words in the New Testament — such as *archisynagogos* (ruler of a synagogue), *krinó* (κρίνω, to rule over people), *basileus* (to rule as a king with complete authority), or *exousiazó* (to rule or reign by exercising authority) — but the above terms give a good, quick overview of the available Hebrew and Greek words which we translate wholesale as “leader.”

#### QUESTION:

Which (if any) of these do you think might work well as a definition of leadership in the church? Why?

#### NOTES



---

“ Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me; but if you do not, then believe me because of the works themselves. Very truly, I tell you, the one who believes in me will also do the works that I do and, in fact, will do greater works than these, because I am going to the Father.”

— John 14:11-12

”

---

The definitions of leadership we’ve covered from Hebrew and Greek are based primarily on a human understanding of leadership. But if we view leadership through the lens of a relational system with God, we must consider how it is that God leads us, and model our leadership accordingly. Because — over and over again — Jesus took our temporal ideas of what a leader looks like, and turned them inside out.

The idea of a leader as the one who is first, the highest, the one to be most honored was shattered by Jesus. Although Jesus was eventually understood to be the “head” of the church (*ro’sh* and *kephalēn*), during his lifetime he would say, “*Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head.*”

His was not a place of honor among the elite of the land. As the Son of God Jesus was certainly the first (*prōtos*) among the creation to which he had come, but he was not recognized for his power or glory. The family chosen to raise the baby until he became a man was not influential or worldly, but impoverished and humble. How this must affect our understanding of Christian leadership is unmistakably clear. In Jesus’s own words:

*You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.*

Then we have the concept of a leader as being the one “lifted up” (*nasi*) to be admired. Instead of being honored as a leader to emulate, Jesus was lifted up with his hands and feet nailed to a criminal’s cross: “And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” Although he possessed limitless power (*dynatos*), he did not use that power for himself, but only to heal and to demonstrate God’s power.

He did not seek positional authority (*melek, sar*), but refused outright to be named as a worldly leader: “*Jesus, knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, withdrew again to a mountain by himself.*” Jesus’s authority for leadership was not bestowed upon him, but was a part of his very nature. Nearing the time of his execution, he proclaimed: “*My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place.*”

Through his life, death, and resurrection, Jesus was the true teacher (*kathegetes*) and the genuinely wise guide (*hegeomai*). Jesus — the One through whom all things were made and in whom we live and move and have our being — this same Jesus was willing to put aside power and privilege and glory to teach and guide us. To lead us.

#### QUESTION:

Think of someone whose leadership has made an impact on your life. How did he or she lead? What in particular about that person’s leadership style was most impressive to you?

#### NOTES



---

“ Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

— Matthew 28:18-20

”

---

The *Merriam-Webster* definition of “lead” is of a transitive verb, which requires a direct object. A transitive verb without an object is incomplete. Lacking an object, it makes no sense.

Likewise, leadership requires an object.

The purpose, the reason, the *raison d’être* of Christian leadership is the people entrusted to our care.

In my first class at Wesley Theological Seminary, I heard Dr. Lovett Weems give one of the most helpful — and concise — definitions of leadership within the context of the Christian church:

“Leadership is helping God’s people take the next faithful step.”<sup>26</sup>

Supported by the foundation of loving God with heart, soul, mind, and strength, Christian leaders are called to reach out in love to those around us, helping them to take their next step in the direction of God’s love.

Think about Jesus’s next words: “*You shall love your neighbor as yourself.*”

In this verse, Jesus is using the future indicative form of the verb *agapaó* — *agapēseis*: “you shall love.”

You shall love. You, right there. You, reading this. You!

The “Great Commandment” from Mark 12:28-31 that we have been using to guide our discussion, and its parallel verses in Matthew 22, have a corresponding text in the scripture reading that started today’s pages. This passage is often called the “Great Commission.”

It begins: “*Therefore go and make disciples of all nations.*”

“Go,” Jesus tells us.

The Greek here is *poreuomai*, which means to go. But it does not mean to simply head out, to leave, and then to be done with the action.<sup>27</sup>

*Poreuomai* means to travel, to journey, to conduct one’s life.

All that Jesus is asking us to do here — reaching out to people, bringing them into the community of faith, teaching them, healing, showing love in ways they can understand — all that is to be a part of our everyday, our working, our living. It is to be a part of our leading.

As we go... we are called to lead others in taking the next faithful step toward God’s love.

QUESTION:

How do we “lead” with our daily lives? What could this mean for you? Have you ever thought of yourself as a leader? How have you led in the past?

NOTES



“ One of the scribes came near and heard them disputing with one another, and seeing that he answered them well, he asked him, “Which commandment is the first of all?” Jesus answered, “The first is, ‘Hear, O Israel: the Lord our God, the Lord is one; you shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ The second is this, ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these.”

— Mark 12:28-31

”

One of the definitions of “leader” from *Merriam-Webster* is this: “to guide, especially by going in advance.”<sup>28</sup> In a simple nutshell form, that is exactly what the Christian leader is to do: lovingly accompany people in their walk with God, ushering them closer to God’s love with every step.

And every Christian has that capacity. No matter how long you have been following Christ, no matter what your talents and resources are, every single Christ-follower has within them the call to lead people closer to God.

You may never have considered yourself a leader before. Or perhaps you’ve been leading for years. But you are a leader.

We can make leadership — and faith — so very, very, very complicated. We can make it so intimidating and confusing. But when he was asked what was the most important commandment, Jesus answered simply: “*Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and all your mind,*” and “*Love your neighbor as yourself.*”

That’s it!  
Fabulously straightforward.  
And deeply challenging.

Love God with everything that is in you, and love the people around you with the same kind of love you have for yourself.



Thank you for taking part in this *Love. Understand. Serve.* study. I pray that your leadership — in whatever context you find yourself — will reflect how well you love God, understand yourself, and joyfully serve others.

Because if we can lead like that, there is no telling what God can do through us!

May God bless you and yours, this day and always,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Hedy".

#### FINAL NOTES

- <sup>1</sup> Online: [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/love](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/love).
- <sup>2</sup> *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*
- <sup>3</sup> Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, *Faust: Der Tragodie Erster Teil*
- <sup>4</sup> Kallistos Ware, “God Immanent yet Transcendent: The Divine Energies according to Saint Gregory Palamas” in *In Whom We Live and Move and Have Our Being*
- <sup>5</sup> Paul S. Fiddes, “Participating in the Trinity” in *Perspectives in Religious Studies*
- <sup>6</sup> Michael Polanyi, *Personal Knowledge: Towards a Post-Critical Philosophy*
- <sup>7</sup> Ronald A. Heifetz and Marty Linsky, *Leadership on the Line: Staying Alive Through the Dangers of Leading*
- <sup>8</sup> C.S. Lewis, *Miracles*
- <sup>9</sup> *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
- <sup>10</sup> *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*
- <sup>11</sup> Online: [dictionary.reference.com/browse/psyche](http://dictionary.reference.com/browse/psyche)
- <sup>12</sup> Michael Frost, *Incarnate: The Body of Christ in an Age of Disengagement*
- <sup>13</sup> Kenneth J. McFayden, *Strategic Leadership for a Change: Facing Our Losses, Finding Our Future*
- <sup>14</sup> Joseph C. Rost, *Leadership for the Twenty-First Century*
- <sup>15</sup> *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
- <sup>16</sup> *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
- <sup>17</sup> *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
- <sup>18</sup> *The Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament*
- <sup>19</sup> *The Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon*
- <sup>20</sup> *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*
- <sup>21</sup> *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
- <sup>22</sup> *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
- <sup>23</sup> *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*
- <sup>24</sup> *Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament*
- <sup>25</sup> *The UBS Greek New Testament*
- <sup>26</sup> Scott Cormode, as quoted in Lovett H. Weems, Jr., *Take the Next Step: Leading Lasting Change in the Church*
- <sup>27</sup> *Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*
- <sup>28</sup> Online: [www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lead](http://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/lead)

---

“ *I thank my God every time I remember you, constantly praying with joy in every one of my prayers for all of you, because of your sharing in the gospel from the first day until now. I am confident of this, that the one who began a good work among you will bring it to completion by the day of Jesus Christ.*

— Philippians 1:3-6

”

---



love.  
understand.  
serve.

RECAPTURING JOY-FILLED LEADERSHIP

written by rev. hedy collver  
[www.loveunderstandserve.org](http://www.loveunderstandserve.org)