

Introduction:

In his book, “The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership” John Maxwell tells the story of two leaders and their teams. In 1911, two teams set off to be the first to reach the South Pole. Norwegian explorer Roald Amundsen and British naval officer Robert Falcon Scott both led their teams on these incredible missions. Amundsen was a great leader and explorer. Before setting off, he studied the ways of the Eskimos and other experienced arctic travelers. He decided to take dogsleds. He chose expert skiers and dog handlers to be part of his team. He stocked easily found depots along the route to make sure they didn’t have to carry all their supplies on their backs. Their trip was highly successful. They were the first to make it to the South Pole by more than a month and the worst problem they experienced was an infected tooth that had to be extracted from one of the team members.

Scott, on the other hand, was definitely the inferior leader. Not having studied what was needed, he decided to use motorized sledges and ponies. Five days into the trip, the sledges stopped working. The ponies could not handle the frigid temperatures and had to be killed when they reached the Transantarctic Mountains. Scott had chosen poor clothes, causing most of his team to suffer from chronic frostbite. The goggles were poor causing his team to become snow blind. He did not stock his depots well so they were always low on food and water. Plus, he decided at the last minute to add a fifth team member, though they had only prepared for four. When they finally arrived at the South Pole, they discovered the Norwegian flag. But Scott’s poor leadership didn’t end there. He decided his men should collect and carry another 30 pounds of geologic specimen, extra weight to be carried by already weakened and sick men. Their progress became slower and slower. One man simply sank into a stupor and died. Another man, believing he had become a hindrance and a danger to the remaining teammates walked out of the camp and into the blizzard to die. Finally, the remaining three, having traveled 10 weeks to the South Pole and two months back home were still 150 miles from their base camp. They stopped there and died. We know their story because they spent their last hours writing in their diaries, which were discovered later.

What made the difference between a toothache and 5 deaths? Leadership. Leadership made all the difference. Leadership makes the difference in countries. Leadership makes the difference in companies. Leadership makes the difference in churches. And leadership makes the difference in our homes. Every one of us is concerned about our homes and our families. The difference in the family will not be made by the jobs you hold, the houses in which you live, the schooling of your children. The difference will be made in leadership. What will that look like in the godly home?

Discussion:

- I. Who is the leader?
 - A. If I were to put out a questionnaire asking who is the leader in the home, I am guessing the almost universal answer would be—the husband or the father. After all, we know that the wife is told to submit to the husband in **Ephesians 5:22**. He must be the leader. This is, perhaps, one of the biggest mistakes we make regarding leadership in the home. Now don’t get me wrong, the husband and father should exercise leadership. In that sense, he is a leader in the home. But if he is *the leader* of the home, your home is going the wrong way. According to **Proverbs 14:12; 16:25**, “There is a way that seems right to a man but its end is the way to death.” If we men continue to think we are *the* leaders of our homes, we are leading our families to death.
 - B. If we want life for our families, then God must be the leader. **Psalms 127:1** says unless our house is built by the Lord, everything we do to build it is done in vain. We may burn the candle at both ends. We may provide all the things we never got. We may put them in the best schools, provide them the best tutors, get them into the best professions, pay for the nicest homes, cars, and clothes. We may work and work and work, but if we are leading the home instead of letting God lead our homes, everything we are doing is in vain. Paul even pointed out God’s leadership in **I Corinthians 11:3**. Yes, the husband is head of the wife, but Jesus is the head of man and God is the head of Jesus.
 - C. We must not miss how important this is. Many a husband and father have thought that they were *the* leaders of their homes. They used that as a whip to beat wives and children into submission to their dreams and goals. They saw the rest of the family as tools to accomplish their

mission and their ends. Not so. God is our leader and everything we do in our interim leadership role must be in submission to Him. Who is the leader of the home? God.

II. Where is He leading us?

- A. No doubt, God is leading us to heaven. According to **I Peter 1:3-5**, we know there is an inheritance reserved for us in heaven. God is leading us to that inheritance. However, I believe there is more to God's leadership than simply leading us to our eternal inheritance and reward.
- B. The means by which we attain that eternal goal is established in **Philippians 3:7-11**. God is leading us to have a relationship with Jesus. He wants us to get to know Jesus above all other things. Remember Mary and Martha in **Luke 10:38-42**? Mary's great choice was spending time knowing Jesus.
- C. However, this relationship with Jesus is for a purpose. Look again at **Philippians 3:7-11**. The purpose for getting to know Jesus is that we might have the righteousness that comes from faith in Jesus. Isn't that what we are hungering and thirsting for? We should be according to **Matthew 5:6**.
- D. We need to understand that God has not saved us simply to save us. He has saved us to bring us to righteousness that we might be zealous for good works (**Titus 2:11-14**). God is not simply leading us to our own salvation. He is leading us to be a force of righteousness and good even in this world. Paul made the same point in **Ephesians 2:10**. God has created us to walk in His good works.
- E. Finally, all of this leadership is intended to accomplish God's great purpose: His glory. **Ephesians 1:6, 12, 14** demonstrate God's great goal in His leadership of us. He has redeemed us, forgiven us, predestined us in Christ in order that we might be to the praise of His glory. That is the ultimate goal toward which we must journey. That is our destination. While walking on our own, we have fallen short of God's glory (**Romans 3:23**), we have caused shame to be brought on God's name, but God is leading us to be a praise to His glory, just as **I Peter 2:9** demonstrates.

III. Three keys to follow God's lead.

A. Study regularly

1. "Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path," says **Psalms 119:105**. If we walk our own path, we'll end in death. But God's word can lead our families and us to life. Spend time in the word, not because you're a Christian and that's what you have to do. Do it because God's word is the lamp that leads us on the way to life. God's way works.
2. Spend time in God's word individually. Spend time in God's word together as a family. Spend time in God's word with other families. Consider what Jesus said in **Matthew 7:24-27**. If you build your family on the foundation of God's word, when the storms come, you'll overcome. If you build your family on some other foundation, the storms will crush you.

B. Pray fervently

1. **I Thessalonians 5:16-18** says to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, give thanks in every circumstance. Make this a family practice. Make it the anchor for each person in the family and make it the anchor for the family together.
2. **I Peter 5:6-7** teaches us to cast our cares on God because He cares for us. He cares for your family. He cares for your spouse. He cares for your children. He cares for your parents. He cares for you. He won't turn you away. He wants you to bring to Him what is troubling you about your family, your life, your work, everything.
3. Once again, don't do this because it is your Christian duty or daily homework. If prayer becomes merely a daily checklist item, it won't help you follow God's lead. **Ephesians 6:10-18** explains why we need to pray in our homes. We are fighting against powerful enemies that we can't beat. Satan is on the hunt. He is hunting for you, for your spouse, for your kids, for your parents. The big problem is you can't beat him. He is too strong for you. Only God can beat him. That is why we must pray. Prayer is the means by which we connect to the only power that can beat our enemy.

C. Trust completely

1. In **Hebrews 11:8**, we witness Abraham's faith. He followed God's lead even when He did not know where he was being led. We need to do the same. We need to learn to trust God completely, doing things His way.
2. **Romans 8:28** says that God will work everything out for our good if we love Him. To me, this means that my job is to love God. His job is to take care of the outcomes. Too often, I want to perform His job. I want to manipulate and control the outcomes. I want to know that things are going to work out in a certain way and then push them that direction. However, once again we'll remember that the way that seems right to man leads to death. My job today is to love God. Practically speaking, my job is simply to do what God wants me to. His job is to make everything work out for good in the end. My job is to do the next right thing. His job is to deal with the outcomes. When I find myself saying things like, "I know God says I'm supposed to talk to someone I'm mad at, but that would just cause problems in this situation," then I'm not trusting God. I'm trying to manipulate the outcome to where I want it. I have to read this verse over and over again to remind me that our job is to do the next right thing, God's job is to handle the outcomes. We need to trust Him that He knows what He is doing with the outcomes. As **Matthew 7:9-11** demonstrates, God will give us good gifts and work things out for our good. We may not be able to see how that will happen right now, but we can trust God that it will.

IV. Leading under God's guidance

- A. It is true that God is *the* leader of our homes. However, as we live out our lives sometimes we must assume the role of leadership within the home. Sometimes this may be the husband leading the wife, the parents leading the children, older siblings leading younger ones. Sometimes it may be that those who ought to take up the leadership mantle refuse and others must lead in the home. I want to share six principles that show godly leadership in the home no matter what role of leadership you are filling.
- B. Love
 1. When God spoke to husbands, He commanded us to love our wives (**Ephesians 5:25**). That love is transmitted by nourishing and cherishing our wives (**Ephesians 5:28-29**). Love is the heart of godly leadership. **I Timothy 1:5** explains that the goal of all our instruction is love. If our leadership is not anchored in love, then we aren't really leading, we are manipulating.
 2. **I Corinthians 13:4-7** defines love for us. We need to work on doing more than just saying, "I love you," though we need to say it loud and often. We need to demonstrate it by being kind to our family, being patient with our family, not boasting or being arrogant, etc. Can you say these things about your relationship with your family?
- C. Sacrificially serve
 1. In **Ephesians 5:25**, God explained how far we must take our love if we would lead in submission to Him. He told husbands to be like Jesus in the home, sacrificing themselves for their wives. Sadly, too often leadership is seen as directing others to sacrifice for us. Jesus turns that idea on its head in His school of leadership. He didn't lead us to sacrifice for Him. He sacrificed Himself for us.
 2. In **Luke 22:24-27**, Jesus explained that leadership in His kingdom means serving. If we would be great in His kingdom, we must become small in our own eyes. If our leadership is directing others to be our servants, we aren't leading God's way. We should lead with sacrificial service.
- D. Envision the goal
 1. In **Ephesians 5:27**, we see an integral part of Jesus' leadership. Jesus didn't simply sacrifice Himself for us willy-nilly. He didn't just act and react. He had a plan. He had a goal. He was working toward the goal of presenting the church without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing, that the church might be holy and without blemish. He saw His goal and was willing to sacrifice Himself to get us there.
 2. We need to see the same goal. Jesus did whatever it took to help us be sanctified and walking His path to heaven. If we are not focused on helping our family achieve that goal, we may get a great deal done, but in the end it won't matter one bit. Again, remember Mary and Martha. Martha was doing good stuff, but Jesus said only Mary's choice would not be taken

away from her (**Luke 10:42**). Martha's would be taken away. God may use us to do a great many things as we walk His path, leading our family to a relationship with Jesus, but if we put any of those other things before a relationship with Jesus, they will all be taken away.

3. Merit scholarships are great, but if our kids don't know Jesus, what good are they? Nice houses are nice, but if our spouses don't know Jesus, what good are they? Big paychecks are exciting, but if our families don't know Jesus, what good are they? When we stand before God in judgment, He won't ask us if we made straight A's, which side of the tracks we lived on, or what was our bottom line. He'll ask us to see if Jesus is our friend. Keep your eyes on that goal with your family.
- E. Empower, don't control
1. Have you ever noticed how Jesus led the apostles? He never once made them do anything. He didn't force them to follow Him. He didn't make them teach His will. He didn't coerce them to perform miracles. Instead, He empowered them to accomplish what He wanted and taught them how to do it. **Luke 9:1-6** demonstrates this.
 2. Sadly, when I want to lead, I often want to control. I want my wife and kids to do what I want, the way I want them to do it, without any room for judgment or initiative. I micromanage their actions, calling into question every little detail, disciplining every little variance. They are not allowed to feel what I don't want them to feel. They are not allowed to question. They are not allowed even volunteer. I claim leadership and authority and press them into service my way.
 3. God hasn't done that to us. Certainly, He has a way and if we would be saved, we must live God's way. But God doesn't force and control us. He empowers us as Jesus did with the apostles. Leadership in the home should do the same. Instead of the manipulative control of our spouse and children, forcing them to look as we want them to look to gain the approval of the world around us, we need to point the way to the goal and help empower our family to go that direction. That means helping them learn their strengths. Helping them see their worth. Demonstrating to them their usefulness in God's kingdom and providing them with instruction, guidance, and opportunities to be part of God's plan.
- F. Get counsel
1. One of the biggest downfalls most leaders make is thinking they don't need help, that they know all the answers. Don't make that mistake in your home. Develop relationships with other Christians who can provide you with good counsel and advice. **Proverbs 15:22** says, "Without counsel plans fail, but with many advisers they succeed." The home is no different.
 2. Get counsel from your shepherds. Get counsel from older Christians. Get counsel from Christians who have families that look the way you want yours to. Go beyond just getting counsel yourself, let your family develop relationships with these counselors. Let them have spiritual parents and siblings, let them have a spiritual community with which they can grow and develop. Don't ever think you can lead all on your own.
- G. Shepherd
1. **Psalms 23** provides the last guideline for us. God's ultimate picture of a leader is not a dictator, it is not a king, it is not a ruler. God's ultimate picture of a leader is the shepherd. If we would be leaders in our home (or anywhere for that matter) we need to follow the shepherding model.
 2. Shepherds spend time with their sheep, leading them to rest and renewal. Shepherds protect their sheep. Shepherds feed their sheep. Shepherds do correct and discipline the sheep, but for the sheep's good, not to assuage the shepherd's anger or embarrassment. Shepherds give their lives in service of their sheep. As **Ezekiel 34:2-6** demonstrates, shepherds are to strengthen the weak, heal the sick, bind up the injured, bring back the straying, seek the lost. They are not to rule with force and harshness, but through love are to take care of the sheep. In our homes, we must not be like the rotten shepherds of Israel, but like God the good shepherd.

Conclusion:

John Maxwell says, "Everything rises and falls on leadership."¹ The home is no exception. Who's really leading your home?

¹ John Maxwell, *Developing the Leader Within You*, Thomas Nelson Publishers, Nashville, TN, 1993, p x.