
BOOK REVIEW

FAITHFUL LEADERS AND THE THINGS THAT MATTER MOST

By: RICO TICE

Charlotte, NC: The Good Book Company, 2021

111 pp. paperback

ISBN 978-1-78498-580-6

In the book *Faithful Leaders and the Things That Matter Most*, author Rico Tice delivers a short yet powerful pastoral perspective of faithful leadership that can be applied in any context and role. He suggests key principles for becoming a faithful leader: “define success, fight your sin, lead yourself, and serve your church” (18). The primary audience for this book is those serving in or seeking to serve in pastoral roles that include preaching and teaching the Word of God.

In Matthew 25:23, Jesus says, “His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful servant. You have been faithful over a little; I will set you over much. Enter into the joy of your master.’”¹ In this parable, Jesus discusses the responsibility of the servant to faithfully produce results with the portion of money given to him. The ultimate test of the servant’s success was his ability to use what he was given and deliver results according to his ability.

In *Faithful Leaders*, Tice defines failure as “being successful at the things that don’t matter” and success as “hearing ‘*Well done*’ from the only lips that matter” (19). Tice suggests that one way to achieve this is that the preacher must be intentional in handling the Word of God with care in a manner that keeps the message of God at the center of the message.

Tice intentionally places emphasis on the responsibility of the leader’s spiritual self-care. In Chapter Two, he discusses the challenge of fighting your sin. He emphasizes the urgency of repentance in the life of the leader to make progress. He states, “The problem is

¹ Matthew 25:23 English Standard Version (ESV)

sin, and sin needs to be dealt with, and all the prayers in the world will make no difference until it is” (43).

Tice references the biblical account of the life of Achan (Joshua, Chapter Seven) and the effect his refusal to confess his sins had on his family. In comparing Achan’s lack of repentance until he was under fire, Tice writes, “The pastor and theologian Jack Miller famously put it like this: If the pastor is not the chief repenter, the gospel becomes a theoretical solution for the theoretical problem of sin, for the theoretical sinners—should there be any present” (56). Tice stresses the need for the leader to be honest with God by dealing with their sin, which is the only way to receive forgiveness.

Leaders must first lead themselves. Tice states, “You cannot lead others well if you cannot lead yourself well” (61). He goes on to discuss two feelings that every leader must address if they will effectively lead others: resentment and thanksgiving. He states, “resentment is the child of envy, and envy is how idolatry feels, and thanksgiving is the cure for resentment” (65). He challenges the reader to consider their three greatest struggles (sins). This challenge presents the leader with an uncomfortable position to examine ways to apply what they are teaching about God’s forgiveness and grace. Tice provides a diagram that encourages the leader to manage their “thinking, feeling, physical health, and behavior and choices” (62).

Leadership can be lonely if one allows it to be. Tice suggests a necessary element for every faithful pastor to have a pastor that can provide “CIA—confidentiality, intimacy, and accountability” (81). In Galatians 6:1-2 the Apostle Paul encourages believers to hold one another accountable with a spirit of gentleness. This is what Tice refers to as CIA, a safe space where the leader can be transparent enough to experience the forgiveness and restoration that only God can give.

When the leader can lead themselves in a manner that honors God, they will be empowered to lead others. Tice concludes Chapter Four by discussing the choice to serve the church. This essentially challenges the leader to examine their motives for serving. He suggests asking if my motivation is “self-serving or self-sacrifice, power or service, security or suffering” (89-94). The book concludes with a charge for the leader, “Instead, whoever wants

to become great must be a servant—a servant who knows that success is being faithful in the things that really matter, and so who defines success biblically, fights their sin ruthlessly, leads themselves carefully, and serves their church wholeheartedly” (104).

This book provides a four-point powerful set of tools for anyone serving as a pastor. The challenges the leader faces require a response reflecting God’s power at work in their life. *Faithful Leaders and the Things That Matter Most* is a must-have book for any pastor that serves with the goal of hearing the Master say, “well done, good and faithful servant.”

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