



THE FAITH-DRIVEN LEADER DEVOTIONAL

A Reflection on Personal Mission Integration



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INTRODUCTION

If you're reading this, the term "mission integration" likely conjures up some thoughts and feelings in your head. What it should look like, how it should be implemented, whether or not it's being done well -- all of these things swirling around in your mind.

As faith-based organizations like hospitals and nonprofits move forward in today's landscape, the leaders at those companies are becoming increasingly concerned with mission integration and how to incorporate it well. On one hand, that's a great thing. Being more intentional about putting tangible missional elements in place is crucial to having any sort of mission component be successful. However, when "mission integration" becomes somewhat of a buzzword, it can breed a sense of complacency or make the initiatives seem like another list of to-dos in operating an organization.

Mission integration is not just a job title or even simply a key results area. It's a way of doing things both personally and professionally, for leaders and their organizations. If, as a leader, you are championing certain values for the organization, they should also apply to you personally.

This devotional is intended to be a two-week focused reflection on how you as a leader in a faith-based organization reflect the not only the missional values of your organization but the Gospel of Christ in our day-to-day lives. It's time all members of the organization — but primarily the leadership — internalize these values and display them in how they work on a daily basis. It's not just one person's job to make sure missional components are being exemplified by the company. It's yours -- and you have the unique ability to influence others by example.

As you spend time in this devotional, consider practical ways you can implement your core values in the day-to-day, whether that means interacting with your staff, making decisions for the organization or navigating your personal life. Whatever we do, we do to the glory of God.

Our Lives Are Not Our Own

Mark 8:34-37

And calling the crowd to him with his disciples, he said to them, “If anyone would come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me. ³⁵ For whoever would save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for my sake and the gospel’s will save it. ³⁶ For what does it profit a man to gain the whole world and forfeit his soul? ³⁷ For what can a man give in return for his soul?

(ESV)

As our busy lives roll from one day to the next, packed to the brim with work, family and all manner of to-dos, it's easy to become entrenched in the belief that it all revolves around us. That not only is our life centered around our own happiness, but it depends on us to keep moving. We find ourselves driven by self-interest and our own schedule, whether we are conscious of it or not. Or, perhaps more common for those in faith-based work, we are consumed by trying to get everything done for the ultimate goal of serving others. God's Word says we are to die to ourselves — namely, our self-interest — every day. As believers, our lives are no longer our own. Scripture says we have been bought with a price — the cost of Jesus' death. We are but a microscopic piece in the grand scheme of God's story. But he cares about us individually because we are His. Remembering that our lives are not our own will serve us well in our careers, as well as bring us peace, knowing that no achievement or zeroed-out inbox will ever do what Jesus has already done for us, and that those things pale in comparison to His glory. Armed with this truth, we press onward to the calling He's given us, understanding that our day-to-day is not all about us — or even all about our organization — but all about Him. Take some time to reflect on this idea today and how it can apply to you personally as you lead others in your organization.

How does keeping this in perspective help you navigate your day in a way that is more representative of Christ?



A Living Sacrifice

Romans 12:1

I appeal to you therefore, brothers, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable to God, which is your spiritual worship.

(ESV)

In the Old Testament, animal sacrifices were offered to temporarily salve the Lord's wrath — a wrath we undeniably deserved as retribution for our sin. Since Adam and Eve, man had been breaking God's law constantly, and because God is just, he requires payment for that sin. Enter the sacrifices. Of course, the blood of a lamb seems small in comparison to breaking the law of the all-creating God. And it was. But even then, God was preparing the world for a day when the Ultimate Sacrifice — His son — would come to die in our place, eliminating the need for us to sacrifice in the way of the Old Testament to please God. Now that we are saved by the grace of God's unconditional love for us, through Jesus, we are to offer our bodies as living sacrifices. This means to dedicate our every day life to Him. Our salvation can never be lost, but as followers of Christ, we are now called to live open-handedly, knowing that nothing is truly our own. We are to offer every part of us as a way to glorify Him and not ourselves. Perhaps this looks different depending on what the day brings: praying for discernment in decision-making or grace in dealing with a difficult conflict. But reminding yourself that everything you do is to be a sacrifice to the One to whom we owe everything not only takes the pressure off us to make much of ourselves but keeps life in perspective.

**In what way can you
offer your life as a
sacrifice to God today?**



Eternal, not Temporary

2 Corinthians 4:18

...For the things that are seen are transient, but the things that are unseen are eternal.

(ESV)

Though the work we do here on earth matters, this world is not our home. As believers we trust that though we live in a fallen world, we will one day get to live with Jesus eternally in Heaven. The things of this world will eventually all fall away. Internalizing this means we fix our eyes on the things that last — the eternal — not the things that are fading away. We make our investments in the spiritual, not the physical — in people's souls, not things. Professional achievements, a busy schedule, even the organization itself will all fade eventually, but if we prioritize the things that remain — loving others, serving Christ and being in relationship with Him — our lives will not be in vain. While professional and personal goals are certainly worthwhile and good, living out the Gospel and helping point others toward Christ, who is the only way to eternal life, is the only investment that will truly outlive us. Remembering we are a small part of a much bigger story helps us take a step back and see our responsibility and privilege as believers and also relieves the stress of many perceived problems in our day-to-day lives, simply by shifting perspectives. Keeping this eternal viewpoint helps bring a sense of peace to our lives, knowing that so many things we worry about on a daily basis are, in fact, temporary. It allows us to steward well the resources God blesses us with, but not get so caught up in the details we overlook our true calling.

Think about a few things that have been causing you worry or stress lately. Are they temporary or eternal? If they are temporary, as so many things are, consider how your feelings and response might change.



Compassion for the Poor

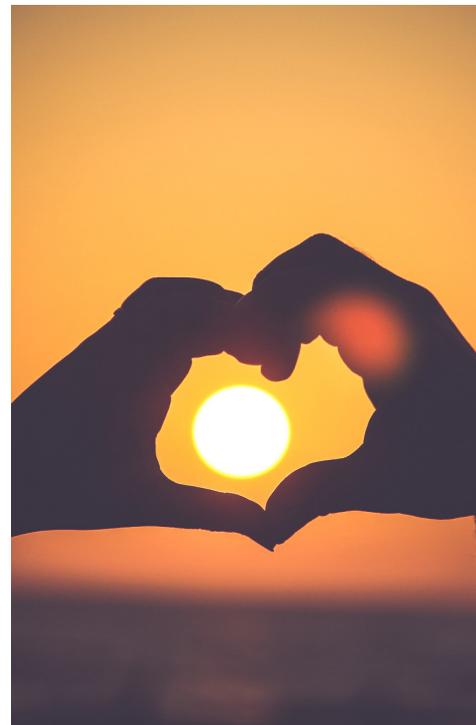
Matthew 25:35-40

‘For I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, ³⁶ I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me.’ ³⁷ Then the righteous will answer him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see you hungry and feed you, or thirsty and give you drink? ³⁸ And when did we see you a stranger and welcome you, or naked and clothe you? ³⁹ And when did we see you sick or in prison and visit you?’ ⁴⁰ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brothers, you did it to me.’

(ESV)

Having compassion for those in need seems like a given. Nearly everyone cares about the fact that many people go hungry every day or lack basic necessities. But in practice, how do we cultivate compassion for those people day in and day out? Many organizations list compassion for those in need as one of their core values, but how do we, as individuals, internalize this value in our personal and professional day-to-day? It doesn't always mean giving money, though that is, of course, helpful. Sometimes it means choosing to look someone in the eye and see them as a real person, God's creation. Sometimes it looks like starting an initiative to solve an issue in the community or simply getting to know someone in a different walk of life than you. Listening to their story, talking less. Partnering with people already doing great work. Cultivating compassion for the poor in our own lives is something we are called to as Christians, but we should also make a part of our day-to-day as leaders and encourage others towards.

**What's one way you
and your team could
cultivate compassion
for those in need today?**



Reverence for All

Genesis 2:27

So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

(ESV)

The Bible says all people are made in the image of God. What an honor and a privilege to carry his likeness! As Genesis states, we were created at his hands, and by our very being, we are His. When we remember this — when we try to see God in every person with whom we interact — we are able to have a greater sense of respect and care for them as individuals. God asks us through His word to work in harmony with one another and show love to everyone, even when it's difficult. In fact, Jesus even takes God's command to love one another a step further in the New Testament, calling us to love not just our neighbor, but our enemies as well. For an organization, recognizing each person's value as God's creation may look like serving everyone with excellence or caring for each person uniquely. For a leader, though, this could mean an internal ego-check or trying to see someone's differing point of view more clearly. Remembering that we are all God's children and bear His likeness should inform how we treat others in our day-to-day lives, regardless of how others respond to us.

Think about a person in your life to whom it may seem difficult to show compassion or love — a coworker, a client, a patient — whoever it may be. How does it change your posture toward them knowing they, like you, are made in the image of God?



Spiritual Care

Ephesians 4:29,32

Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear...

³² Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ forgave you.

(ESV)

While a mission goal of 'spiritual care' may specifically relate to organizations, the concept can be applied to us as individuals as well. As Christians, we are called to walk alongside one another in community, weeping with those who weep and building one another up. The heart of those directives is essentially the same as the one behind 'spiritual care.' It can be especially tempting in a work environment to place blame or even gossip, but as followers of Christ we must hold ourselves to a higher standard, letting "no corrupting talk" come out of our mouths and encouraging one another. We know, however, that we are not perfect and that we will say or do prideful, hurtful or simply unkind things. The important thing is that we continue on to verse 32 - forgive one another as God in Christ forgave us. We ask for forgiveness and forgive others, stumbling through this imperfect life as Christians here on earth together. Reflect on the people you interact with every day. Is there someone you could come alongside as they weep, or even rejoice? Perhaps you feel God convicting you regarding something you've said or done that needs forgiveness. Perhaps you've thought of someone who could use some encouragement.

**Whatever scenarios
are present in your life,
how might you respond
in light of the calling
we have to build one
another up?**



Integrity

Ephesians 4:25

Therefore, having put away falsehood, let each one of you speak the truth with his neighbor, for we are members one of another.

(ESV)

One standard to which all believers are held is integrity, whether or not we are a leader of a faith-based organization. Those around us — especially nonbelievers — should be able to trust in our word and that we will do what we say we are going to do. Mistakes and shortcomings are inevitable, but being upfront in handling them is the difference between integrity and deceitfulness. As Christians we should never sacrifice truthfulness for personal or professional gain, nor should we abandon honesty to save face. We are to be the same in the dark as in the light, speaking the truth in love as we walk alongside one another. It is often tempting to massage the truth or neglect to disclose information that may seem unflattering toward ourselves, but in these scenarios we are called to assume humility and remember that our lives are not about us. By living with integrity we are a testament to God, sacrificing self-interest for His glory.

Think about a time when you were tempted to curb your integrity. How did you react? What would you do the same or differently today in light of these verses?



Servant Leadership

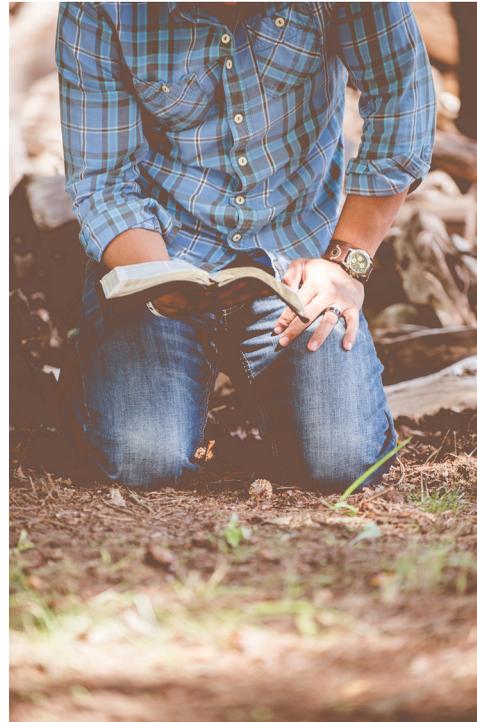
Mark 10:42-45

And Jesus called them to him and said to them, “You know that those who are considered rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. ⁴³ But it shall not be so among you. But whoever would be great among you must be your servant, ⁴⁴ and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. ⁴⁵ For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.”

(ESV)

When we consider the idea of servant leadership, what better example is there than Jesus himself? Though Jesus was fully God, he humbled himself under God the Father's will. He also had every authority to dictate to the people around Him what they *should* be doing and lord his power over man. After all, He is the only person who should do those things. But He doesn't. He washes feet. He makes himself nothing; ultimately sacrificing Himself for us. He consistently pours out grace and patience, leading his disciples toward the truth without forcing their hands. As leaders, we should try to keep this attitude in mind when faced with challenges. Let compassion, grace and humility lead your responses, not anger or pride. Consider how Jesus led his disciples — the ultimate servant-leader.

Reflect today on a challenge you're facing as a leader. How might Christ respond as a servant-leader?



Do Everything with Excellence

Colossians 3:23-24

Whatever you do, work heartily, as for the Lord and not for men, ²⁴ knowing that from the Lord you will receive the inheritance as your reward.

You are serving the Lord Christ.

The concept of doing everything as unto the Lord may seem cliché or obvious when leading a faith-based organization, but it's often easier said than done. While in the thick of it, we can often find ourselves anxiety-ridden about what others may think, or making decisions based out of pride, even simply striving for approval. But this is not the spirit God gives us through Christ. We are to work hard, yes, but to His glory and His alone. In this passage, Paul is reminding the Colossians of their identity in Christ, to not get caught up in the opinions or expectations of man. As the Holy Spirit guides us, and calling upon the wisdom He's given us, we take the next step, confident in that which He's commissioned us and remembering whose we are. And because we do all things for Him — our Creator, who always deserves our absolute best — we do our work to the best of our ability. Remember who you serve today.

In light of this, how does your posture change toward your to-do list today?



Influence Others

Matthew 5:14-16

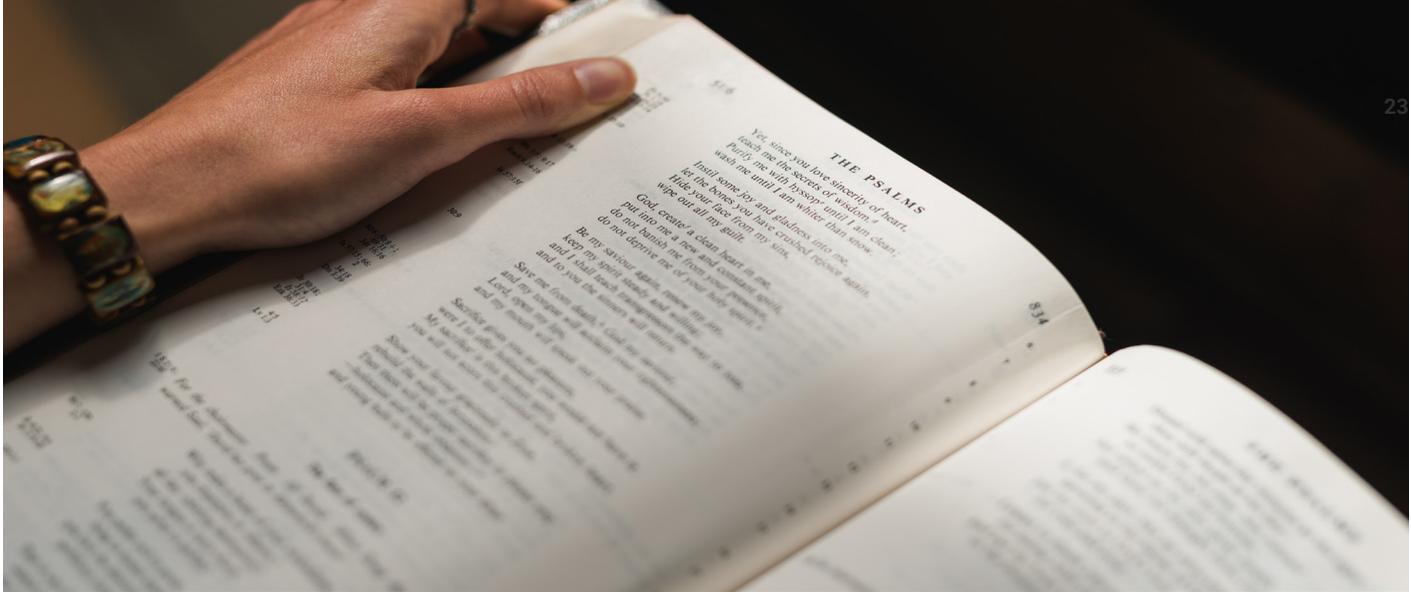
You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. ¹⁵ Nor do people light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a stand, and it gives light to all in the house. ¹⁶ In the same way, let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven.

(ESV)

All believers are called to shine the light of Christ to others, inspiring them to pursue and worship God — not because of anything we do, but because we allow Christ to display Himself through us. As a leader, you are in an even more unique position to set an example in faith. It doesn't mean leaders have to be perfect or Super Christians, but it does mean when Christian leaders make mistakes they are to confess and ask forgiveness, approach others with humility, act with integrity and look to Christ as the ultimate example of how one should lead. If the Spirit is in us, we will bear fruit, and as Scripture says, the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. If we as leaders can allow the Spirit to manifest these things our lives, we set an example to others and inspire them to pursue Christ also.

Choose one of the fruits of the Spirit this week to focus on and see how it affects your own spirit as well as those around you.





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