



A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders

Reggie McNeal

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A Leadership Network Publication

Spiritual leaders must become experts in matters of the heart. They must learn to discern God at work in their own lives, shaping their hearts to embrace the particular ministries to which they are called. *A Work of Heart* shows how God prepares leaders today just as he did in biblical times-and how God creates these leaders in order to share his heart with his people.

A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders Details

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From Reader Review *A Work of Heart: Understanding How God Shapes Spiritual Leaders* for online ebook

Courtney Huskisson says

So good! Gets to the heart, and develops the core of a leader. Highly recommend.

Thomas Christianson says

Written in 2000, it has some insights which are useful today, and other parts which have not aged well (the comparisons between Baby Boomers and Generation Xers are a notable example). As a bonus, I found the enormous humblebrag in his preface hilarious since the whole book is about being a spiritually and emotionally healthy leader.

John Gardner says

In theory, this should have been a good book. It had endorsements from a lot of prominent leaders, and it's premise is very interesting. The author breaks the book up into two parts. In the first, he examines the leadership style and qualities of four Biblical leaders: Moses, David, Paul, and Jesus. In the second, he applies what was gleaned from these leaders to our own lives, breaking these qualities down into six alliterative (he is Baptist, after all) categories: Culture, Call, Community, Communion, Conflict, and Commonplace.

Unfortunately, *A Work of Heart* fails to deliver on its promise. Despite a few practical and pragmatic suggestions that are genuinely good advice for leaders, the theological foundation for most of McNeal's assumptions is terribly weak. I am not entirely sure what his gauge of "success" in ministry is, but it does not appear to be the proclamation of Biblical truth, the genuine conversion of the lost and discipleship of the saved. On the rare occasions when Scripture is used to back up the author's assertions, it is consistently misapplied.

There are plenty of great books on leadership, both sacred and secular. A book which seeks to offer merely pragmatic advice under the guise of a vaguely "Christian" spirituality is ultimately pretty useless. Pass on this one.

Susie says

A great book on how the losses, trials, and difficulties of life and ministry are all part of what God uses to form Christian leaders into disciples of Christ who can be effective in service. A wonderful book to read and go through with fellow leaders.

Chad says

This was a great book. Had a few issues with it getting too real for me but I like books that challenge my mind and my heart.

I have a lot of earmarked pages and a lot of underlined stuff.

Reggie starts out with the stories of Moses, David, Jesus and Paul. We walk alongside them through their lives and consider all that went into preparing them to lead.

Reggie then asks us to consider their subplots: culture, call, community, communion, conflict and the commonplace and how each of these areas impacted their lives. He then challenges us to see how each of these areas has impacted our lives and how they might be preparing us.

Bob says

I've read very few self-help books, but this one seemed well thought out, organized in a way that made the suggestions memorable, and posed practical exercises. Little of it was uniquely relevant to spiritual growth or leadership, as his vocabulary, often drawn from business, politics and the military, makes clear. This is reasonable enough, but what disappointed me was the American Protestant assumptions underlying the whole. McNeal assumes the reader *knows* what to do to follow God's plan for us, and would probably be surprised by approaches like Flannery O'Connor's or Daniel Berrigan's, though to be fair his concerns do not include, and in fact specifically exclude, do-it-yourself spiritual direction.

Reinhard says

This was an intriguing with good insights for any person in leadership of any sort. I especially found the section on communion very helpful in my own life. A lot of life lessons can be learned by reading this book.

Israel Desta says

The author does a good job of highlighting key areas with and through which God moulds us to be spiritual leaders. There are insightful and biblical comments on each area. I would have liked to see more systematic look of these area within the bible stories he shared. Furthermore, i was hoping that the author concludes by saying that spiritual leadership is for every christian. It seems like the author believes it is only for select people, which i don't agree with.

Doug says

Great book for anyone in leadership. I was required to read this book for my internship with Young Life, but it has been one of the most insightful books for me to read about being a leader. Specifically how God shapes

the hearts of Leaders too. I would also add, that this book definitely has the voice of corporate America. I had to read some leadership books for being a CEO type and the way they talk about being a spiritual leader is almost the same as a CEO of a fortune 500 company.

Daniel says

McNeal, in his admirable attempt to observe and identify the qualities of great spiritual leadership biblically employs the narrative of Moses, David, Jesus, and Paul as case studies for behaviors, circumstance, and disciplines worthy of interpretive emulation. The success of this project is unfortunately undermined by what I perceive to be preconceived notions and characteristics of leadership that McNeal too often imposes onto the characters he is using as evidence. Eisegesis creeps in far too often given that he seems to want to use the Biblical witness as the primary source of the nature and practice of spiritual leadership. For example, he creatively imagines that Jesus took on the family carpentry business from Joseph upon Joseph's death. This he uses as an example that Jesus has organizational acumen predating his ministry. McNeal employs this with without mentioning that he is engaging in creative imagination—which is not a particularly thoughtful practice given the state of Biblical-illiteracy in the regular church community. Not to mention that it seems to use this otherwise harmless speculation as though it is an authoritative piece of evidence for nature of a good leader.

The strength of the text lies in the questions it asks at the end of the chapters. These questions invite helpful self-reflection and good opportunities to reorient the practices and course of their leadership. For instance “What is the culture around me and how have I transcended that culture?” is a great and important question any leader should ask of themselves from time to time.

In sum, I recommend that if you would like to read this book that you simply borrow it from a library and write out the best questions for regular self-reflection.

Chris says

Helps Christian leaders take a look inside so they don't become another haggard.

Benton says

As a Christian leader I was hopeful that this book would be gospel-centered and a good exposition of leadership in regards to God's sovereignty and our responsibility. It was not.

McNeal made some good observations about how we are influenced by our life circumstances; however, he never even came close to connecting the dots to how the gospel of Jesus Christ transforms and creates in us a new heart. Nor did he explore the full measure of God's Word as crucial to being a "spiritual leader." I'm just not certain how God's revealed Word is not central in an a book discussing how to be a Christian leader. The other stuff, honing our skills, is good and useful; yet, without a strong and firm foundation in the Word...well, what are we building?

In his concluding statements, McNeal revealed - well, it was there the whole time - that we are masters of

our own destiny and our choices are the most essential thing that shapes us. No, he didn't say it quite like that, but that's the impression I was left with. That's not saying our choices aren't important, but where does God's sovereignty and good purposes fit into McNeal's vision of leadership?

There was enough to like that the book wasn't a waste of time, but in the end, I wouldn't recommend it to anyone. If you're looking for what it means to be a leader, read your Bible (spend some time in the Epistles) and if you let it permeate your heart, soul, and mind, you will become a man/woman after God's own heart. Love what He loves, hate what He hates. That's what shapes our heart.

Tim says

The author demonstrates through the lives of Moses, David, Paul, and Jesus how God shapes a leader in the context of their culture, call, community, communion, conflict, and the commonplace. A refreshing break from practical how-to books.

Patricia Mayer says

This book has some pretty sound theology and shows how God shaped early leaders of the church. Through the book you explore Moses, David, Paul, and Jesus and see how God shaped each of their hearts to be a leader in ministry. The last part of the book leads you as you examine the same factors and how God is shaping you to spread the Gospel.

Stephanie says

This book gets to the heart of what it means to be a servant-leader. I really like the way the author uses Biblical leaders to help the reader understand both positive and negative traits of a spiritual leader.
