Deep Roots and Lasting Fruit: Developing a Leader’s Spiritual Life for Mission
WHO IS THIS HANDBOOK FOR?

The assumption of this handbook is that if you have it in your hands, you are actively taking part in the mission to see the gospel reach every corner of your campus.

• You may be leading a bible study for your dorm, friends in your major, or a club you are part of.

• You may be praying for a section of campus where there is no ministry, actively waiting for God to use you to start something new.

• You may be using your room to host a gathering.

• You may be preaching the gospel at larger gatherings.

The point is, God has given you a vision, and you are using your gifts to actively be a part of the mission on campus. You also have been given some level of training and tools to help you develop this missional work.

WHAT IS THIS HANDBOOK FOR?

The reality is this:

A leader on mission who is not spiritually formed will not be able to sustain ministry that bears fruit over time. You can have all the vision, all the tools, all the training but if you are not addressing your relationship with God at the core, the well will quickly run dry.

The question this handbook addresses is this:

As a Leader in Mission, what can you do to develop a foundational and dynamic spiritual life (the roots) so that you are spiritually prepared to lead in this particular mission, while also growing for a lifetime of leadership (the fruit)?
HOW TO USE THIS HANDBOOK:

There are three main sections to this handbook that address three different areas of spiritual formation for the leader. Each section builds on the next.

- Section 1 focuses on a leader’s life with God, the core foundation, and how this can be developed and deepened.

- Section 2 focuses on a leader’s heart and character, and how we participate with God’s forming us over time.

- Section 3 focuses on a leader’s influence, and how we can be doing ministry with a deepening experience of God’s presence and authority.

While each section builds on the next, you can focus on the area where you sense God is inviting growth. As a handbook, the idea is not to “get through it” but to use it as a resource to help in your spiritual formation as you lead.

A WORD ON DISCIPLINES:

Core to this handbook is the concept of Spiritual Disciplines. Each section gives disciplines that fit the goal of the section.

Disciplines are not markers of spiritual maturity. If you do the disciplines in this handbook as a way to “check off” your spiritual progress, you are missing the point!

Rather, disciplines are like training and stretching for an athlete: they prepare us for the race. The Christian race is all about loving God and loving others more deeply and actively. That’s the goal. For our mission, that means bringing the gospel deeper into our own hearts and more broadly to all the people around us that God loves. In this way, the disciplines in this handbook help towards the bigger goal. The more we practice the disciplines, the more “fit” we will become for the race.
The Leader's Life With the Father
BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

In Mark 1: 35 we are told that Jesus rose ‘very early in the morning, while it was still dark, departed and went out to a desolate place, and there he prayed.’ In the midst of His mission and ministry, and facing the demands and expectations of so many people – Jesus knew it was vital to spend time communing with his Father. Time with His Father was at the heart of His life and ministry.

Throughout Scripture and church history we see God’s people experiencing life with Him.

- Adam and Eve walked with God in the garden
- Moses met with God face to face as a friend
- King David was a man after God’s own heart who wrote psalms that poured out his experiences to his God in prayer
- Paul bowed his knee before his Father in prayer for himself and other believers.
- And through the ages believers have testified to the necessity and joy of simply creating space and time to be with our Heavenly Father and the deep and wide transformation that flows from this communion.

The foundation for these times of prayer must be God’s Word. This is where prayer with Him starts because this is where we get to hear and recognize His voice. This means spending time in His Word in a way that draws us into prayer with Him. The purpose is not to read the bible to get more knowledge, or prepare for a bible study; but the purpose is to spend time in His world in a dynamic and lively way that moves us to know our Father more deeply and be deeply changed by Him.

In other words, it is a way that engages our heart, moves our heart and transforms our heart as we spend time talking with our Father through His Word.

Next we will focus on two spiritual practices that aim to develop and deepen our life with our Father. The first is the ‘Heart Devotional’ that focuses on spending time in God’s Word in a way that moves us to pray and engages our heart. The second discipline is to spend an extended time in 'Silence & Solitude' with our Father.
Heart Devotional

INTRODUCTION TO OUR FATHER’S WORD

- Feel free to spend time in worship if this will prepare your heart to pray with your Father.

- Choose a book to slowly work through (Ephesians, Psalms 121–132, Gospel of Luke)

- Select about 8 – 12 verses

- Read over these verses 2–3 times, out loud if possible

- Jot down some thoughts or questions you might have in a journal and feel free to use a study Bible to understand things better

- Maybe paraphrase the passage in your own words

- Then spend a few moments simply asking Your Father to speak to You and bless this time of prayer

Remember the purpose is to spend time praying with Your Father. His Words should move your heart to listen to Him and talk with Him.

Open Response

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Heart Devotional

PRAYER TIME WITH OUR FATHER

1. Heart Raised: in adoration

To adore someone is to express strong feelings of love and admiration. To this end, read through the passage and notice what the Word reveals about God’s character & heart. Then simply spend some time expressing your love and admiration to Him.

2. Heart Bowed: in humility

Holding on to the unconditional love of our Father, now slowly read the passage again and ask for eyes to see where your Father is calling you to confess sin. Perhaps ask: Where have I turned away from Jesus? How have I trusted in myself and the things of this world? When have I not believed my Father? Where have I been proud? Talk to Him about your failings honestly and confidently knowing that His love is unconditional and His grace covers all sin. Spend time confessing and asking for forgiveness.

3. Heart Warmed: by the Gospel

Now read through the passage and notice how God’s Word reveals His good news that warms your heart: How does His Word point to the work of Jesus? How does it remind You of His salvation? Where does it reveal His grace and forgiveness? In what way does the Word set you free from guilt and shame? Enjoy spending time in prayer receiving this good news and responding in praise and thanksgiving.

4. Heart Committed: to respond

And finally, read the passage one last time and ask Him: Why are You speaking these words to me now, Father? What is going on in my life today that I need to hear these words passage? How are you calling me to think, act and speak differently today? Spend time talking to your Father about this and then ask Him for strength to respond and live faithfully.
Heart Devotional
KEEP IT UP

DO IT TOGETHER

Consider inviting 1–2 friends to join you in reading through the same passages and then meeting up once per week to share and pray together.

NEXT STEPS

• Choose a book of the Bible you wish to pray through.

• Set aside a specific time and place to start spending time with Your Father.

• Tell someone about your plans and ask them to pray for you and ask you how things are going!
Noise and people are all around us, all the time. Often this is very enjoyable and life-giving.

However, noise and people can also fill up all the space and time so that we are not aware of what is happening in our life with God. We are like a bottle of water filled with mud that is all stirred up and murky.

Silence and solitude are spiritual disciplines that allow the mud to settle, the water to clear, so we see clearly.

Jesus withdrew to be on his own in quiet places so that he could hear clearly what His Father was saying to Him. These disciplines can be vital for our life with God as well.

Particularly in our 'noisy' culture, the practice of silence and solitude can be incredibly fruitful for our life with the Father. It is in the silence and solitude that we can hear from Him, respond to Him, and above all simply enjoy being with Him!

In this practice, don't worry if ‘nothing’ happens. It is important to hold our expectations lightly, and not compare your experiences to other people.

Commit to doing this 4–6 times in order to grow and learn how to spend time alone in silence with your Father.
Silence and solitude rarely ever just ‘happen’ to us. We need to very deliberately set aside the space and time. Below are some suggestions for how to make this happen:

1. Ask someone to pray for you

2. Set aside 2–3 hours once per month in your calendar. A good day for this would be on Sunday before or after church.

3. Find a place where there is very little noise – a library, bench beside a river, botanical garden, church, place of prayer like a monastery.

4. Leave your ‘things’ behind: phone, computers, books, even your journal.

5. Simply take your bible and choose a psalm to read and pray through (Suggestions: Psalm 1, 23, 27, 131).

6. Pay attention to your thoughts and emotions – bring them to Your Father in prayer.

7. Don’t worry if you get distracted, don’t feel guilty if you lose attention. Just gently return to.

8. Scripture, return to prayer, listen to what God may be saying (perhaps simply pray, ‘Here I am Lord, your son/daughter is listening.’)

9. Vary how you spend your time: on the following page are some suggestions. You don’t have to do all of them, but it will help to have some sense of how you are going to spend your time.
Silence & Solitude RETREAT

• Just ‘arriving’: noticing your mental, physical, emotional and spiritual state. Talk to God about how you are doing and feeling.

• Reflect on the work of God in your life over the last month – where have there been spiritual highs and lows, places of confusions and moments of clarity

• Read through God’s Word slowly, meditatively and prayerfully

• Get up and take a walk, notice your surroundings, pray about what you see

• Enjoy a cup of coffee or snack, give thanks for God’s provisions in your life

• Set aside ‘silent listening time’ by asking God what He wants to say to You and then be still and listen

• Remember and celebrate the truths of the Gospel: you are a beloved child of God, forgiven and freed in Christ. Listen to Your Father as He speaks the truth of the Gospel into Your life

• As you close your time consider what you may want to ‘leave with God’ and what He is inviting you to ‘take with you’ back into your everyday life.
Silence & Solitude
KEEP IT UP

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DO IT TOGETHER

Commit with a friend to spending time once a month in silence and solitude. Hold each other accountable to schedule the time, and then share with one another afterwards. You can also invite a spiritual mentor to follow up with you, hear what your time of silence and solitude was like, and help you discern how God is at work in your life. Debriefing your time will be valuable.
The Leader's Character
INTRODUCTION
Leaders are called to live a life that looks more and more like Jesus. We face many temptations that push against this kind of transformation. The real danger is to lead without a character that is being changed. So, how do we join God in his work of changing us to be more like Jesus? This section explores this theme.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION
Imagine this familiar scene: You are going through your dorm, putting up posters and knocking on doors of friends to invite them to a weekly gathering where you will explore the life of Jesus and how it relates to campus life. You know that God has given you a vision to do this, and now it’s starting. You’re leading.

Leading a vision raises all kinds of real questions. “Am I qualified to do this?” “What if I mess up?” “Will I be able to love those that get involved?” “What if I don’t know enough?” “What if it doesn’t work out?”

At the outset of his ministry, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tested by the devil (Luke 4.1-13). The devil questioned his identity and calling, seeking to lure him into choices against the will of the Father.

Jesus relied on his relationship with the Father and his Father’s Word in Scripture to “pass the test” and not succumb to real temptations.

When we lead, we also will face temptations. Our character will be tested. This may reveal our sinful, broken sides like pride, selfishness, fear, low self-esteem, moral weaknesses or failings. Or it may reveal our redeemed sides such as love for others, hope, faith, and self-sacrifice.

How do we become leaders who are truly letting God move us away from sin and towards a Jesus-like life?

The following disciplines address this, with two practices that give God access to our inner lives, welcoming his transforming love and power.
The Examen

INTRODUCTION

The Spirit led Jesus to have the time and space to know who he was and how the Father was leading him, so he could resist the temptations. Christians throughout history have used a practice, called the examen, that helps give space and time for this kind of reflection.

Simply put, the examen asks two profound questions that look back over the day:

- Where have I experienced the absence of God in my life today? (Desolation)
- Where have I experienced the presence of God in my life today? (Consolation)

HOW IT WORKS:

A good time to do this is in the evening, when the day is drawing to a close. (Perhaps set aside 10 extra minutes just before you do your bedtime routine).

Begin the time with a scripture that focuses on God’s abundant and overflowing love for you, like Romans 8:38-39: “For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ.”

This exercise is not meant to be a guilt trip or a judging, self-critical experience. There is no condemnation for those who are in Jesus! Rather, imagine it is like you and God watching a video of your day, seeking together to understand what was happening in your character on the journey of becoming more like Jesus.
The Examen
HOW IT WORKS

First, explore where you experienced God’s absence:

● Prayerfully notice where in the day you were unaware of God, felt far from God, resisted God, strayed from God’s commands, had unanswered questions come up, or experienced some kind of “desolation.” (fear, anxiety, anger, lust, greed...). This could include confession.

● As you recall these, invite God to see them with you, receive any forgiveness (if needed), and ask the larger question, “What was going on here?” Allow God to speak.

● In doing this, you may realize why you felt or acted a certain way, you may get a different perspective, and God may help you to know what it looks like to believe him and repent.

Second, explore where you experienced God’s presence:

● Prayerfully look back and notice where you sensed the “consolation” of God’s love, guidance, provision, care, leadership, correction, instruction. This could include worship and thanksgiving.

● Ask God “What was going on here?” and allow God to speak. You may notice what helps you to connect with God, to know his love. You may see a pattern in how God is working in you.

After praying through these two questions, ask God for his grace for tomorrow, to live out some of the things you may have noticed from the prayer. You may want to keep an examen journal where you jot down simple take-aways from the prayer time.

By doing this daily, you may begin to notice larger patterns, invitations, dangers or opportunities where God is working in you to become more like Jesus. You may experience more clarity in God’s direction and leadership.
The Examen
KEEP IT UP

DO IT TOGETHER

Finally, a great addition to this is to gather a group of 2 or 3 other leaders to meet regularly and share what is happening with you through the examen. This will help you to do it, and have others involved in discerning what God is doing in your life over time. A simple format for this could be to have one person share what they have been seeing, pause to pray in reflection together, share thoughts, questions and reflections, clarify if there are any action steps emerging, and wrap up in a short thanksgiving prayer.

NEXT STEPS

1. When can you set aside 10-15 minutes to do the examen? Put this into your schedule (perhaps set your alarm on your phone for that time daily). To start, aim to do it daily for a week.

2. Who can you invite to do this with you, and to meet with regularly? Make a plan to invite them, and set a time to meet.

Your Next Steps
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Spiritual Mentorship

INTRODUCTION

The second key discipline that helps to shape a leader’s character is to find and regularly meet with a spiritual mentor.

Simply put, a spiritual mentor is a person who has walked a little farther along the road with Jesus than you have, and who understands how to help others to grow in their life of faith. You should consider someone who knows you, with whom you are willing to share vulnerably, and give them permission to speak into your life. You also should find someone whose spiritual life you look up to! If you don’t know someone like this, then you could ask someone in your church to help connect you.

WHAT DO YOU DO TOGETHER?

Set a regular meeting schedule together. (Once a month works well). It is always good to schedule these firmly, as these times can easily get pushed aside without attention.

When you meet, come prepared to share about your life with God. This could include:

- Reflections from doing the examen
- What your prayer life has been like
- What questions you have had about relating to God
- Areas of sin that you are struggling with
- Decisions that are before you
- Desires you have for your spiritual life.

For a format, keep it simple. Here’s a suggestion for a 1 hour meeting:

- 10 mins: Small talk, catching up, then dedicate the time in prayer
- 10 mins: You share, the mentor listens
- 30 mins: Open time for exploration. Here the mentor can ask questions, explore scriptures that are relevant, and let the conversation develop naturally around the topics that have come up.
- 10 mins: Mentor helps you to consider what actions steps you could take based on your conversation. End the time in prayer, and schedule the next meeting.
NEXT STEPS

1. Who are some potential people you could ask to be a mentor?

2. Pray over the list, and then choose one of them to ask.

3. Do it!

4. Note: When you ask someone if they would be willing to mentor you, give them a clear idea of the expectations. It also may be good to set a 3-4 month “test” period where you can then evaluate and decide if it is working well.
The Leader's Mission
INTRODUCTION

Jesus said, “I am the light of the world.” He also said, “You are the light of the world.” He has chosen to invite you, with believers around the globe, to reflect His light to a dark world.

But how do we do this so God is the one truly leading our actions and bearing fruit?

Paul gives us a great model of two core disciplines that are critical for leaders.

BIBLICAL FOUNDATION

First, St. Paul prayed. He regularly interceded for the churches.

Paul’s letters are full of rich prayers that are great models for us. Imagine what the members of the church in Colossae must have felt to read Paul’s prayer for them in Colossians 1:9–12:

“... since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives, so that you may live a life worthy of the Lord and please him in every way, bearing fruit in every good work, growing in the knowledge of God, being strengthened with all power according to his glorious might so that you may have great endurance and patience, and giving joyful thanks to the Father, who has qualified you to share in the inheritance of his people in the kingdom of light.”

Second, Paul sought the Lord for specific guidance in the mission. Paul’s faith was always grounded and tested in the (Old Testament) Scriptures. But in Acts 14, 15 and 16, you can see Paul seeking or receiving God’s guidance through prayer and fasting, thoughtful planning, submission to church leaders, dreams and visions, and through God’s direct intervention.

This section will explore the disciplines of intercession and listening prayer as key tools for the missional leader’s life.
Intercessory Prayer

INTRODUCTION
When we intercede, we are asking God to respond to the needs of others. Jesus invited us into this amazing opportunity to stand with Him, between our Holy Father and a broken, needy world, asking for God to have mercy.

Jesus taught His disciples a specific way to intercede: “May your Kingdom come; may Your will be done on earth as in heaven.”

HOW IT WORKS
- Consider taking 10–30 minutes each day to focus on this prayer with specific people, events, or places on your campus, especially within your specific ministry focus.
- What would it look like if God’s will were done in these areas as it is in heaven? Think of specific ways they would be different. Then ask the Lord to do those things!
- If that feels too “big,” try breaking down your prayers into “faith-sized requests”. For example, you may want to see your whole dorm come to Christ, but you have a hard time believing that will happen. Ask yourself, “what can I believe?” Maybe it is that I would see one new believer in the dorm this year. Pray for that.
- Or break it down farther: “Lord, I want to have a conversation this week with one seeking student and invite them to follow Christ.”

Keep a record of your requests so you can see answers to prayer. Then you can give thanks to God as you make new requests. (Phil.4:6) It is easy to forget what you asked God for, and so you miss the fact that your prayers were answered! Remembering what He has already done inspires you to ask for more, with expectant faith.

An easy way to track your prayers is to use sticky notes. Post specific dated requests on your wall. When they are answered, write the answer and the date, and move them to another site for thanksgivings. Other thanksgivings can be added each time you pray.

By doing this, you may begin to understand how God is answering prayer, where God is working, and this could help give you further direction in the work God has called you to do.
Listening Prayer

INTRODUCTION

People often think of prayer as our talking to God. But God talks with us, as well. In John 10, Jesus says, “my sheep know my voice,” using the image of a shepherd leading his flock safely to pasture.

But sheep are not born knowing the shepherd’s voice. They need to learn to recognize his voice through practice, and so do we.

The primary way the God speaks to us is through Scripture. Most of God’s will for us is already revealed in the Bible. I don’t need discernment about whether to murder, or steal, or lie, or have sex outside of marriage. It is already written!

But how do I know if God wants me to start a Bible study with my neighbor? For specific guidance, I need to learn to listen to the Lord, and particularly, to distinguish between my own willful desires, and God’s leading.

As with St. Paul and his companions, there are many different ways God may speak to you. Here are a few:

- Visually, as in a dream, a vision, or image that comes to mind in prayer
- Hearing a voice or other sound
- Experiencing a sensation or a feeling; (warmth, tingling, pain, etc.)
- Signs and wonders, answered prayers, miracles
- Through nature, beauty, art or music that communicates something about God
- Through wise insights and spiritual understanding
- Through people and experiences (“coincidences”) that point us to God
Listening Prayer

HOW IT WORKS

1. Begin by coming to God in humility and a spirit of submissiveness. In this whole process, be aware of typical barriers to listening: fears, doubts, demands, avoidance and distractions.

2. Bring the question you have to God.

3. A good way to do this is in your journal. After writing your question, listen quietly for a reply. Write whatever you think you heard or thought God said.

4. You may want to repeat the cycle a few times, asking, listening and writing. Even if you are not certain you are hearing from the Lord, write down what you think you hear.

5. It is important to test everything you think is from the Lord. Test it with Scripture, with the wisdom of mature Christians, and with your past experiences. Does it pass these tests?

6. If it does – then act on what you’ve heard. If not, then continue to wait.

7. Over time, you will grow in the ability to recognize when God is leading you, or when you are simply listening to yourself or the tempter – the devil.

Some questions you could ask the Lord in your journal:

- What do you want to show me or tell me today about my leadership and our mission?
- Is there a course correction needed? Your will be done, not mine.
- Jesus, what do you love about my campus? What breaks your heart?
- Lord, how are you praying for ____________?
- Father, how are you choosing today to love those I lead?
- Whom do you want me to pray for, to notice, or to tell about you?
Listening Prayer
AN EXAMPLE

You might ask a question: “Lord, how do you want me to serve in the mission to bring the gospel to every corner of this campus? Is there a corner you want me to go to?”

Wait quietly, and see what comes to mind. Maybe you get an impression of a dorm, or a club, or a part of campus, or a specific person.

Go walk around that area (or consider the person) and pray. Notice what happens as you do this. What does God show you?

How does this line up with Scripture? Are there any concerns? Confirmations?

Share this with a leader or your staff. What do they think?

If it all lines up, then step out in faith.

Open Response

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Listening Prayer

KEEP IT UP

DO IT TOGETHER

Jesus promised that when 2 or 3 are gathered in His name, that He would be there. Praying regularly in a small group is a wonderful way to experience Christ’s presence, and to engage with Him in His mission.

Leaders often make a mistake of trying to get everyone in the fellowship together at one time to pray. You will be much more effective if instead you find key believers who are committed to prayer, and gather them regularly. A small group of faithful and fervent pray-ers will be more powerful than a room full of reluctant Christians who have been rounded up to pray together.

You can be sure that the devil will try to keep you from effective intercession, so pray for protection and perseverance, and don’t give up!

If you need an outline for a prayer meeting, see the website [Lord’s Prayer; ACTS]

NEXT STEPS

1. Make a plan to intercede for your campus every day for the next month. Where and when will you pray? What is the goal in prayer? (We want to reach “Every corner of every campus” with the gospel. Which “corner” is God drawing you to?) What is the basic format? (How will you pray, and for what?) Who can be an accountability partner for you? Is there anyone you can invite to join you in prayer?

2. Set aside 15 minutes in your regular prayers to practice listening prayer. Use a journal. Share your experiences with your staff worker or a prayer partner.
THE HOPE

By engaging with the spiritual formation practices in this handbook, the hope is that:

You will know God and God’s love in a growing and real way;

So that your heart becomes more and more like God’s heart;

So that God gives you an overflowing love for those around you that have yet to experience this love;

So that they might experience conversion into God’s family;

So that they will become part of God’s mission.

“I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit, fruit that will last.”

Jesus, John 15:16