



# Loving Leadership

The transformation that comes when we lead from places of suffering

BY RHONDA MCLEOD

ONE DAY during a time of prayer, I began to weep as I noticed my resistance to suffering. As quickly as I noted this truth however, a greater truth penetrated my spirit: *'It is because you have not yet experienced the depths of my love.'*

I began to reflect on the beauty and power of a life shaped by the depths of God's love. I focused on Jesus, God's beloved Son with whom He was delighted (Matthew 3:17) and whose suffering on the cross was His

## Spiritual Practices

As a chaplain and spiritual director-in-training, I've found the following spiritual practices helpful in discovering how much I'm loved and valued by God.

**Meditation** Looking at God through His Word and His works

**Solitude** Leaving everything behind to enter a time alone with God

**Self-care** Valuing myself as God values me

**Service** Reflecting the helping, caring and sharing love of God in the world

Adapted from *Spiritual Disciplines Handbook: Practices That Transform Us* by Adele Ahlberg Calhoun, (Westmount, IL: LIVBooks,2009)

sacrificial love offering. His Father's "giving" love shaped Jesus' leadership, and I wanted it to shape mine, but on my terms with little or no suffering. Life unfolded differently.

"Suffering was the tool that enabled me to embrace..."

As I navigated a difficult family situation, storms of "unlove" overwhelmed me. I withdrew in silence, engulfed by waves of chaos and confusion and suffering under what felt

like billowing winds of shame. Desolation came and left me numb, but that soon wore off and my unmedicated pain roared like a dying lion from deep within me. Everything seemed dim in this new reality. I didn't even know if I would weather the secondary storms of deceptive accusation that buffeted me.

Unknown to me however, suffering was creating new spiritual perspectives and paradigms in me, reshaping old belief systems concerning God's love. Suffering was producing a new brand of personal leadership framed with truth, deep compassion, and the grace of intercession. Suffering was the tool that enabled me to embrace silence, stillness, solitude, and times of deep and meaningful meditation and communion. In these spiritual practices, I became aware of the healing love of God for me and for others. I experienced a shift to a different kind of leadership – a loving leadership – that began shaping my responses and transforming relationships.

John 17 played a pivotal part in restoring me, stirring a deep noticing of Jesus' loving leadership. Jesus' John 17 prayer is saturated with love from God, His Father, and with the depths of His own love for his present and future disciples. Jesus knew that His hour had come. Jesus knew the disciples would experience immense sorrow, and so He laid down the foundation of a love that now included His disciples in the love shared between Him and His Father.

Jesus was not spared suffering. Neither were His disciples in their fulfilment of His great commission, yet through it all, God's keeping grace and power would enable them to become pillars of leadership.

As women chosen to lead by love in our various spheres of influence, abiding in the depths of God's love is formative to our leadership. God's love transcends suffering and brokenness. Living in the reality of that love revives us, restores our image in Christ, casts away fears, and heals the wounds of offences. And once we begin to live in that truth, we keep receiving and growing in the depths of His love as we become more aware and open to it.

When we practice receiving God's love, acknowledging it with Him, intentionally living and leading out of His supply, we grow and flow in loving leadership. 1

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