**“The Transition Of A Leader”**

Hello Riverside! Back from vacation; share with you some things that are near and dear to my heart and have significant implications for us as a church during this succession season. Though we’ve not been meeting together in person … we’ve been working hard, behind the scenes, to prepare for the eventual return of our in-person services and the staff hires that we’ll need to cover all the areas of ministry and the leadership responsibilities.

As we told you at the beginning of the year, I’ll be spending my time between both the Mills and the Oakmont campuses and there will be stationary Campus Pastors in both locations. Prior to COVID, we identified Michael Evans to assume my role as the Campus Pastor at the Mills. Lord willing, He will assume that role beginning in September. In the meantime, we have been searching for the Oakmont Campus Pastor and have made significant progress over this social distancing season in narrowing down the candidates in hopes that we can soon introduce you to a new team member who will join the RCC Family.

In the meantime, I want to share with you in this teaching some thoughts on “The Transition of a Leader” that will hopefully help you to understand what goes into our prayerful leadership decisions and staff hires. In fact, as a teenager I began to grasp these things that have helped to shape my thinking for decades … my dad’s most memorable message …

**Transitions are hard, aren’t they? 1st, 7th, 9th, College – Josh leaving, Jenna – license. Marriage breakup, jobs, friends, leaders, PASTOR. I moved every 4 years as a PK. Never knew what it was like to be on this side.** Change is hard – years of stability. Now things are uncertain. 400 years of silence (Malachi/Matthew) …

“There was a man sent from God whose name was John. He came as a witness to testify concerning that light, so that through him all might believe. He himself was not the light; he came only as a witness to the light.” John 1:6–8 (NIV)

**There Was A Man**

Not an angel or superman/woman. Human being – flawed, mistakes, faults, weaknesses, imperfections and limitations. So are all pastors! No perfect pastor has ever been found. ☺

Preaching, counseling, coaching, mentoring, casting vision, wrestling with the spiritual darkness, leading, visitations, praying, protecting, meetings, administration, phone calls, texts, emails, correspondence, events, staffing, social media, etc.

Physical weariness, nervous exhaustion, strained relationships, differences of opinion, preferences about everything from the style and volume of the worship to the length and content of the message to the color of the carpet to the version of the Bible to the style of dress. Inability to please everyone is like the plague!

Enemy – steal, kill & destroy – temptations (pride, arrogance, jealously, greed, lust, envy, anger, fear, doubt, etc.) – personally: physically, emotionally, mentally, morally, ethically, financially … spouse, kids, reputation, calling, identity, self-worth, value, etc.

I’m asking you to pray for us and our families! *Be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry*! Be encouragers, offer help, take ownership of our church, pursue unity and cultivate a cooperative spirit. (Eph. 1:16-19, 3:16-19, Phil. 1:9-11, Col. 1:3-4, 9-12)

**Sent From God**

Although he was a man with human limitations, John was distinguished and set apart from others in that he was a specially chosen one. God gave him **Divine Authorization**. Paul’s NT letters are full of instructions that encourage us to treat our leaders with honor and respect and as God’s servants (you do this so well!!!). If we get this right it’ll give us two things …

1. **Focus** – bearing witness to the light. Christ-Centered Focus!
2. **Filter** – to sort out expectations for our new hires … *“He himself was not the light.”* No pastor can single-handedly please everybody. No church can do everything. Set Priorities!

Guard against our staff “maintaining the machinery” so we can be Spirit-Led & Spirit-Empowered!

The fact that God brings our pastors has implications for how we treat them and their families … criticism … gossip … attitude … actions … words.

We don’t treat pastors as superior – we’re not any better than anyone else – be please do consider their heavenly calling. We don’t worship our pastors or put them on a pedestal. But we do honor their God-given calling.

~~“Pastors who do their work well should be paid well and should be highly appreciated, especially those who work hard at both preaching and teaching.” 1 Timothy 5:17 (TLB)~~

~~“But how shall they ask him to save them unless they believe in him? And how can they believe in him if they have never heard about him? And how can they hear about him unless someone tells them? And how will anyone go and tell them unless someone sends him? That is what the Scriptures are talking about when they say, ‘How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the Gospel of peace with God and bring glad tidings of good things.’ In other words, how welcome are those who come preaching God’s Good News!” Romans 10:14–15 (TLB)~~

Parents: how you talk about the church, pastors & leaders will rub off on your kids as they head into adulthood & will have a significant impact on how they lead Jesus’ movement in their generation!

**Whose Name Was John**

Names were very significant then …

“On the eighth day they came to circumcise the child, and they were going to name him after his father Zechariah, but his mother spoke up and said, ‘No! He is to be called John.’ They said to her, ‘There is no one among your relatives who has that name.’ Then they made signs to his father, to find out what he would like to name the child. He asked for a writing tablet, and to everyone’s astonishment he wrote, ‘His name is John.’” Luke 1:59–63 (NIV)

Unique and not like everyone else. John had certain gifts, strengths and a certain ministry to which he had been called – forerunner of the Messiah. **New staff will not be Bill or Me!**

Every pastor is unique, gifted for ministry and has areas where they can grow. Each one is gifted for ministry but no two are the same in how they express those gifts/passions. Please avoid the idea that every pastor should have all the gifts and that they should be able to do everything well.

He came to preach Jesus, that was John’s mission (Heavenly Commission). Verse 8 says, “He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light.”

“So Christ himself gave … the pastors … to equip his people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ.” Ephesians 4:11–13 (NIV)

**Who are we looking for? Who do we want our new leaders to find us to be?**

**Dating: focus more on being the right kind of individuals, families and church body than on trying to find the ideal leaders. What condition do we want them to find us in?**

***Preferences*** *will be our primary struggle …*

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| Chaplain vs. CEO | Insider vs. Outsider Focused |
| Evangelism vs. Discipleship | Introvert vs. Extrovert |
| Preaching vs. Worship | Topical vs. Expository |
| Clock-Aware vs. Spirit-Led | Preacher vs. Administrator |

*Someone who (common language & framework) (1 Timothy 3 & Titus 1) …*

1. Has been found by Jesus. (Repentance, Faith, Forgiveness, Grace & Mercy)
2. Faithfully and wholeheartedly follows Jesus. (Direction, not perfection. Obedience & Submission)

Loves his/her family like Jesus. (Lays down life, sacrificial)

* + Spouse “called”, healthy marriage, kids aligned with the will of God. Say NO to you! ☺

Passionately upholds and creatively communicates the words of Jesus. (Authority & Reliability)

Is authentic & transparent about their ongoing need for & dependency upon the Spirit of Jesus.

* Fruit & Gifts

Models service (serving-towel, humility) like Jesus. *“He must increase, I must decrease.”* (Jn. 3:30)

Embodies a C-7 approach to leading on behalf of Jesus.

Character – integrity, ethical, moral, holiness, generous (spontaneous, strategic, sacrificial)

Competency – preaching, teaching, leading, caring *(the “what” of the role)*

Chemistry – connects relationally with staff, board & church family, likeability

Culture – “gets” western PA, vision for reaching our area

Calling – not a job, a lifestyle, “all in”, owner vs. manager

Capacity – ability to grow, adapt, develop, teachable, curious, life-long learner

Circumstances – transitioning from their previous role with honor & a good reputation

**What value will you add to this transition in our leaders?** Jesus hasn’t abandoned us!

**Let’s Pray!**

Heavenly Father, thank You for Riverside … for this season … please send those whom You will to help shepherd our church family. Please grant growth, wisdom, revelation, strength, power, perseverance, faith, unity, courage, love, grace, humility, deference, knowledge, fruit of the Spirit and discernment. In Jesus’ Name, Amen.