

FIVE ESSENTIALS FOR SPIRITUAL LEADERS

LIFESIGNS FOR LEADERS[®]

 **bent**tree



CANDID CONVERSATION GUIDE
AND GROWTH PLAN

Welcome from Pete Briscoe
by Scott C. Watson

A note from the pastor . . .

Dear <First name>:

Imagine the scene: Jesus' influence grows daily. News of His ministry and miracles spreads like wildfire. This Jesus of Nazareth heals the sick, gives sight to the blind, casts out demons, calms storms, and raises the dead. The crowds are amazed, saying "Nothing like this has ever happened in Israel!"

In villages and towns throughout Judea, people fill synagogues to hear a new message from a new kind of leader. Matthew captured what happened next: "When Jesus saw the crowds, he had compassion on them because they were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. He said to his disciples, 'The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields'" (Matthew 9:36-38).

So why did Jesus tell his leaders to pray for more leaders? It was because the people "were confused and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd." Jesus knew that people needed a different kind of leader than a Scribe or a Pharisee. They needed a leader with the heart of a shepherd. A good shepherd keeps watch for enemies, defends the sheep from attackers, binds-up the wounded, searches for the lost, and ultimately, a good shepherd lays down his life for the flock.

Jesus knew that people needed leaders with the heart of a shepherd. And they still do today.

Having a "vertical conversation" with God was only the beginning of an adventure. Armed with new insights into your character, calling, and identity in Christ, you now have a golden opportunity to grow like never before—and you don't have to do it alone.

Here's how it works: Prayerfully pick a fellow leader who has also completed the on-line portion of LifeSigns for Leaders. Mutually commit to have five candid conversations. You'll share your strengths and struggles, pinpoint priorities for growth, and cheer one another forward as you take steps of faith.

It may take you five weeks or five months to have all five conversations. That's fine. When you do, God will use this process to develop your spiritual leadership like never before. **So think of this as an adventure, not an assignment.** With each new step of faith, you'll find Jesus walking beside you, gently guiding you into the hidden parts of your heart and the furthest reaches of your faith.

<First name>, we're with you! Once you and your partner have completed all five candid conversations and taken all five steps of faith, you'll have an opportunity to re-take LifeSigns for Leaders. In addition to seeing your progress across all 60 areas pre/post, you'll have a chance to share stories of your adventures with Jesus.

I'm praying for you!



Pete Briscoe
Senior Pastor, Bent Tree

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“AS IRON SHARPENS IRON,
SO A FRIEND SHARPENS
A FRIEND.”

Proverbs 27:17, NLT

Privacy and Confidentiality Notice: All the information captured during your on-line “vertical conversation” with God, as well as all of your information displayed in this Candid Conversation Guide, is confidential. You do NOT have to share results with anyone. You do NOT have to show this document to anyone. You are 100% in control of your personal information. Additionally, your LifeSigns data is not accessible by anyone at the church. Your data is not stored on any church computers, servers, or cloud applications. See the LifeSigns for Leaders Waiver and Release of Liability for more information.

Five Essentials for Spiritual Leaders

How is spiritual leadership different?

It's important to understand how spiritual leadership is *fundamentally different* from secular leadership. In secular leadership, you're primarily focused on your leadership skills and strategy, and your leadership style and personality. While these qualities are certainly important, spiritual leadership goes much deeper.

Your influence as a spiritual leader also depends on the condition of your heart, the content of your character, and the clarity of your calling. Spiritual leadership is ultimately about how the Jesus lives in you, so He can lead through you.

That's why these five Candid Conversations are not simply about what you DO as a leader, in public.

They will help you grow in your understanding of who you ARE as a leader, in Christ.

What is a practical picture of spiritual leadership?

Jesus' last words to His disciples included a profound promise. He said, "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." In the New Testament alone, God's power is described 135 different ways.

When you study the lives of people God called to lead in scripture, you'll discover five challenges all leaders face, along with five expressions of the Spirit's power that you'll need as a spiritual leader (see right and below).

- The Heart of a Leader: the power of Intimacy
- Leading in Private: the power of Integrity
- Leading in Uncertainty: the power of Clarity
- Leading in Adversity: the power of Humility
- Leading in Public: the power of Authenticity

Get ready. You're about to launch a bold expedition into the depths of what lies beneath the visible surface of your life. That includes not only your beliefs, but also your brokenness—not only your faith, but also your fears and failures.

If you're willing to go deep in these five horizontal conversations with your partner, you'll experience the awesome truth Paul shared with his leaders in the Galatian church:

*"I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me.
The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God,
who loved me and gave himself for me." – Galatians 2:20*



This is "inside out" and "bottom up" leadership.

Important – Read This! Candid Conversations & Steps of Faith

Your role in Candid Conversations: to Listen, Love, and Point

Having a truly candid conversation is never easy. Candor takes courage. Sharing intimate issues can be intimidating. To create a safe and supportive environment for your partner, you must avoid three conversation killers at all costs: interrupting, judging, and offering unsolicited advice. You can't fix someone—only Jesus can. But you can listen patiently, love unconditionally, and point them gently to Jesus.

- **Listen Patiently:** Listening takes patience. But bad listening is like bad breath. Your partner usually won't say anything about it, they'll just keep a safe distance. If you're dying to share a pearl of wisdom while your partner is talking—silently pray it, don't say it. Turn your commentary heavenward, re-focus on your friend, and God will quiet your heart.
- **Love Unconditionally:** Nothing breaks the grip of fear and creates a safe space like unconditional love. "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. We can love because he first loved us" (1 John 4:18-19). Love makes it safe.
- **Point Gently:** First, when your partner feels fully heard, then you can point them to the selected scripture in each section. This brings God's voice into your conversation. Second, you can point your partner to Christ and "to the throne of grace, so that they may receive mercy and find grace to help in time of need" (Hebrews 4:16). Finally, you can point them to others who can help.

Remember your job is to Listen patiently . . . to Love unconditionally . . . and to Point your partner to Jesus.

How do you take a "Step of Faith?"

We've all experienced the frustration of living with "the gap." It's the awkward distance between our beliefs and our behaviors—between hearing God's voice and our decision to follow. Too often our actions fall short of our aspirations.

LifeSigns for Leaders is about closing those gaps. That's why we asked you to identify your top three priorities, as well as a step of faith at the end of each module. Now, as you have five candid conversations, we'll help you close your gaps:



- **Goals: Where are you going?** Paul was a big fan of clear goals: *"I do not run like someone running aimlessly; I do not fight like a boxer beating the air."* – 1 Corinthians 9:26
- **Allies: Who's with you?** *"Two are better than one . . . If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But someone who falls alone is in real trouble."* – Ecclesiastes 4:10, NLT
- **Plans: How will you get there?** *"The mind of man plans his way, But the Lord directs his steps."* – Proverbs 16:9

Your answers to these three GAP questions (or lack thereof), will determine how likely you are to make meaningful progress. Remember, Jesus is ultimately responsible for your leadership growth, not you. Your job is to allow Christ to express himself through you as the "author and the perfecter of your faith" (Hebrews 12:2).

Candid Conversation #2: Leading in Private – Your Integrity

Developing your integrity in private gives you greater influence in public.

That’s why little things are such a big deal. Jesus told his leadership team:

“If you are faithful in little things, you will be faithful in large ones. But if you are dishonest in little things, you won’t be honest with greater responsibilities”

– Luke 16:10, NLT



Leading with Integrity



Now, stop and pray for a truly candid conversation with your partner as you discuss your integrity as a leader. Re-affirm your commitment to 100%, total confidentiality.

And remember, when your partner has the floor, your only job is to **Listen** patiently, **Love** unconditionally, and **Point** them gently back to Christ.

Before beginning this candid conversation, take a moment to share how you’ve taken a “step of faith” to grow in intimacy with Christ (from Conversation #1). What have you LEARNED since you last met?

Question #1 – What challenges are you having with integrity?

What challenges are you facing in your personal life and leadership when it comes to integrity? (your selections are shown below)

- I’m so incredibly busy, it’s hard to give enough time and attention to my family and personal life.
- I don’t regularly schedule extended time away for solitude and stillness with Jesus.
- I need to eat healthy and exercise more often, so I’ll have more energy and lose some weight.
- I wish I knew the Bible better, but I haven’t really devoted the time to dig deep and learn more.
- I sometimes give-in to a hurtful habit, and I’m afraid it’s affecting my relationship with God and others.
- If I’m honest, I’m struggling to stay sexually pure in my thoughts or actions.
- I wish I had someone in my life I could really trust, so I could open-up and have healthy accountability.
- I’d like to be a better reflection of Jesus’ character, to be someone that people want to follow.
- It’s hard for me to fully forgive people who’ve hurt me deeply, playing it over and over in my mind.
- I sometimes struggle to tell the truth and be honest, without shaping it or leaving something out.
- I sometimes wish I was more consistent, because my outward actions don’t always match my internal

Other challenges: (not listed above)

Question #2 – What are your strengths and struggles?

When it comes to developing your character and integrity, what are your strengths (highest rated) and struggles (lowest rated)? Take turns sharing a few recent examples of both strengths and struggles.

Leadership Essential #2: Integrity in Private





Question #3 – How are you? Really.

Take turns reading what you wrote during your vertical conversation about any “God substitutes” you sometimes turn to for comfort. Feel free to edit or expand on your written response (below). Remember your mutual commitment to 100% confidentiality.

< import text – leadership challenges >

Take turns sharing how these God substitutes may be negatively affecting your personal life, spiritual health, or leadership (your response is shown below).

< import response – very little/some/significant impact, I’m not too/becoming/very concerned >

Question #4: How wide is your integrity gap?

You don’t have to pretend you’re perfect—nobody is. We all live with gaps between our ideal level of integrity and our actual experience. As Christ develops your integrity, you will become more honest, authentic, accountable, engaged, healthy and sexually pure. Today, how WIDE is your integrity gap? Is your gap getting larger, smaller, or staying the same?



Take turns sharing about your integrity gap. The larger the gap between your private integrity and your public image, the harder it is to talk about. Give it shot. Specifically, in which areas do you wish you had greater integrity? Anything goes: more family time, exercise, purity, honesty, accountability, etc.

Question #5: How will you close your integrity gap?

When it comes to experiencing the integrity of Christ, your top three priorities from your vertical conversation with God are shown below. Take turns sharing WHY your #1 Priority is important to you.

< import priority #1 >

< import priority #2 >

< import priority #3 >

Relevant Scripture: Read aloud what the Bible says about your #1 Priority (below). Why does it matter to God?

< import selected scripture >

Question #6: How will you take a step of faith?

How do you plan to close your integrity gap? Take turns filling-in the details of your Goals, Allies, and Plans (GAP) for your top growth priority (also see Recommended Resources, next page).



Goals: Where are you going? What does your desired destination look like, when it comes to living with greater personal integrity? (Example: “I will consistently maintain my sexual purity, in thought and action, avoiding anything on the internet that could cause me to stumble.”)

Allies: Who is with you? What specific kinds of support do you need? From whom?

Plans: How will you get there? What specific steps will you take? Your notes from your vertical conversation on taking a step of faith are shown below. < import text – Next Step >

Remember: LifeSigns is not a self-improvement program. Growing in integrity is about a practical partnership with Jesus, who is responsible for your growth:

“Let us run with endurance the race God has set before us. We do this by keeping our eyes on Jesus, the champion who initiates and perfects our faith.” - Hebrews 12:1-2, NLT



Wrap-up: Pray for each other.

Take turns praying for each other’s “step of faith” before your leave—and commit to keep praying in the days/weeks ahead. Consider sharing updates and encouragement in the days/weeks ahead (by text, e-mail, or phone).

When will you meet for Candid Conversation #3: Leading in Uncertainty — The Clarity of Christ?

Date: _____ Time: _____ Place: _____