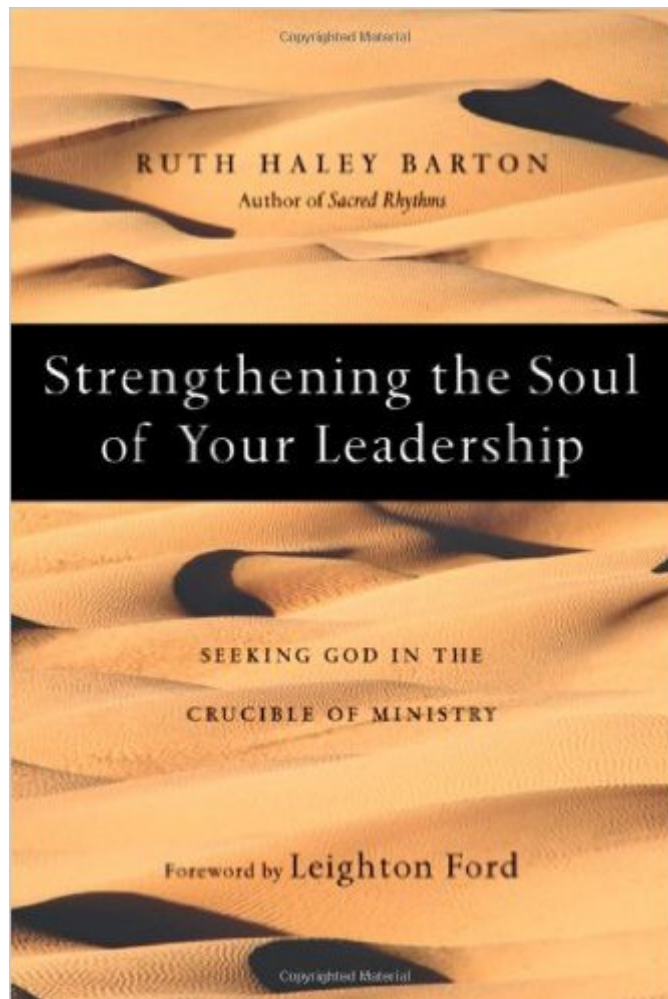


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Strengthening The Soul Of Your Leadership: Seeking God In The Crucible Of Ministry



Synopsis

"I'm tired of helping others enjoy God." "I just want to enjoy God for myself." With this painful admission, Ruth Haley Barton invites us to an honest exploration of what happens when spiritual leaders lose track of their souls. Weaving together contemporary illustrations with penetrating insight from the life of Moses, *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* explores topics such as responding to the dynamics of calling, facing the loneliness of leadership, leading from your authentic self, cultivating spiritual community, reenvisioning the promised land, discerning God's will together. Each chapter includes a spiritual practice to ensure your soul gets the nourishment it needs. Forging and maintaining a life-giving connection with God is the best choice you can make for yourself and for those you lead.

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Customer Reviews

As a minister, we deal with a variety of issues. There is the normal stress in leadership within a congregation. Often this creates an interesting paradox because you are called to lead, but the perspective in some congregations is that the minister is not a leader. Any time you have paradox within a system, it will create stress within the person caught in the middle of the confusion.

Because of this reality, it is wise to invest your time in leadership development. There are numerous books to help the minister to improve leadership skills, but this book is excellent because it deals with the soul of your leadership. It is a first priority message. If your soul is weak, your ministry will fall. As a preacher, you must be careful about not being so busy working that you stop growing in

your walk with the Lord. This is probably one of the best books for ministers that I have read in years. It was encouraging, wakening, and insightful. As a minister, it is so essential that we spent time in this area. You can become so focused on activity that you forget the soul in your leadership. The book is filled with insight: "Taking responsibility for oneself may well be more demanding than taking responsibility for a congregation or an organization! Whether it happens early or late, it is crucial to our capacity to lead spiritually." "Many of us are choosing to live lives that do not set us up to pay attention, to notice those places where God is at work and to ask ourselves what these things mean. We long for a word from the Lord, but somehow we have been suckered into believing that the pace we keep is what leadership requires.

"Strengthening the soul of our leadership is an invitation that begins, continues and ends with seeking God in the crucible of ministry. It is an invitation to stay connected with our own soul - that very private place where God's Spirit and my spirit dwell together in union - and to lead from that place" (210). Barton acknowledges that spiritual leadership is similar to any other kind of leadership in that it is susceptible to the failings of burnout and the weakness of human nature. Without the proper care for themselves and their relationships with Christ, pastoral and ministry leaders can fail in their task of being spiritual leaders. Instead of leading spiritually, they may lead from their own strengths, weaknesses, understanding, wisdom, and draw from their own resources. This will result in tragedy in their lives and in the lives of those who follow them as spiritual leaders. Barton calls spiritual leaders to engage in a process of spiritual discipline that will allow them to reconnect with the divine presence in their lives and then be able to lead from that connection, with benefits for themselves and those they lead. Using the story of Moses, Barton sketches a process of encountering God through the practice of certain spiritual disciplines, such as solitude, silence, awareness of God's activity, Sabbath rest, and intercessory prayer. Along the way Barton addresses topics such as understanding one's calling, understanding one's own spiritual journey so as to help others on theirs, building healthy ministry teams of interdependent people, and how those teams can exercise the gift of discernment so they can do God's will together.

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