

# Leadership Traps in SPAR

Leadership in God's kingdom is for everyone. Every man gets the privilege of being the unique leader that God has created him to be. I enjoy watching the different leadership personalities impact the lives of men in our community. Mark leads differently than Jonathan, while Marshall leads differently than Jeff. Yet, we all lead perfectly according to our divine design. And most importantly, we all are leading like Jesus did, with deep vulnerability, crazy faith, and huge love.

Leading relationally is an exciting journey for any man. Our Biblical SPAR model of meeting, discipling, and leading is a very rewarding way of living the Christian life. One has to die to self and learn a brand-new skill set. The hard work is worth the effort. We get to watch men, families, and churches transform.

This journey also has its challenges. The biggest challenge is me. And you. Yes, we as leaders, are our own biggest obstacles. Our daily struggle with pride, fear, and selfishness are good and healthy. And yet, they can cause us to miss out on "bearing MUCH fruit" for God's kingdom.

There are six big traps that a SPAR leader can fall into if we are not staying spiritually aware. The Holy Spirit is good at helping us avoid these snares, IF we will simply pay attention. Ask the Spirit to show you which one of these is a big temptation for you as a leader.

LEADERSHIP TRAP #1 is: *Focusing on the meeting instead of the men.*

Much of contemporary ministry today is program-based, meaning that the ministry takes place during a certain time of the week at a certain place. While there is nothing wrong with program-based ministry, Jesus modeled a different kind of ministry. His focus was relationship-based ministry. Discipling others was a way of life, not a weekly meeting.

While the weekly SPAR meeting will be significant, what happens in between the meetings is more important than what happens during the meetings. Remember, the quality of the ministry in a SPAR meeting will be determined by the quality of

the relationships. Most SPAR groups that fizzle are ones that never got off the ground in the first place. In essence, they never formed genuine SPAR relationships. Remember, only real brothers have the privilege of sparring together. Small group attendees will get to do only one thing: attend a small group. God's men were not created to attend a weekly meeting.

How do you connect with your men in between SPAR meetings? It's an important question. We all can get lazy at times. What is your next step in making disciples as a lifestyle? There are many ways that you can impact men in between meetings. Here are a few ideas:

- Call one man the day after SPAR. Tell him in 30 seconds or less how he impacted you during the SPAR meeting.
- Do a one-on-one (breakfast, coffee, lunch) with one or more of the men.
- 10 minutes SPAR call with a brother as you drive down the road.
- Track down a man before or after church in the sanctuary to follow up on his SPAR meeting ministry time.
- Go for a run, shoot a gun, go to the gym, etc. with a SPAR brother.
- Serve him. Does he need help with some yard work? Give him an hour of your time on a Saturday morning.
- What else? There is no limit in the ways that you can impact and build relationship with another man.

Every man is hungry for intimacy with another brother in Christ. How much time should a leader invest in men in between meetings? However God leads you. Remember, when you are pouring into your men you are renouncing your stinking self. The real winner of reaching out to your men is you.

*LEADERSHIP TRAP #2: Poor stewardship of time during the meeting.*

It is amazing what God will do during a 90-minute SPAR meeting if you will allow Him to work in and through His men. Every man can contribute much as well as be impacted greatly if we as leaders will be good stewards of our most valuable commodity, our time.

How are you stewarding the time that your men are giving you to lead them through the SPAR journey? As for me, I've wasted many hours as a SPAR leader. It is painful to admit it but it is true. I've been a wimpy SPAR leader more times

than I would like to admit. I've made every mistake possible when it comes to not stewarding the 5,400 seconds of a brothers' meeting. Here's the big ones:

- Getting off to a slow start. It is easy to spend the first 12 minutes talking about the ballgame or politics. Don't do it! Designate a time keeper if needed. 4 minutes maximum for fellowshiping. And don't wait for Bruce to arrive before you start. Bruce is always late!
- Letting Bob (or anybody) dominate the meeting. There will be times when one particular brother has a ton of heart stuff to unload. This is fine as long as it leads to life-giving ministry. Don't allow a man to remain in storytelling mode for more than 5 minutes. Focus on his heart issue and lead him to a God encounter. If he is not ready to look at his heart and listen to God, listen to his story with compassion, and simply move onto the next man.
- Not enough time left for a quality God encounter. This is the easiest mistake to make. If there are only 5 minutes left, there is not enough time for the main event: The God encounter. The last twenty minutes of the SPAR should be reserved for transformational prayer (if you have not already done so).

What are the heart issues that keep us from being good stewards of SPAR minutes? Lack of courage is the big one. Every SPAR gathering is the same: A courageous leader is desperately needed. It takes guts to lead men out of their fleshly conversations and distorted views and into God's presence where the darkness is exposed and captives are set free. SPAR leadership is not for the faint of heart. Remember, you are not a teacher or a facilitator. You are a kingdom leader!

After several years of leading SPAR, I finally realized that every SPAR meeting is a leap of faith. Regardless of my ministry experience, Bible knowledge, and giftedness, I am totally dependent on God working deeply in the souls of the men one that can.

**LEADERSHIP TRAP #3: *Failure to go after the next man.***

Remember Private Desmond Doss in the movie Hacksaw Ridge? His prayer is ours as well: "Please Lord, give me one more man." Going after the "next man" is the

lifeblood of the brotherhood. There are two simple choices to make as a SPAR leader. Either we lead our men into the adrenaline rush of rescuing the next man, or we die of boredom. It's just that simple. Can we use a SPAR meeting to go after the next man? For sure! Here's how:

- Keeping a running list of the guys that each man is pursuing. Every man is surrounded by lost, isolated, and wounded men.
- Interceding for these men on a regular basis.
- Create opportunities to connect with these men as a group.
- Be willing to do whatever it takes. Remember the 4 men who tore the roof off of a house to get their buddy to Jesus? Get creative. Go get the next man!

Healthy growth is God's will for every group. It is built into the DNA of the church. And, there is nothing more exciting than seeing a new man get set free from addiction and begin to love his wife and children. This is we change the world-going after the next man!

LEADERSHIP TRAP #4 *Refusal to multiply leaders.*

Going after the "next man" will guarantee one thing: healthy kingdom growth. God loves to grow His kingdom. This kind of growth will also guarantee new SPAR groups. Multiplying SPAR groups requires that we are always raising up new SPAR leaders. How are you using your SPAR group to train and multiply new leaders?

Every SPAR group should have an apprentice or a co-leader. Remember, we are ALWAYS reproducing leaders and multiplying disciplemakers. What if God wants to multiply your group into 20 groups over the next 5 years? What will it take to have 20 humble, skilled leaders and 20 co-leaders?

The best thing you can do to multiply leaders is to: STOP leading! That's right. Let another man lead. It takes faith to give the leadership baton to another man and sit back and watch him make mistakes. Just remember, mistakes are good. The path to effective SPAR leadership is full of mishaps and blunders.

The main obstacle to letting others lead is believing this lie: I am the most capable leaders in the group. This is a snare that I have fallen into many times. Although I would never say it, I believed that I was the most skilled leader because of my leadership experience. This is nothing but pure PRIDE. I get to repent of this nasty fruit of pride on a regular basis.

There is a joy greater than being used by good to lead men: the joy of watching other men being used by God to lead men!