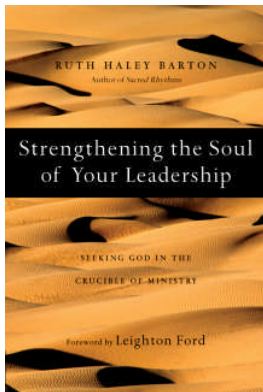


Q&A

AUTHOR INTERVIEW



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—Ruth Haley Barton

Your previous books, like *Invitation to Solitude and Silence* and *Sacred Rhythms*, have focused on spiritual formation. Why did you decide to focus on spiritual formation and leadership in this new book?

Ruth Haley Barton: Most pastors and ministry leaders enter into ministry out of genuine passion for Christ and what it is he has called them to do. However, over time it is easy to become so focused on meeting other people's needs, leading others to Christ and helping them to grow, that we neglect continuing to cultivate our own ongoing journey of intimacy with God and the spiritual transformation that is the result of that intimacy with Christ. When this happens, we become depleted and disconnected from the very Source of spiritual vitality and authority.

You have been in many leadership positions and have worked with leaders throughout the years. What are one or two of the greatest lessons you have learned about leadership?

Ruth: That it is possible to gain the whole world of ministry success and lose your own soul—that place where God's Spirit and my spirit dwell together in union. It is amazing how successful some of us can look on the outside while at the same time being so empty on the inside. The other thing is how hard leadership is once you get past the initial euphoria. This may be God's way of keeping us humble. I am convinced that the only way for leaders to stay faithful to the call of God upon our lives for the long haul is to keep seeking God tenaciously in the crucible of ministry—which is what this book is about.

How would you describe the general state of many leaders' souls today?

Ruth: Depleted and longing for God. The most widespread issue that I encounter in working with leaders is how exhausted they are in God's service and how they have come to believe that this is what is necessary in order to be "successful" in all the ways we measure that these days. Right underneath that is a profound longing for an encounter with God that will change them somewhere deep inside where it matters. When they are able to become quiet, they might acknowledge a longing to be loved and affirmed beyond what they do for God and others. They might acknowledge a need for comfort or healing or deeper levels of transformation. They might be longing for a word from the Lord that offers guidance for themselves personally or for their leadership situation.

Q&A

AUTHOR INTERVIEW



Why is solitude so important for a leader?

Ruth: Solitude is at the heart of spiritual life because it is that place where we give God our full and undivided attention and await his word to us. Without solitude it is impossible to have a spiritual life, and cultivating the spiritual life is at the heart of spiritual leadership. As Henri Nouwen says, solitude is the place of the great encounter with God and the place of the great struggle with the compulsions of the false self. Encountering God in such a way that we are delivered from the compulsions of the false self and are free to lead from our authentic self is what we as leaders need the most.

What is your hope for the readers of *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership* and for leaders in general?

Ruth: I have only one desire for this book, really, and that is that it will lead the reader into encounters with God that will strengthen the soul of their leadership in the places where they need it most. The best thing we have to bring to leadership is our own transforming self, and that transformation comes as we are strengthened in the inner being by the presence of God.

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