

# SCANNING YOUR DASHBOARD

WARNING LIGHTS  
& HOLY HABITS

=====*for*=====

A LEADER'S SOUL

ROWLAND FORMAN

## Dashboard Indicator #6

Am I Isolated or Investing in Others?

## Caring for Your Own Soul

Effective leaders care deeply for the souls of others. Yet this often comes at the expense of their own soul's well-being—and sometimes that of their family as well.

***Scanning Your Dashboard*** invites you to regularly attend to your inner life. Just as a driver watches the dashboard for warning lights and fuel levels, wise leaders learn to notice what is happening beneath the surface of their lives.

Each **Dashboard Indicator** in this mentoring resource pairs a Warning Light with a Holy Habit—helping you not only to recognize areas of vulnerability, but also to respond with practices that cultivate a healthy, Christ-dependent life.

A dashboard doesn't only warn you when something is wrong—it also reassures you when things are functioning as they should.

**Begin by processing Warning Light #6 and Holy Habit #6 on your own.** Then, if possible, meet with a mentor-friend or small group, to share what the Holy Spirit is bringing to your attention. **Working with Warning Lights and then Holy Habits, helps you not only to see what you need to work on, but to step into a grace-filled response.**

### **WARNING LIGHT #6:**

#### ***ISOLATION: Am I Drifting Away from God's Design for Interdependence?***

When the heart begins carrying more than it was meant to carry alone, leadership effectiveness often narrows rather than widens. One of the earliest signs is isolation.

In leadership, isolation is rarely a deliberate choice; it is more often a drift. What begins as a well-intentioned desire to avoid burdening others—or the practical assumption that it's quicker to do things yourself—can slowly become a pattern of carrying loads God never intended you to carry alone.

Isolation is described in Ecclesiastes 4:8:

*There was a man all alone; he had neither son nor brother. There was no end to his toil, yet his eyes were not content with his wealth. "For whom am I toiling," he asked, "and why am I depriving myself of enjoyment?"*

That is a striking picture of productivity without companionship, achievement without joy. There was no one to gently challenge him, no one to slow him down.

Thankfully, Moses had a trusted companion in his father-in-law Jethro. Exodus 18 gives us a window into their interaction at a critical juncture in Moses' leadership. As wise mentors do, Jethro first affirmed Moses by rejoicing in all that the LORD had accomplished through him.

Jethro then went on to ask two perceptive questions:

*What is this you are doing for the people? Why do you sit alone as a judge, while all these people stand around you from morning to evening? (Exodus 18:14).*

To his credit, Moses gave a straightforward answer: *Because the people come to me to seek God's will.* Moses' isolation was not born of laziness or pride, but of giftedness and calling. Yet as a true mentor-friend, Jethro dared to say what Moses could not see: *What you are doing is **not good**.* His words echoed God's declaration in Eden: *It is **not good** for man to be alone.*

Before my first ministry burnout, Jethro's assessment of Moses' isolated leadership style could have been written about me—*The work is too heavy for you; you cannot handle it alone (Exodus 18:18).*

Sadly, I didn't recognize it at the time. It took a car wreck to get my attention. On my way from Christchurch, New Zealand, to Queenstown, to speak at a conference, I was driving too fast. The fuel gauge was on empty when my car hit a concrete bridge, and landed on a boulder in the Roaring Meg River. It was a metaphor of how I was living: running on empty and driving too fast. God graced me soon after that with a Jethro-type mentor who was able to ask questions that have formed the basis of this "7 Warning Lights" and "7 Holy Habits" series of devotionals.

Have you, like Moses, experienced God's hand of blessing on your life and ministry? Are you doing things alone? Do decisions bottleneck with you? Have

you drifted—unwittingly—into an independent rather than interdependent style of leadership?

Could Jethro's courageous words—***not good***—be the Holy Spirit's whisper to you today? Before rushing to a solution, allow this still, small voice of the Spirit to register as a warning light.

### **Reflect & Discuss**

1. Where have you noticed Isolation creeping in through busyness, pressure, or success?
2. In what ways might your strengths or gifting be contributing to isolated leadership?
3. Who currently has permission to ask you hard questions like Jethro did with Moses?
4. What kind of decision-making, approval-giving or burden-bearing depends on you alone? Why?
5. What might interdependence rather than independence look like for you in this season?

### **Prayer:**

Faithful and gracious God, You never designed us to carry life or leadership alone. Forgive us for the ways we have drifted into isolation—through busyness, success, or the quiet belief that we must manage on our own.

Open our eyes to where our loads have become too heavy and our circles too small. Give us the humility to welcome trusted voices, the courage to share responsibility, and the wisdom to live interdependently as You intended.

Help us hear Your gentle warning not as condemnation, but as grace. Lead us back into life-giving community, for Your glory and our good. Amen.

## HOLY HABIT #6

### INTERDEPENDENCE: *Learning to Walk with Others*

Let me ask you a simple question:

Who is walking alongside you so that you can lead in a way that is healthy and sustainable? Do they know what warning signals might be flashing on your life or ministry dashboard right now? And how vulnerable have you really been with them?

The story of leadership in Scripture is not one of heroic independence.

It is the story of holy interdependence.

Ecclesiastes describes a person who is ... *all alone* ... –working hard yet isolated and joyless (Ecclesiastes 4:7-8). But then the writer turns and shows us something better: *Two are better than one* ... (Ecclesiastes 4:9) because partnership brings support, encouragement and protection. If one stumbles, the other helps them back up.

Let me repeat that question. Do you have someone partnering with you who knows your vulnerabilities and can steady you when you wobble?

We all need others.

- Moses needed Jethro to pull him back from overload (Exodus 18:13-28).
- Joshua needed Moses to give him fresh courage (Deuteronomy 34:9).
- David needed Nathan to confront him with grace (2 Samuel 12:1-7).
- Timothy needed Paul to inspire him with a bigger vision (2 Timothy 2:1-2).

Sometimes the need is mutual.

- Naomi needed Ruth's companionship, and Ruth needed Naomi's wisdom (Ruth 1:6-2:9).
- Saul needed Barnabas to speak up for him (Acts 9:26-29) and Barnabas needed Saul's expertise in Antioch (Acts 11:22-26).

This is what New Testament writers called the one-anothers:

- I encourage you; you encourage me. (Hebrews 3:13)
- I pray for you; you pray for me. (James 5:16)
- I carry your burdens; you carry mine. (Galatians 6:2)

God never intended his people, especially his leaders, to flourish in isolation.

We are members of one body: the Body of Christ. And body parts need each other. *The eye cannot say to the hand, 'I don't need you!' And the head cannot say to the feet, 'I don't need you!'* (1 Corinthians 12:21-22).

So how do you find a trusted mentor-friend to share your life with?

Start where you always need to start. Pray. Ask the Holy Spirit to guide you.

Then pay attention to the people God has already placed near you. Take note of what some call a Divine “click”—a growing sense of trust and affinity. Arrange time to meet for mutual encouragement. And remember your primary role is not to fix, but to ask questions and listen to each other.

Luke tells the story of two disciples walking the road to Emmaus. They were processing the heartbreak of Jesus’ death. They were processing life, but they were still missing something.

They were walking together, but without Christ. Until Jesus came alongside them.

He walked with them. He listened. As he opened the Scriptures, their hearts burned, and as he broke bread, they realized who he was.

(Luke 24:13-35)

Interdependence overcomes isolation. But it goes to an even deeper level when we add dependence on Christ.

As I look back on 50 years of Christian leadership in various roles and ministries, it has been the mutual mentors in my life, the “Jethro’s” or “Barnabas’s who have sustained me. They have been companions when I was alone, stabilizers when I might have tripped up, guides when I had almost lost my way, and encouragers when the wind had gone out of my sails.

And even more than that, it is the endless love and faithful companionship of my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, that means I will never really walk alone.

Servant leadership is daily dependence on Christ. Apart from Him we can do nothing.

And it is also the courage to walk with others.

So, take one simple step this week:

Pray.

Then reach out to someone you trust. Invite them to walk alongside you.

**Healthy leadership is not independence. It is dependence—on Christ, and on the people he has graciously provided.**

### **Reflect & Discuss**

1. Who can you trust to be able to understand and support you through the real pressures and vulnerabilities of your leadership?
2. When are you most tempted to drift into isolation?
3. Which biblical example of interdependence stands out most to you—and why?
4. What would it look like to take one step toward a mentor-friend relationship this week?

### **Prayer:**

Lord Jesus, thank you that you never designed me to walk alone. Forgive me for the times I've tried to lead in independence or hiddenness.

Give me courage to be known, wisdom to seek the right people, and humility to both give and receive support.

Teach me to walk with others—and to walk closely with You. Amen.

## The 7 Dashboard Indicators

- Indicator #1** Am I Drifting, or Abiding in Christ?
- Indicator #2** Am I Praying Less, or Praying More?
- Indicator #3** Am I Proudful, or Humbly Serving Others?
- Indicator #4** Am I Running on Empty, or Learning Unforced Rhythms of Grace?
- Indicator #5** Am I Slipping Morally, or Guarding my Heart?
- Indicator #6** Am I Isolated, or Investing in Others?
- Indicator #7** Am I Pretending, or Leading with Integrity?



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