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Contact: Kelly Hughes, 312-280-8126
kelly@dechanthughes.com

New Book Shows How Cultivating Spiritual Influence Can Bring about the Enduring Change the World Needs Now

A world with the troubles that we find ourselves in today needs more than new leadership. It needs people in every sphere of life who exercise spiritual influence, drawing upon deep currents of character, integrity, wisdom, and perseverance to bring about enduring change, says author, pastor, and speaker Mel Lawrenz. His new book, *Spiritual Influence: The Hidden Power Behind Leadership* (Zondervan, August 2012), offers a life-affirming approach to today's leadership crisis.

Such a crisis exists because we have devalued the spiritual side of leadership, Lawrenz says. This is not about religion per se. It's about altruistic values, the dignity of human beings, and purposeful work—concepts that are the foundation of civilized societies. Crises of leadership in politics, on Wall Street, in education, and elsewhere can be attributed to a loss of these essentially spiritual values.

Lawrenz emphasizes that he is not attempting to shape “spiritual leaders,” a moniker he eschews. “It tells us nothing about motives and ends. Some ‘spiritual leaders’ have guided people to summits, and others, off cliffs. For every Billy Graham there has been a Jim Jones.”

Instead, his aim is to help people understand the true nature of influence and the hidden forces that create visible, enduring change: “the sustained influx of great ideas, solid wisdom, reliable truth.” Not to be confused with persuasion or salesmanship, influence is a spiritual dynamic that shapes our thinking and being. Therefore, Lawrenz says, “our influence in the lives of others must always have a grounding in God.”

In fact, spiritual influence is a countercultural movement. It assumes that the best growth is organic and progressive, challenging people to slow down, let truth percolate, take time to develop many relationships that will yield many different insights.

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Drawing from over thirty years of experience in leadership, Lawrenz offers a practical guide to the four phases in which spiritual influence develops:

- Getting Grounded: building a solid foundation of integrity;
- Taking Initiative: generating ideas, seizing opportunities, exploring new horizons;
- Going Deep: developing discernment and wisdom, and promoting truth;
- Facing Challenges: managing expectations, and dealing with crises and failure.

Influence is a spiritual matter because it appeals to people's inner lives, where opinions are formed, values are shaped, and decisions begin.

Leaders can fulfill a higher purpose if they link their influence with the work of the Spirit of God and with the spiritual qualities of the people they are working with. It means being who we really are and drawing on God as he really is, Lawrenz says: "No one really wants to follow you, per se. They want to know that, by following you, they are following a higher principle. People want to know whether they are being led by and influenced by God. They want and need meaning, redemption and purpose."

Mel Lawrenz trains an international network of Christian leaders, ministry pioneers, and thought-leaders. He served as senior pastor of Elmbrook Church in Brookfield, Wisconsin, for ten years, having succeeded Stuart Briscoe, and now serves as Elmbrook's minister at large. He has a Ph.D. in the history of Christian thought (Marquette University) and is on the adjunct faculty of Trinity International University. He has also been an adjunct professor of history at the University of Wisconsin, Milwaukee. See TheInfluenceProject.com for research, resources, and other extensions of *Spiritual Influence*.

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by Mel Lawrenz
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For more information about *Spiritual Influence*, or to schedule an interview with Mel Lawrenz, please contact Kelly Hughes, 312-280-8126 or kelly@dechanthughes.com.