

“Finding and Following Jesus Together”

Selections from *LeaderLines*,
a weekly e-newsletter to our church leadership
from Pastor Tom Goodman
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The following material is adapted from articles in LeaderLines that appeared from March 22 to May 3, 2007. LeaderLines is an e-newsletter sent to our church's leaders each Thursday from Pastor Tom Goodman. Anyone can subscribe to LeaderLines at <http://www.HillcrestAustin.org/subscriptions>.

You can either read through this material in one sitting, or use the material for your daily devotional for eight days.

Day 1: Finding and Following Jesus Together

Hillcrest is to be a place where people can find and follow Jesus together.

Call it our vision, our mission, our calling--whatever the current jargon from management conferences, that's the church's task.

"Hillcrest is to be a place where people can find and follow Jesus together." Each word in that sentence is carefully chosen:

"Find Jesus" -- Doesn't everyone believe that a church should be a place where seeking people can find Jesus? Sadly, no. While every Christian I've met believes in personal evangelism (at least in theory), few know or care about being "seeker sensitive" on Sunday mornings and at other church gatherings. Now, there's a difference between being a church for seekers and being a seeker-sensitive church. A church for seekers gears everything it does toward introducing the faith to non-believers. When I read about church life in the New Testament, I don't find any seeker churches. But I do find seeker-sensitive churches. When I read Acts 2 and 1 Cor. 14:23, I discover that Hillcrest should expect non-believers to be present when we gather to worship the Name and study the Word. Not only should we expect seekers to participate with us, what we do should intrigue them and even convict them. Worship and Bible study are "for believers," yes, but not *just* for believers. Hillcrest is a place to find Jesus, like the Greeks who came to Philip in John 12:21 saying, "We want to meet Jesus."

"Follow Jesus" -- As I said, Hillcrest isn't a "seeker" church where everything is designed simply to introduce nonbelievers to the faith. What should nonbelievers see when they attend the ministries and activities of Hillcrest? They should see people faithfully following Jesus. We should be like the believers Paul commends in 2 Thessalonians 1:3, whose "faith is growing more and more." So, we're a church where people challenge each other to (have you heard this before?) *honor* God, *invite* people to consider Jesus, *love* each other, and *live* the Word. Every command in Scripture can be summarized in those four statements.

“Together” -- Don’t leave out that word, “together.” We’ll never be as effective alone as we will be together in our spiritual search or in our spiritual growth. People figure out Christianity and grow in Christianity only as they discuss things together, challenge each other, pray with each other, and watch how others live the faith.

If we don’t need to be *together* to find and follow Jesus, then we may as well sell our church property to a condominium developer. If we can figure out who Jesus is just by doing Google searches on the internet, or if we can grow in Jesus just by reading Max Lucado books at home, then there’s no need for all the stuff we do at the corner of Steck and Greenslope.

Neither our spiritual search nor our spiritual growth will go far unless it’s done with others.

Some churches are very effective at helping people find Jesus, but they don’t really focus on helping people grow once they’ve come to faith. Other churches are very effective at helping people follow Jesus, but frankly they’re uncomfortable with the issues and questions that seekers raise. Our church needs to be where people can come together to meet Jesus and grow in him.

Tim Keller put this well in a lengthy interview for “The Cutting Edge” magazine. Keller is pastor of Redeemer Presbyterian Church in New York City, and I tend to read and listen to anything the man releases, because he’s got a lot to say about what he calls “city-center churches” like Hillcrest. Keller says:

In Acts 2 and 1 Cor. 14:23 we see non-believers attracted and challenged by worship. We learn there that non-believers are expected in worship, and that non-believers must find worship challenging and comprehensible. In city-centers where there are a mixture of world-views, it is crucial to include both Christians and non-Christians in the same service--even in many of the other meetings and ministries of the church. . . . Why? In a “mixed” group, when the preacher speaks somewhat more to non-Christians, the Christians present learn how to share the faith. . . . On the other hand, when the preacher speaks more to Christians, the non-Christians present come to see how Christianity “works.” . . . In short, a center-city church should not simply “do mission” or “do evangelism.” Every part of its ministry should be geared routinely both to Christians and non-Christians, and expecting non-Christians to be “overhearing” whatever is said and done in any context.

. . .

If you speak and discourse as if your whole neighborhood is present eventually more and more of your neighborhood will find their way in or be invited. Why? Most Christians, even when they are very edified in church, know intuitively that their non-Christian friends would not appreciate the service. What you want is for

a Christian to come to your church and say, “Oh! I wish my non-Christian friend could see (or hear) this!” If this is forgotten, soon even a growing church will be filled with Christians who commute in from various towns and communities far and wide rather than filling up with Christians and seekers from your church’s immediate neighborhoods.

So, we are to be a church where people can find and follow Jesus together. Practically speaking, can those who need to *find* Jesus and those *following* him do that *together*? I’ll try to answer that question in “Day 2.”

Prayer for Today: Pray that Hillcrest will be a place where people can find and follow Jesus together. Pray for this vision to “catch fire” in our congregation.

Day 2:

Can People Find and Follow Jesus Together?

In “Day 1,” I laid out the aim of our ministry: that Hillcrest will be a place where people can find and follow Jesus together. But someone might ask, “Is this really something that can be done *together*? Won’t we either *confuse* nonbelievers or *slow down* believers if we try to find and follow Jesus together?”

One of the biggest misconceptions in churches is that helping people *find* Jesus and helping people *follow* Jesus are completely separate processes. People who hold this misconception assume that each group needs a message that the other group doesn’t need to hear. In reality, those who want to *find* Jesus and those who want to *follow* him both need to hear about the forgiveness of Christ, and they both need to hear about the instructions of Christ.

On the one hand, those who want to *find* Jesus and those who want to *follow* him both need to hear about the forgiveness of Christ. Some people would think that the only people who need to hear this are those who are considering Christ, and once we become believers we no longer need to reflect on the message of the cross. But in my twenty-six years as a pastor, I can tell you that lifelong Christians need to hear it as often as do seekers.

Jesus seemed to think so. He commanded us to practice two symbolic rituals: baptism and the Lord’s Supper. While baptism takes place at the start of the Christian life, the Lord’s Supper takes place *throughout* the Christian life--but have you ever noticed that baptism and the Lord’s Supper both point to the work of the cross? Jesus seemed to think

that I will never get to a point of spiritual growth where I don't need to be reminded of what his sacrifice accomplished for me.

On the other hand, those who want to *find* Jesus and those who want to *follow* him both need to hear about the instructions of Christ. Some people would think that the *only* people who need to hear this are those who have embraced Christ, but I've discovered that those considering Christ want this and need this, too.

In fact, teaching the kind of life Christ wants us to live is the best form of evangelism in our world today. People want to know what they're here for, and when we communicate the *purpose* for human existence, it's incredibly attractive. What's the purpose for existence? You've heard it before. We're here to:

Honor the Lord of Life
Invite Our World to Life
Love the Fellowship for Life
Live the Word in Life

Did you think that the H.I.L.L. acrostic was just to outline what we do "at church"? Not at all! God made us to *honor* him, *invite* others to him, *love* each other, and *live* his Word. When we fulfill those purposes, we are fulfilled as human beings. So, explaining those purposes is the way we help people *find* Jesus and the way we help people *follow* Jesus.

Let me say that again: *finding* and *following* Jesus together involves pointing people to the H.I.L.L. that we are meant to climb!

So, *finding* Jesus and *following* him can be done *together*. But the only way that can happen is if *we accept* wherever someone's "at" while *we encourage* them to reach the next level.

Did you catch the two verbs? Accept. Encourage. To fulfill our vision, we have to put both into practice.

I'll explain how to do that in "Day 3."

Prayer for Today: Pray that our congregation can rally around this idea that everything we do is so that people can find and follow Jesus together.

Day 3: Stages Up the H.I.L.L.

We've been discussing a worthy vision: "Hillcrest is to be a place where people can find and follow Jesus together."

In your "Day 2" reading, I showed how we can be a church that can (and should) reach seekers and develop believers in the same services and ministries. It's all about pointing people to the life purposes we're all meant to fulfill. God made us to HONOR him, INVITE others to him, LOVE each other, and LIVE his Word--at our church we call that the "H.I.L.L." we're meant to climb. When we fulfill those purposes, we are fulfilled as human beings. So, explaining those purposes is the way we help people *find* Jesus and the way we help people *follow* Jesus.

So, finding Jesus and following him can be done together. But as I closed your "Day 2" reading, I pointed out that the only way that can happen is if *we accept* wherever someone's "at" while *we encourage* them to reach the next level.

Did you catch the two verbs? Accept. Encourage. To fulfill our vision, we have to put both into practice.

When it comes to fulfilling our life purposes (climbing the H.I.L.L.--honor, invite, love, and live), people are at one of the following stages:

Stage One: "I am *exposed* to the life purposes."

Stage Two: "I *agree with* the life purposes."

Stage Three: "I *practice* the life purposes."

Stage Four: "I *advance* the life purposes in others."

If we're a church where people are *finding and following Jesus together*, all of us will be at a different stage. But notice again: no matter what stage a person is at, we must turn their attention to the discipleship H.I.L.L. that we are meant to climb!

Stage One: As we build relationships with lost and unchurched persons, we *expose* them to the life purposes. Through the music and the lessons at church--and through the example we set with our own lives--they get exposed to the inspiring life Christ is calling them into.

Stage Two: As they make their commitment to Christ and to our church, we lead them to *agree with* the life purposes. At this stage, they are simply saying, "I commit my life to Christ as his disciple: I pledge to pursue his vision for my life."

Stage Three: Here people work through the joys and struggles of putting the life purposes into practice.

Stage Four: Christ expected us to influence others for him. We need to nudge others to embrace Christ and to climb the discipleship H.I.L.L.

Of course, moving from one stage to another doesn't mean you abandon the work of the previous stages. Even though I've been at Stage Four for many years, I'm still *exposed* to the life purposes as I watch the inspiring examples of great disciples around me (Stage One); I still *agree with* the life purposes--and sometimes have to renew my commitment to Christ (Stage Two); I will never come to a point where I'm not *growing* in my ability to practice the life purposes (Stage Three). But Christ calls all disciples to influence others who need to find and follow Jesus, and that's the stage many of us have reached (Stage Four).

In the rest of these daily readings, I'll go into more detail about each of these four stages and how we serve people who are at each one.

Prayer for Today: Pray that God will help you be fully faithful at the Stage *you* are at, and pray that God will help you reach the next Stage.

Day 4: Stages Up the H.I.L.L.--Stage One

"Hillcrest is to be a place where people can find and follow Jesus together."

That's our mission, our calling, our vision, our task—I'm not sure what the current management jargon is, but that statement summarizes what we're supposed to do together as a congregation.

Imagine that:

- Your worship services are attended by people who are finding and following Jesus together. Seekers watch believers authentically worship God, and worship leaders ensure that every part of the service is relatable to new people whom God is drawing to himself.
- Your Sunday School class or Common Ground group has people who are *considering* Christ as well as people who are *committed* to Christ. Seekers grow as they learn biblical guidance, and believers grow as they try to answer the questions from their seeking friends.
- Your Hillcrest Institute class has people who could win a Bible drill competition as well as people who have just begun to crack open a Bible.

Is that really how Hillcrest looks right now? Not always. But that's why it's called a *vision*!

If we are going to make that vision a reality, we have to realize that people are at different stages in responding to God's call upon their life. What's God's call? God made us to HONOR him, INVITE others to him, LOVE each other, and LIVE his Word-- at our church we call that the "H.I.L.L." we're meant to climb. When we fulfill those purposes, we are fulfilled as human beings. When it comes to fulfilling those life purposes, people are at one of these stages:

Stage One: "I am *exposed* to the life purposes."

Stage Two: "I *agree with* the life purposes."

Stage Three: "I *practice* the life purposes."

Stage Four: "I *advance* the life purposes in others."

Let's look at Stage One. As we build relationships with lost and unchurched persons, we *expose* them to the life purposes. They get introduced to a better way of living as they simply watch us *honor* God, *invite* people to the Jesus way, *love* others, and *live* the precepts of the Word. This happens in your neighborhood as you and other parents watch the kids at the neighborhood pool or cheer for the kids on the soccer sidelines. This happens in your workplace as you complete assignments and as you socialize.

Eventually, some of the people from your neighborhood or workplace accept your invitation to Hillcrest, and they get even wider exposure to the H.I.L.L. They see other believers working on the life purposes. They hear the challenges from the sermons and small-group lessons, they sing along with songs that encourage us to practice the life purposes. Soon, they are asking questions, offering to help with a room setup, joining us as we put a roof on a house, or volunteering to take dinner to a new friend in their small group who's been hospitalized. By this point they are deep in the process of *finding* Jesus among those who are *following* him.

How can we be a church filled with people who are *finding* Jesus among those who are *following* him?

Build relationships with your THEMs. There is no church advertising campaign or visitation program that can substitute for this. Jesus commissioned us to, "Go and make THEM my disciples" (Matthew 28), so you have to identify who the THEMs are in your own life.

Be what you are! You laugh at good jokes and cry at funerals. You're competitive on the golf course and you're ambitious at work. You are a growing disciple who has successes and setbacks, firm convictions and honest questions. That's what seekers need to see. Handing them a tract won't do it; sitting in a Bible study group with people too afraid to be *real* won't do it. They need to be exposed to the life purposes by spending time with people who are trying to live the life purposes (Honor, Invite, Love, and Live).

Consciously connect. Whatever you lead or organize at church needs to be designed with everyone in mind: those who are *finding* Jesus as well as those who are *following*

him. Whether it's a worship service you're leading or a Bible study group, mission trip, or banquet you're planning, make sure that you envision it through the eyes of those who are brand new to this church thing.

Be patient with them. It will take a while for people at Stage One to become regular attenders at your event. There may be habits and lifestyle choice they aren't ready to lay down. The answers to some of the questions they raise may be painfully self-evident to you, and yet they keep struggling with them. If we're really going to be a church where people find and follow Jesus together, patience is required.

Challenge them. Real friends challenge each other to deal with things that need to be addressed. You have to have patience, yes, but you also have to encourage them to take the next step with Jesus.

What's the next step? Those who are *exposed* to the life purposes must be encouraged to *embrace* them. We'll look at Stage Two in your "Day 5" reading.

Prayer for Today: Ask God to show you your THEMs. There are neighbors, coworkers, relatives, and friends whom you need to befriend and invite to church.

Day 5: Stages Up the H.I.L.L.--Stage Two

God made us to *honor* him, *invite* others to him, *love* each other, and *live* his Word--at our church we call that our "H.I.L.L." to climb. When we fulfill those purposes, we are fulfilled as human beings.

Now, leaders at a church where people find and follow Jesus together will recognize that people are at one of four stages in relation to these life purposes:

Stage One: "I am *exposed* to the life purposes."

Stage Two: "I *agree with* the life purposes."

Stage Three: "I *practice* the life purposes."

Stage Four: "I *advance* the life purposes in others."

In your "Day 4" reading, we looked at what to do with those at Stage One. But those who are *exposed* to the life purposes must be encouraged to *own* them. That's Stage Two.

At this stage, the person says "Jesus is my Lord and Hillcrest is my church." She accepts Christ's offer of forgiveness, commits to the path he wants her to walk, and she formally connects with the Hillcrest community through membership.

Think of the second stage as a wedding. A wedding is the *completion* of the courtship and the *beginning* of the marriage. In the same way, Stage Two is the completion of something and the beginning of something.

On the one hand, Stage Two is the *completion* of a person's spiritual search. A wedding isn't the union of two strangers, because in courtship the two get to know each other and consider whether they could spend a lifetime building a home with each other. In Stage One, people are given the time and the freedom to ask their questions about Christ and see in others what a life as a Christ follower looks like. They feel more and more a part of the Hillcrest family and they become more and more persuaded to commit to Christ and his church. But courtship leads to something. Just like a wedding date, there comes a point at which someone *considering* these things *commits* to these things. The "Discover Hillcrest" class is completed, and the new member is baptized and/or presented for membership.

On the other hand, Stage Two is the *beginning* of a person's spiritual growth. Again, I compare it to the wedding that begins a marriage. Don't look for a couple in a black tuxedo and white wedding dress if you're looking for a couple that has weathered the storms of life, learned how to forgive, figured out the cost of mutual sacrifice, knows intuitively how best to serve each other, and can predict each other's moods. If you're looking for a couple like that, go find a 50th wedding anniversary party!

The half-hour wedding is a place to *express* commitment; it's the lifelong marriage where a couple grows and develops.

Likewise, as leaders of a church where people find and follow Jesus together, we should rejoice when people reach Stage Two, but we should understand that it's only a start. A newly-minted Christian isn't like a believer who has had decades of spiritual growth. There are still old habits and old ways of thinking that have to be overcome.

Most church leaders say they want to be part of a "New Testament church." Have you actually read what a church in the New Testament was like? Most of Paul's letters were written to congregations filled with baby Christians, and the letters cover such basic issues and problems! So, if you want Hillcrest to be a church like those in the New Testament,

. . . expect to deal with doctrinal confusion like you find Paul addressing in the Galatian church,

. . . expect to deal with relationship issues like you find Paul addressing in the Philippian church,

. . . and expect to deal with the shocking ethical issues like you find Paul addressing in the Corinthian church.

Why? Because Stage Two is the beginning of spiritual growth, just as a wedding is just the beginning of a marriage. As Hillcrest leaders, then, we have to rejoice at someone's *expression* of commitment (Stage Two), and lead them into a lifetime of spiritual growth (Stage Three). We'll look at that stage in your "Day 6" reading.

Prayer for Today: God has blessed us by leading many guests to our services in the last several months! Pray that they will reach Stage Two and join our church through profession of faith or transfer or membership.

Day 6: Stages Up the H.I.L.L.--Stage Three

My vision for our church is that we be a place where people can find and follow Jesus together. Think of it:

- . . . People in our Sunday worship services
finding and following Jesus together.
- . . . Youth on mission trips
finding and following Jesus together.
- . . . Boomers in a Second-Half Ministry social
finding and following Jesus together.
- . . . Participants in a Common Ground group
finding and following Jesus together.
- . . . Members of an Anchor Course study
finding and following Jesus together.

Now, leaders at a church where people find and follow Jesus together will recognize that people are at one of four stages in relation to these life purposes:

- Stage One: "I am *exposed* to the life purposes."
- Stage Two: "I *agree with* the life purposes."
- Stage Three: "I *practice* the life purposes."
- Stage Four: "I *advance* the life purposes in others."

What are these "life purposes"? God made us to *honor* him, *invite* others to him, *love* each other, and *live* his Word--at our church we call that our "H.I.L.L." to climb. When we fulfill those purposes, we are fulfilled as human beings.

Someone at Stage One is being *exposed* to the H.I.L.L. we're meant to climb: She catches a vision of the way life could be as she spends time with believers--in structured Hillcrest activities as well as informal social occasions. By the grace of God, she reaches Stage

Two where she *agrees* with the life purposes: She accepts Christ's offer of forgiveness, commits to the path he wants her to walk, and she formally connects with the Hillcrest community through membership.

As Hillcrest leaders, we need to make sure that those who *express* a commitment to climb the H.I.L.L. get all the help and encouragement they need to make the upward trek. That's our work with people at Stage Three. Here are four ways to do this:

Set the Example. In 1 Corinthians 11:1, Paul wrote, "Follow my example, as I follow the example of Christ." As a Hillcrest leader, can you say that yet? More important, does it bother you if you can't? Whatever your position--deacon, staff member, Common Ground host, Sunday School teacher--you set an example whether you want to or not. So, be sure to set an example worth following.

Pray. When Paul wrote the Colossian Christians, he commented on one of their leaders who was visiting him in prison: "Epaphras, who is one of you and a servant of Christ Jesus, sends greetings. He is always wrestling in prayer for you, that you may stand firm in all the will of God, mature and fully assured" (Colossians 4:12). When was the last time you "wrestled in prayer" for those you lead?

In my 20s, just starting out in ministry, I found all the pastoral prayers in the New Testament, wrote them on index cards, and memorized them. What a difference it would make if all of us as leaders prayed for those at Hillcrest like Paul prayed for his people! Listen to his heart in Philippians 1:9-11, for example--

And this is my prayer: that your love may abound more and more in knowledge and depth of insight, so that you may be able to discern what is best and may be pure and blameless until the day of Christ, filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ--to the glory and praise of God.

Evaluate the Program. We should use the H.I.L.L. acrostic to regularly evaluate the kind of program we provide at Hillcrest. Are we consciously, deliberately providing activities, studies, and opportunities for people to learn how to

. . . *honor* God with their worship, prayers, and stewardship?
. . . *invite* their world into a better life?
. . . *love* each other more and more?
. . . *live* the Bible in all it's practical goodness?

Exercise Church Discipline. As church leaders, we need put Galatians 6:1 into practice: "Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently." From time to time, our staff has had to quietly go to some people and remove them from leadership and service for a season. It's not pleasant, but it's biblical.

If you are in a position of influence, you may have to do the unpleasant work of reprimanding someone. Don't neglect this essential, biblical work of church leadership.

Another part of leadership is identifying growing Christians with the aim of pulling them into positions of leadership and influence. We'll look at how to get people to Stage Four in your "Day 7" reading.

Prayer for Today: The greatest "advertisement" our church could ever have is the transformed lives of our people. So, pray for the spiritual development of our people.

Day 7: Stages Up the H.I.L.L.--Stage Four

I see Hillcrest becoming a church where people can find a follow Jesus together. In these special daily readings, we've been looking at this vision--and your part in fulfilling it.

Today we'll look at how to lead people into "stage four" in finding and following Jesus together. We must recognize that people are at one of four stages when it comes to the "life purposes" all humans must fulfill. God made us to *honor* him, *invite* others to him, *love* each other, and *live* his Word--at our church we call that our "H.I.L.L." to climb. When we fulfill those purposes, we are fulfilled as human beings. At Hillcrest, we should expect to have people at four stages when it comes to these life purposes:

Stage One: "I am *exposed* to the life purposes."

Stage Two: "I *agree with* the life purposes."

Stage Three: "I *practice* the life purposes."

Stage Four: "I *advance* the life purposes in others."

Someone at Stage One is being *exposed* to the H.I.L.L. we're meant to climb: She catches a vision of the way life could be as she spends time with believers--in structured Hillcrest activities as well as informal social occasions. By the grace of God, she reaches Stage Two where she *agrees* with the life purposes: She accepts Christ's offer of forgiveness, commits to the path he wants her to walk, and she formally connects with the Hillcrest community through membership. Then, at Stage Three, she grows in her ability to *honor* God, *invite* her world to the new life she's found, *love* others, and *live* the Word. She's climbing the H.I.L.L.

What's next for her? As Hillcrest leaders, we need to notice that she's climbing the H.I.L.L. and move her into a position of influence or leadership where she can advance the life purposes in others. That's our work with people at Stage Four.

Notice a few things about that last paragraph:

First: I've described people at Stage Four as those in positions of "*influence* or *leadership*." Positions of *leadership* involve official roles such as teacher or committee chairman or deacon, and so on. However, there are more positions of *influence* than there

are positions of leadership. Positions of *influence* include such informal tasks as giving a testimony in a service, being the “go to” person for advice, or being the “E.F. Hutton” for a particular circle of relationships. (You remember the old commercial: “When E.F. Hutton speaks, people listen.”) Every leader is an influencer, but you don’t have to be a leader to be an influencer.

Second: I believe the only people who should *lead* and *influence* a congregation are “Stage Four” people. These are people who agree with the life purposes (Stage Two), are actually practicing the purposes (Stage Three), and are therefore leading others to accept and practice the purposes (Stage Four). Sadly, this is not the case for every church. Too many of us have served in too many church settings where the leaders and influencers were not passionate Christ-followers and did not have a priority to make others passionate Christ-followers. For example, I’ve served with decision-making teams before (deacon boards and church councils) where I was the only one who was practicing the “I” of the H.I.L.L. Bill Hull said something about this in one of his books:

In many cases leaders who do not walk with God tell pastors how to spend their time and do their job. Such laymen don't pray, meditate on, study, or memorize Scripture. Many have never introduced a single person to Christ. How anyone could lead an organization that purposes to save the world and never lead one person to Christ is the enigma of the church. This kind of duplicity cannot exist even in the business community. (*The Disciple-Making Pastor*, page 32)

Amen and amen. If a church is supposed to be a body of people who are learning how to put the life-purposes into practice, there’s simply no reason for anyone who is not personally practicing the life-purposes to lead that kind of organization! Thankfully, at Hillcrest most of those in influence and leadership are climbing the H.I.L.L. But if we find a leader or influencer who has no personal interest in practicing the life-purposes, we either have to inspire them to that calling or replace them with someone else.

Third: It’s the job of leadership to build leadership. The Apostle Paul said something about this: “And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others” (2 Timothy 2:2). Now, he was speaking specifically about the role of pastors, but the principle applies to other leadership positions: multiply yourself! Enlist and equip others! If you’re a leader, part of your job is to watch for those who “get it” and put them into positions where they can lead and influence others. The other side of that coin is relevant, too: make sure you *guard* the positions of influence and leadership in our church. Don’t occupy those positions with people who aren’t climbing the H.I.L.L. and who don’t have a drive to help others up the H.I.L.L.

Now, there’s one more thing to discuss in this series of daily readings. If you’re a leader, you need to be able to actually *name* the people you’re influencing at each stage. We’ll wrap up this series in “Day 8” with that topic.

Prayer for Today: Pray for all those who are *leaders* and *influencers* at Hillcrest.

Day 8: Whom Are You Helping Up the H.I.L.L.?

Diane and I had been dating a year by the time we were high school seniors. That was the year a young and newly-married couple became our Sunday School teachers. They taught us a lot about ministering together.

Kirby Hill was a friend I met in college, studying in the same ministry program. He was so far beyond me when it came to theological reflection. His questions, comments, objections and insights were as much a part of my academic training as were my professors' assignments.

Cecil Taylor was the first pastor I got to see "up close and personal." I was a Baylor student in an internship, and he was my supervisor. I learned so much in our brief time together, and we still keep in touch (he leads the religion program at the University of Mobile).

This is a small sampling of people who have helped me up the H.I.L.L.

Who's helped you up the H.I.L.L.? God made us to *honor* him, *invite* others to him, *love* each other, and *live* his Word--at our church we call that our "H.I.L.L." to climb. These four actions are the "life purposes" we must fulfill as human beings.

Across these daily readings, I've pointed out that people are at one of four stages when it comes to these life purposes. If you're a Hillcrest leader, you should be able to name some people you're influencing at each stage.

Do you have someone at Stage One? Someone at Stage One is being *exposed* to the H.I.L.L. we're meant to climb: She catches a vision of the way life could be as she spends time with believers--in structured Hillcrest activities as well as informal social occasions.

Do you have someone at Stage Two? Someone at Stage Two *agrees* with the life purposes: She accepts Christ's offer of forgiveness, commits to the path he wants her to walk, and she formally connects with the Hillcrest community through membership.

Do you have someone at Stage Three? At Stage Three, she grows in her ability to *honor* God, *invite* her world to the new life she's found, *love* others, and *live* the Word. She's climbing the H.I.L.L.

Do you have someone at Stage Four? At Stage Four we move her into a position of influence or leadership where she can advance the life purposes in others.

You and I have benefited from the friendship and direction of others, and we need to offer that friendship and direction *to* others.

Can you name people you're influencing?

Prayer for Today: Pray that you would be a godly influence in all you say and do at Hillcrest.

Thank you for participating in this eight-day reading series. If you know of anyone who would appreciate learning more about the Hillcrest mission, pass this along to them! And sign up for my weekly LeaderLines articles at HillcrestAustin.org/subscriptions.

--Pastor Tom Goodman