

Dr. Paul H. Dixon  
The Loneliness of Leadership  
November 1, 1999

Unedited Transcript

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Paul H. Dixon

Our theme for this academic year is preparing leaders for the 21st century. And today, I would like to address the topic of the loneliness of leadership. We'll be talking about many things about who the leader is and what a leader does.

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Paul H. Dixon

As we continue my emphasis on Monday mornings, on leadership right on through the academic year. But I think it's important for us to understand that often as we think of leaders. And we realize that all of you will be leaders in some capacity in the home and the local church and world of education or medicine or business

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Paul H. Dixon

, whatever it might be. All of us face some difficult times. As leaders. Lennon and McCartney wrote All the lonely people. Where do they come from? Are the lonely people? Where do they belong? In the song, The Nowhere Man, he wrote, is real nowhere man sitting in his nowhere land, making all his nowhere plans for nobody doesn't have

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Paul H. Dixon

a point of view. Knows not where he's going to. Isn't he a bit like me and you? And that nowhere man is a very lonely man. Someone wrote. A book entitled The Lonely Crowd. And in it, they penned they are crammed and jammed in busses, but each of them.

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Paul H. Dixon

There's a lot. Is there a connection someone asked between loneliness and health? And the responder said it's like asking, what's the connection between air? And one cell. There are three aspects of loneliness that I want us to consider this morning as a college family, and the first one is the experience of loneliness.

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Paul H. Dixon

I just want to talk to you from out there and in here what people do experience in loneliness. And certainly there are those who experience loneliness as widows and widowers. As we have watched. Our beloved professor, David Dellinger.

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Paul H. Dixon

Barry, his Helen. The thought that came to me, what's it like? We go home. To an empty house. That first day. And day after day. After day as a widower. And it's caused me to pray for him in that regard.

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Paul H. Dixon

I've also thought about what I heard of Judy van Kampen. And one of the friends of the family that I've been touch and touch with on a regular basis throughout Bob's ordeal and the mechanical heart, all that's happened.

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Paul H. Dixon

Judy went home, you have to understand they left Grand Haven, Michigan, and went to Chicago to Loyola Hospital, and they've been in Chicago dealing with this for about two months, so she had not been home for two months.

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Paul H. Dixon

And when Pat talked to this individual while I was gone this weekend, she was Judy doing and and the response was. When she walked into that house. That he built. Magnificent hall there on the lake. And Bob's hand is all over that house.

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Paul H. Dixon

It was almost too much for too bad. All the loneliness of that day and of that first night and day after day after day. Last week, I shared with you some of the details and the Payne Stewart plane crash.

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Paul H. Dixon

And since then, I've picked up several news items off the CNN, Sports Illustrated news and other ways, and one of the things is the very clear testimony that Payne Stewart has had of his faith in Christ, the testimony of his pastor, Pastor Henry, at first Baptist Orlando, Florida.

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Paul H. Dixon

And then many of you watched or saw excerpts of the funeral on last Friday, and we must remember that there wasn't just Payne Stewart on that flight, there were five others. And as far as we know, I don't know about the pilot and the copilot, but his two agents that were longer also very active, born again, Christians

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Paul H. Dixon

and the architect from Jack Nicklaus architectural firm who was along to talk about a future golf course, was also a active, born again Christian there in the Orlando area. But I read this story. American golfer Payne Stewart's Australian wife, Tracy, tried in vain.

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Paul H. Dixon

The contact him by mobile phone during his doomed plane flight. You imagine being a wife. And you're watching someone calls and said, did you see the CNN news Payne's jet is flying out of control? And in a panic, she picks up the cell phone to try to call in thinking maybe someone would wake up.

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Paul H. Dixon

The plane could be saved and the lives could be saved, but it didn't happen. No, the anguish of that hour, but the loneliness, not necessarily Friday. Surrounded by all those golfers and thousands of people let. Today. And tomorrow.

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Paul H. Dixon

The loneliness of a widow and a widower, the loneliness of a senior citizen. And maybe that senior citizen is a widow or a widower, but maybe it's a senior citizen couple, and here's someone who has been a leader and no one ever asked their opinion any more.

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Paul H. Dixon

No one ever asked for a suggestion. You know, one of the things I really appreciate about you, young people, I've watched this for the last 21 years is I've been privileged to be your president. It's how much you love children.

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Paul H. Dixon

And how much you love old people? In fact, the older I get, the happier I am that you love old people, and I hope that you will always love old people. People come up to me and said, You remember my name when I was a graduate.

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Paul H. Dixon

I say, you know, I don't even remember your name tomorrow if you give it to me today, let alone when you were a student. I just love it when I go into these churches. Yesterday, I had students come in, graduates come in from other cities because they saw my itinerary and the torch.

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Paul H. Dixon

But here were two of our single graduates who said we want to take you out to dinner. Now, I'm always glad when I can go out with a pastor and his wife or some other friends of the college, but it is so neat when I go out with alumni and I had just such a wonderful time and

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Paul H. Dixon

I did not let them pay. I said, Look, if I can pay for a student's meal when I go in the Cracker Barrel, then if I find a lump and I eat with them, I can pay for their meal.

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Paul H. Dixon

So that's all I paid for their meal and we had such a wonderful time. But as I. Was reflecting upon them. Oh, I didn't tell the freshmen about that, did I just forget what I said, and it doesn't count for a young man alive if I paid for all of you when I go to Young's?

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Paul H. Dixon

Oh, I do have to ask Bob Rome for a loan. But the older we get, the lonelier we get. It is a very difficult time in life, and then of course, there's the loneliness of the single. So I mentioned the two young ladies and and they told me how they each own a mobile home.

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Paul H. Dixon

one of them has a brother here in the college now had another brother who graduated to the pre-med program, and this brother is in the engineering program. But I just thought, you know, here are two single young ladies and the loneliness that goes with singleness.

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Paul H. Dixon

And though we have many wonderful faculty and staff members who are living lives committed to the Lord as single. That does not take away. From the loneliness. That goes with those leaders. And that lifestyle. And then there's the loneliness of divorces.

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Paul H. Dixon

It's one thing to have been a single, but it's another thing to have been married and to have had that spouse who gave you support and the love that you shared. And all of a sudden that heart has been broken and you are no longer married.

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Paul H. Dixon

And you're so very alone. And often raising the children. Then there's the loneliness of the parents with an empty nest. How many of you empty the nest? How many of you when you left, you left mom and dad all alone this year?

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Paul H. Dixon

Can I see your hands in that something? Pray for your mom and dad. It's really time. It's so tough. You know, I love that commercial. Do you see that commercial when they're crying, when they say good bye to Johnny and they give him the old computer and they give him the old television set up, and then they

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Paul H. Dixon

open the garage door and have a brand new computer, a brand new television set. Maybe you're saying I don't need to pray for my mom and dad. They're having the time of their lives. But there is something about coming to grips.

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Paul H. Dixon

With the empty nest and then, of course, the loneliness of being a missionary. At the same time. That I received the information on Payne Stewart, I also received the information on our missionary friends and the husband who was killed last week over in Togo.

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Paul H. Dixon

I was a front page story, wasn't on the Philadelphia Inquirer when. And in that story, you can just see what did that wife and those kids are going through, but it's not just when you go through tragedy as missionaries, just being a missionary says well in it that if you're going to be a leader.

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Paul H. Dixon

In carrying out the great commission. And leave the United States and all the comfort levels and comfort zones that go with it. There is loneliness. And of course, there is the. Loneliness of leaders just by being a leader.

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Paul H. Dixon

People ask me and all the years that you've had this responsibility, do you get lonely? I am not wired to be a lonely people, a lonely person. Some people are wired where they get lonely, easier than others, and somehow I'm not wired that way.

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Paul H. Dixon

But there have been some difficult times. You tell you what, when you are a leader, whatever realm it might be, you have to make choices. You have to be a decision maker if you don't want to make decisions, then you can't be a leader.

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Paul H. Dixon

That just goes with the turf. And when you make decisions, you have to understand that there's a great host of people out there that you have the privilege of leading who don't have all the facts. And since they don't have all the information, they're going to see it from a different perspective and they can only see it

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Paul H. Dixon

from what they know and they can't know everything. So just about every decision that you make, you're going to have some. We're going to say

good decision, you're going to have some others going to say, I'm not sure that is a very good decision.

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Paul H. Dixon

So the very fact that you are making choices and dividing people is going to bring about. Some measure of. You can get all the input you want, but as Harry Truman says, the buck stops here and you have to drop the gavel.

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Paul H. Dixon

You make that decision. It's not just a matter of choices, it's a matter of criticism. So how do you handle criticism? Not very well. I don't like it. I needed. There are times that it certainly is deserved. But that doesn't make it any easier.

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Paul H. Dixon

It back, I ask leaders who come to this campus, we may be having lunch in the PDR, and I will say to them, how do you handle criticism and they handle of the bat like I do? I don't know of any leader who thrives on it, maybe Paige Patterson.

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Paul H. Dixon

You know, remember when he was here last year now Paige. Paige Patterson is the kind of a guy that I often say runs the vortex of controversy. I mean, he just loves that Fritos loves to go to war, and he loves the goes off battle.

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Paul H. Dixon

And I think he loves it when people hating. Not me. I like it when people love me, I just don't like it when people hate me. And you know, the criticism is tough, but you can't be a leader and not be criticized.

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Paul H. Dixon

You can't be a leader in the home and make decisions and not be criticized by your kids or criticized by your spouse. And it's the same with church and in every level of war. So there is the experience of loneliness and second Timothy 1:15.

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Paul H. Dixon

Paul said this now knows that all they which are in Asia be turned away from me. It almost sounds like an overstatement, like an exaggeration. But whether it was reality or not, it's certainly how he felt. What about the of a college student?

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Paul H. Dixon

You know, anything about loneliness. The loneliness of change. Some of you have just gone through an unbelievable change coming in as freshmen

are coming in as a transfer student and trying to absorb this culture that brings about loneliness.

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Paul H. Dixon

And then there's. Just the uncertainties of college life, how do you how do you like, are you in midterms now? Oh, yeah. How you like them? Suddenly, you found that there's a difference between high school and college life.

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Paul H. Dixon

There's a difference in the academic challenge. There's a difference in trying to balance all that goes on in the dormitory and your social life and the academic life. And some of you, you're halfway through the quarter and you're just now finding out it's not camp.

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Paul H. Dixon

There are a lot of uncertainty for the college students. And then there's just the loneliness of not having any friends. Well, you said that's not me, I know that's not a lot of you, a lot of you, just you make friends so easily and you have your group and you just have a wonderful time.

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Paul H. Dixon

And I mean, I talked to graduates and they still get together with their friends periodically, and we have young people who go through four years and never make a plan. You know what I did when I was in college and I didn't have any problem making friends love people.

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Paul H. Dixon

Every semester, I used to pray that I could meet somebody who needed a friend. Would you be willing to get out of your comfort zone? And instead of sitting in a chapel with the same kids every day, sit in a chapel with somebody you need to plan.

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Paul H. Dixon

Would you be willing to find somebody in the dining hall that you observe generally is eating alone and has no one to talk to? Would you accept it as a challenge? To meet the need of someone. It was very lonely.

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Paul H. Dixon

In the midst of the crowd. And we need to find. And then there's also this whole issue of loneliness when it comes to dating. All right, some of you just have dated your whole life. You started dating in kindergarten and haven't stopped.

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Paul H. Dixon

one of those wonderful days in kindergarten in the first grade. I just love those dates back then. No pressure whatsoever. You are afraid that they were going to ask you to marry them, you weren't afraid that somebody was going to say in kindergarten, Hey, they're going to study, I can't ask you, I know you.

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Paul H. Dixon

We didn't know about that stuff then. Now, whoa. A whole different ballgame. And some of you are lonely because you haven't had a date yet. And you're going to graduate this year. Oh, hey. Can I help? I'll tell you what I'll do, I will do, I, my wife and I take it on as a challenge.

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Paul H. Dixon

We are match matchmakers if you want us to. If you want me to help. Just give me your name or guys, give me your name, girls, give me your names and we'll do our best to bring some things together.

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Paul H. Dixon

Are you good at that, Bob? No, he's not, he's not very, he's laughing. I like to do that. We have fun with it, but it's been. It hurt. The last. And it really hurts. We don't understand it. Why no one ever asked me out.

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Paul H. Dixon

Why I ask someone out and she doesn't accept the invitation. That's part of the loneliness of being a college student. But what about the examples of loneliness if we have the experience of loneliness is real? What about the examples of loneliness you see?

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Paul H. Dixon

Can you prove to us that leaders really have lonely experiences? Yes. What about Abraham? Can you imagine how lonely Abraham was? In Genesis, Chapter 22, verse two. one God said take now by some nine only Son Isaac. Whom they'll love us.

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Paul H. Dixon

And get the into the land of Malaysia and offer him, therefore a burnt offering up on one of the mountains, which I will tell. Can you imagine what it was like to be Moses out on the back side of the desert, a castaway?

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Paul H. Dixon

God and putting that. Think with me about David, and David testifies in Psalm, 102 verse three, six and seven. My days are consumed like smoke. My bones are burned up as a heart. I'm like a pelican of the wilderness.

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Paul H. Dixon

I'm like an owl of the desert I watch and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top. Do you think? Only college students. Battled loneliness. Or the widow, the widower or the others that we are? Did you think that people like this?

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Paul H. Dixon

The man after God's own heart ever had such an experience. Oh yes, he's an example of it. Listen to him again. And some 6920 reproach had broken my heart and I am full of heaviness and I look for some to take pity.

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Paul H. Dixon

But there was none. And for comfort. But I found the. Somehow, no one looked for David. Someone wasn't in the student body looking out for David, who because of his leadership role, was going through such a tough time.

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Paul H. Dixon

And then the example of Jesus Christ. When John, 1632 said, behold, the outcome of a is now calm that you shall be scattered every man to his own and shall leave me alone. And yet I am not alone because my father is with me.

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Paul H. Dixon

Our Lord, our savior. And if you truly want to hear the loneliness in his voice, listen as he says about the ninth hour and he cries out Eli Eli Lama. So back then I that is to say, my god, my god, why is thou forsaken me?

00:43:17:00 - 00:43:38:19

Paul H. Dixon

I would suggest that no one. As ever, been involved. As Jesus Christ. There's one more point that I'm not going to share with you today, maybe at another time. But what I want us to think about today is that loneliness is real.

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Paul H. Dixon

The loneliness is part of leadership, but it is also a part of life. And if Abraham and Moses and David and none other than the son of God, our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ know what it is that's very influenced and surely we can now.

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Paul H. Dixon

But as Jesus said in the garden in that verse. I'm not really alone. Because God is the father. Thank the Lord. That we can meet. Each other's need. The a source of comfort. And encouragement. But there are those.

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Paul H. Dixon

When no one can do. But our God. The of. Have a great day.