

book of the month | July 2024

*Agape Leadership* – Robert L. Peterson & Alexander Strauch

R.C. Chapman and this amazing short little book have played a critical role in the life of Grace Bible Church. In our early and formative days—nearly 20 years ago—Tom Angstead led the elders and many of those who would become elders, deacons, and missionaries through these 13 short chapters. The reverberations of this study and the godly man, R.C. Chapman, whom we sought to emulate are still felt in much of what is commendable in GBC today.

R.C. Chapman lived from 1803 to 1902. He is remembered because of how he exemplified the love of Christ in his personal life, use of his home in ministry, leadership of his church, and commitment to missions. The reality of God's reconciling love in the gospel and the dramatic effect that must have on our lives lived in this world

permeated every part of Chapman's life. Spurgeon remembered him as "the saintliest man I ever knew." His life was thoroughly changed by and lived for his Savior.

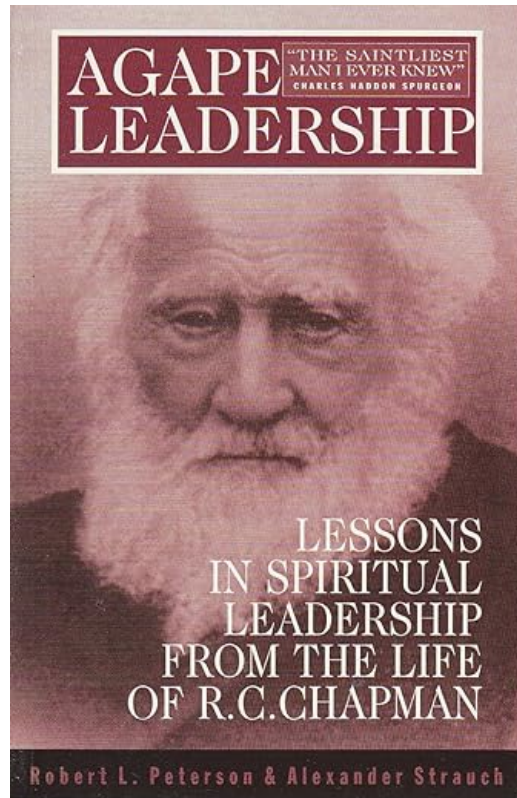
Alexander Strauch has taken the content from a biography written by Robert Peterson and distilled it down into 13 short chapters. Each chapter is a topical summary of the way that Chapman's exemplary life demonstrated godliness and encouraged others toward similar godly faithfulness. While he lived, Chapman's humility, love, dependence on God's Word, love for and trust in Christ, evangelistic zeal, self-discipline, and prayerfulness were contagious. I have now read this book almost a half-dozen times in my life, and the effect each time I do read it is a similar contagion of love and godliness infecting my own life in God-glorifying ways.

Each chapter is short enough to be read easily in one sitting. Strauch helpfully includes Bible verses for meditation at the end of each chapter. I strongly recommend you set aside the whole month to read this book slowly—one chapter at a time—with time for reflection, discussion, and focused application. So much of Chapman's life is so easily emulatable. Each time I read I am convicted of just how much more sanctification I have to undergo. His life is inspiring in the little things: the consistency of discipline, long-suffering forgiveness, constancy of prayer, faithful dependence on the Lord, a lifetime of reading and obeying God's Word...just a simple, exemplary Christian life.

Reading of his life and example, I have much the same response that one missionary and preacher who traveled with him expressed after spending some days with him: "A great change already began to pass through my mind as to the one who was my traveling companion, and instead of feeling my own importance as a great and accomplished traveler, I felt more as a child compared with him."

I don't know of any who have walked away unchanged from this book and the Spirit-wrought example of RC Chapman. I'm excited for GBC to read it together again.

Your pastor-elder. *Jacob Hanftla*



**Suggested One-Month Plan**  
(3 pages per day)

**Week 1: Monday, July 1st - Sunday, July 7th**

Preface – 2 pages

Agape Leadership – 6 pages

Spirit-controlled Character – 7 pages

**Week 2: Monday, July 8th - Sunday, July 14th**

Being Patient and Gentle – 6 pages

Maintaining Unity – 6 pages

Discipling and Reconciling – 5 pages

**Week 3: Monday, July 15 - Sunday, July 21st**

Forgiving and Blessing Others – 3 pages

Hospitality – 5 pages

Giving to the Needy – 5 pages

Working Together in Love – 6 pages

**Week 4: Monday, July 22 - Sunday, July 28th**

Vision and Evangelism – 8 pages

Self-discipline – 4 pages