



Francis – Chooses Authenticity

The story:

Francis, the son of a wealthy cloth merchant, stood in the public square of Assisi before the bishop and his *furious* father, Pietro di Bernardone. Francis had given Pietro's money and goods to the poor, and his father now, publicly, demanded repayment for everything.

Francis answered not with coins, but with a grand gesture. Slowly, he stripped off his fine clothes, the very symbols of his old life, and laid them at his father's feet. Standing nearly naked, he declared with burning clarity: *"Until now I have called Pietro Bernardone my father. But from this day on I say with all my heart: Our Father who art in heaven."*

The crowd gasped. Some pitied him, others mocked him. But Francis was free. He walked away from wealth, comfort, and expectation. He walked not into security, but into the wild risk of faith. From that moment, he belonged to no one but God, and his new life had begun.

Reflection:

- What expectations, beliefs, or programs might your ministry need to let go of in order to remain tightly focused on your mission?
- Francis risked everything for authenticity and faithfulness. How do you discern when bold, risky decisions are necessary in your own leadership, even if they may bring criticism or loss? What examples can you think of in your ministry where you made a bold decision? What was your decision making process?
- How does Francis's rejection of wealth challenge the way you allocate resources, set priorities, or measure "success" in ministry?

