

Chapter Three: Leadership and Organizational Dynamics

As we discuss leaders and leadership we will look at a number of areas. We are addressing some areas in a question and answer style dialogue. First let us look at you the leader or potential leader. Leader — even the word itself has implications and contradictions — implications of power and superiority and contradictions of humility and servanthood.

Everyone is a leader, right?

Let us ask first is leadership learned or a natural ability? The answer is a leader has both a natural way with people and worldview that causes her to encourage others as they strive for their best and a leader is teachable as well as courageous enough to take the high risk required.

Every person influences others in ways that are good or bad. The connection between influence and leadership is common and is found in parents, teachers, dictators and journalist. Society has been the judge of many famous leaders — Adolf Hitler, Benito Mussolini, Billy Graham, Malcom X, Nelson Mandela, Pope Francis, Warren Buffett, Aung San Suu Kyi, Juliet V. Garcia — we could go on with this list.

We can also take a look at the Old Testament kings in Chronicles and Kings. Some were good and pleased the Lord through their obedience; others were not good or kind or caring and destroyed the people. One thing can be said about all of these listed, helpful or harmful, is summarized in the quote: “*Great leaders communicate a vision that captures the imagination and fires the hearts and minds of those around them*” (Joseph B. Wirthlin).

What makes a Christian Leader?

Humility. The leader who is Christian puts into practice the Christlike character of humility. Romans 1:3 says *Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you.* According to the “Calibar Leadership System”, ego-driven leaders are those people who have many talents and abilities for leading, but may not have the kind of self-awareness, training or confidence required to do so authentically. Most people don't know the difference between their egos and authentic selves and are therefore unaware of when they are acting from their ego. This greatly impacts their ability to be an effective leader.

Call from God. You, like Isaiah (Isaiah 6:1, 8) have three factors that make up a divine call to lead according to The Max-

well Leadership Bible.

Opportunity. We see a specific place where we can make a difference. This has to do with timing.

Ability. We recognize that we have the God-given gifts to do something about the need. This has to do with competence.

Desire. We want to step out and address the need; our hunger pushes us. This has to do with our passion.

Despite his high calling, Aaron at times struggled with his authority. He once caved into the depraved wishes of the people and led Israel in a pagan worship service, an abomination that led to the deaths of many Israelites. Aaron had been set apart for God's service, but on that occasion he chose to live and lead otherwise.

When God has called us, He is clear. We can trust Him to provide. He will help us make the changes necessary to accomplish His will through us. Galatians 5:22-24 from *The Message* says: *... what happens when we live God's way? He brings gifts into our lives, much the same way that fruit appears in an orchard — things like affection for others, exuberance about life, serenity. We develop a willingness to stick with things, a sense of compassion in the heart, and a conviction that a basic holiness permeates things and people. We find ourselves involved in loyal commitments, not needing to force our way in life, able to marshal and direct our energies wisely.*

Scripture gives meticulous detail to their ordination and calling. Their conduct was to be beyond reproach. God made it crystal clear that failure to uphold His established guidelines would result in death.

Full of Faith and the Holy Spirit

- Be known as a person with faith and character. Acts 6:5: *This proposal pleased the whole group. They chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit.*

- Be a person through which God speaks and acts. Acts 6:8: *Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people.*

- Be a person of peace and calm during in difficult moments. Acts 6:15: *All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel.*

- Be a person secure in their relationship with God. Acts 7:55: *But Stephen, full of the Holy Spirit, looked up to heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God.*

- Be a person who knows God is walking with her every moment. Acts 7:59: *While they were stoning him, Stephen prayed, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit."*

- Be a person who has been so encouraging and faithful that your leadership impacts the community. Acts 8:2: *Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.*

Foundations of Leadership

Leadership takes time to develop and involves time for others to recognize leadership skills. According to John Maxwell in *The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership*, seven key areas are found in leaders.

- **Character.** Leadership begins as you develop your inner self, enabling others to see your character. Character is necessary for trust, and trust makes leadership possible.

- **Relationships.** Leaders have followers. Relationships make it easier for people to follow. The deeper the relationships with followers and those involved in the ministry, the easier it is for them to follow.

- **Knowledge.** The leader must comprehend the ministry potential, the ministry needs, and a vision for the future.

- **Intuition.** As important as knowledge is, leadership requires more than raw data. A leader can communicate passion for the present and vision for new ministry strategies.

- **Experience.** A leader needs experience to demonstrate abilities. It is possible for the experience to be in a related, but transferable, field. Experience is not a guarantee, but it encourages people to give you opportunities to show your abilities.

- **Past success.** Proven experiences show what you've accomplished. Additionally, each success is another example of leadership ability.

- **Ability.** People will follow as long as you demonstrate the ability to lead. When people no longer believe in your abilities, they will stop following you.

Leaders view life experiences from a leadership perspective. Some are born with this ability while others develop it. This may be described as the ability to grasp intangible factors, understand the factors, and work with them to accomplish ministry goals. This involves the ability to read the situation by capturing the details others miss. Understanding the context of the bigger picture and observing trends are other elements of this ability. Good leaders learn to read themselves as well as others. Reading themselves includes knowing their strengths, skills, and weaknesses. This enables leaders to develop a leadership team that complements them. Max DePree suggests "The signs of outstanding leadership appear primarily among the followers. Are the followers reaching their potential? Are they learning? Serving? Do they achieve the required results? Do they change with grace? Manage conflict?"

How Do I Remain Effective And Successful?

To be an empowering leader, you must do more than believe in emerging leaders. You need to take steps to help others become leaders. You must invest in them to empower them to become their best.

Empowering people takes personal investment. It requires

energy and time. But it's worth the price. If you do it correctly, you have the privilege of seeing others develop leadership skills.

The *Maxwell Leadership Bible* suggests that Haman in Esther gives a clear picture of an out-of-control leader. He lost joy over little problems. He needed friends to build his self-image. His greed made him unhappy. He listened to the wrong people. He thought too highly of himself. He set himself up for a fall. He reaped what he sowed.

To improve your character and build a solid foundation of your leadership, you must honestly look at yourself before God. Identify where you're weak or have taken shortcuts. Look for patterns. Apologize to those you've wronged. Stay teachable and rebuild.

Discover and work within the system. It is not honoring to become a "maverick" ignoring the system in place. If the system needs to be reviewed and revisited there are respectful ways to go about making the change. As you model respect and a gentle spirit, you will gain the confidence of others to help you implement the changes needed.

Leaders are often challenged and abilities tested. These times are opportunities to demonstrate your true character and leadership abilities.

Building relationships is a vital aspect of leadership. People want to know that the leader is a "real" person — that she has faced and survived challenges and failures.

Authenticity is a key characteristic. Develop your self-understanding, intuition, and interpersonal skills and communication skills. Develop others through team building, mentoring, coaching and networking.

Conflict Resolution

Whenever individuals passionate and striving to do their best work together, conflicts occur. Based on *The Peacemaker* by Ken Sande, here are five ways to resolve conflicts:

The first way is to overlook the offence. Some disputes are insignificant and, therefore, are easily resolved when we quietly and deliberately overlook the offence and forgive the person who wronged us. An example is when someone makes flippant remarks that offend you.

Discussion uses confession or loving confrontation to resolve the conflict. In this method of reconciliation, individuals talk about the circumstances that led to the conflict, the role each played, and what they can do to resolve the issue. Discussion involves naming the problem, identifying your role in the conflict, using "I" statements, and accepting the role each party played.

The next step is mediation. One or two people are asked to meet with the individuals to help them communicate more effectively and explore possible solutions. The mediator's role is to ask questions and to give advice, rather than forcing a certain solution.

More than likely, you've used some form of negotiations without recognizing the process. For instance, mediation may have occurred as you discussed problems with mutual friends. Their insights may have caused you to resolve the conflict without recognizing the process.

At some point, conflict may develop among members of the leadership team and you may be asked to serve as a referee. Hans Finzel in *Empowered Leaders* suggests a step before you accept the role of referee — ask those involved to talk about the problem with resolution as the goal. Finzel recommends the following guidelines.

Mediate rather than judge. Encourage those involved in the conflict to solve the problem and let them determine how to accomplish it.

Give it time. Give all sides adequate time to express their positions and understand the other person's perspective instead of hurrying to end the conflict.

Don't accuse or lay blame. Keep people focused on the goal — finding a resolution. Emphasize what is right rather than who is right.

Gain admissions — and forgiveness of mistakes. Let people gracefully admit to shortcomings. Remember some of the hardest, but most powerful, words are, "I was wrong."

Find grounds for cooperation. Create ways for those involved in the conflict to work together for a common goal.

When you are involved in a conflict, ask yourself, "What results do I want?" Honestly answering this question will direct the approach you take.

Remember that anger and differences of opinions are part of daily life. It's how you cope with and react to these differences that matters. Anger is an emotion, a feeling, with nothing good or bad about it; therefore, even as Christians, we will become angry and experience conflict. However, our Christian experience should help us handle the situations effectively and peacefully.

Organizational Structure

A local ministry is like a train. It is on track heading to the intended goal and purpose. The train cars are filled with people and programs to carry out the mission. Still to be successful you need a conductor — responsible for safety people and programs riding on the train. One other person on the leadership team is the engineer whose responsibility is to focus on the track looking ahead for curves, rail switches, blind spots, when acceleration and breaks are needed.

In many organizations the image of a leader is the person in front of the others, one on the highest pedestal, the one giving instructions or the one who stands out in the crowd. The image of shared leadership is a puzzle with each one contributing a piece. "Shared

leadership is more than an ideal. It is a commitment to becoming a real community of leaders with mutual accountability, vision, goals, trust, blame, and rewards," according to Dr. Bill Donahue. This is not a new idea. Paul in I Corinthians 12:12 writes *Just as a body, though one has many parts, but all its many parts form one body, so it is with Christ ...*

We may be so steeped in the hierarchical model that it is difficult to grasp this style of leadership. Emerging leaders readily envision and commit to collaborative relationship. Consider these scripture references.

- Ecclesiastes 4:9-10: *Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up.*

- Proverbs 15:22: *Plans fail for lack of counsel, but with many advisers they succeed.*

VOLUNTEERS

How can we solicit and keep volunteers? Almost all ministries require volunteer participation. Motivating, recruiting and retaining volunteers require thoughtful preparation and continued effort on the part of the leader. The first step in motivating potential volunteers is to understand and appreciate their personal values and priorities.

What do they expect to gain from this relationship? Volunteers need a full picture of the role they would be filling in the organization, including the gifts and graces required and the time commitment. We all are more willing to be part of a positive group with shared values. We all desire to be valued for our contribution; therefore, we delegate to volunteers meaningful work with clear expectations.

How can we successfully match volunteers to the work? Understand that not all work of a ministry is suited for volunteers to perform. Just because you have volunteers does not mean they will fit the needs of the organization. People volunteer in order to serve. Make a serious effort to treat them like employees by evaluating and rewarding for work well done.

How do we train volunteers when we don't have time? Consider that the time spent selecting and training volunteers will benefit the ministry. One of the jobs of the leader is to look at the ministry with a view to the future good. We do an injustice to our volunteers by not having the a clear understanding of the job and appropriate support to succeed. Developing people and helping them serve is a high calling and well worth the time spent.

Suggested Reading and Resources

Barton, Ruth Haley. *Strengthening the Soul of Your Leadership*, Inter-Varsity Press, 2008.

www.cometothefire.org Online devotionals and Bible study to build character and a holiness foundation.

www.discipleshipplace.org Online courses that build competence and Bible knowledge.