

IS LEADERSHIP "SPIRITUAL"?

A leader's greatest asset is people through whom the Holy Spirit can work.

One of the leading Christian teachers on leadership and management, Ted Engstorm, emphasizes that Christian leadership represents action, but it is also a set of tools for spiritual men and women. It is not the moral or immoral - it is amoral [neither right nor wrong)... The issue is the spirituality of the person and how he can better use leadership tools for the glory of God... **I believe that every basic, honourable principle in leadership and management has its root and foundation in the word of God.** The Bible is filled with examples of God's searching for leaders, and when He found them, He used them to accomplish His purpose, despite their human failings... Many failed at some point in their lives in a marked way, but the key to their success was that they never grovelled in the dust. They learned from the hand of failure, repented, and then were used in even mightier ways.

Each one of us as Christ-following Christians has the awesome responsibility to carry on the work which Jesus started here on earth. The Great Commission is well known to us [Mark 16:15; Matt. 28:19] yet we seem to function as though the Bible is not relevant to today's environment and circumstances were very different from the ordinary human being so there is no way we can anticipate success in our lives.

Jesus Christ was not content just to acquire followers. he didn't believe a leader was simply one who leads followers. He felt His job as a leader was not complete until He had actually reproduced Himself in the lives of His twelve disciples and turned them from followers into leaders. He actually redefined effective leadership.

Servanthood

What is different between a Christian leader and a non-Christian leader? We need to realize that, in a "nut shell", **a Christian leader has a servant's heart** - as did our Master Leader, Jesus Christ. Worthy of note is what David L. McKenna wrote in his book, *Power to follow, Grace to Lead*,

...the Christ-like spirit of a servant is a Biblical distinction for Christian Leadership. But the problem is that the concept of "servanthood" leaves us hung up on one horn of a dilemma. Jesus said, "Whoever wants to become great among you must be slave of all" (Mark 10:43, NIV). This poses a paradox. Leadership and servanthood are biblical concepts in creative tension - neither one can be exploited, neither one can be denied. To define Christian leadership as servanthood alone is to leave unanswered the many practical problems which confront Christians in leadership roles every day.

Interestingly a major North American Bible college had a "rash" of teaching on "servant" leadership - only to wake up one day to find it had very few leaders - as were servants!

The leader needs to have a servant's heart - but he remembers that **he "serves" best by effectively and competently leading well!**

We need to address the need for leadership and its role with God-given balance and practical common sense!

We must note the spiritual images of a leadership profile (qualities and competencies) also include that of "**Shepherd**" [John 21:15-17] and "**Steward**" [Luke 12:35-48]

The "**Shepherd**" picture of a leader points to People-related competencies. Shepherd leadership focuses on people; the leader looks out for the welfare of the people and he facilitates team-work. The Leader must have a shepherd's heart and must develop shepherding skills!

The "**Steward**" picture of leadership in Scripture relates to the "result" oriented type of leadership. This means he is basically committed to giving a proper account of work entrusted to his care by his Master.

The "Steward" leader uses delegated authority and resources to produce results that benefit others. He must be a good steward of his own, as well as the followers' spiritual gifts, talents, abilities, and skills.

The Challenge of Leadership

There are three major challenges which we need to embrace.

Challenge #1

Selection - To select people for certain positions or responsibilities is a challenge. We need to match personalities, talents, skills, abilities and experience with the situation. To be able to foresee the hidden abilities in a young person is a challenge - yet so essential to successful leadership.

Challenge #2

Development - People need to develop their own God-given talents and abilities; God did not give spiritual gifts for people to bury! A leader must ensure that people have the opportunity to be good stewards of their talents and abilities and to develop their potential.

Challenge #3

Enablement - A leader must enable and equip people to utilize their abilities and skills and then turn them into helpers of others to develop and use their gifts and talents as well.

The challenge of leadership and the development of leaders is a non-negotiable ministry. Leaders reproducing themselves in younger leaders - this is Biblical! it is Scriptural!

Bramble Leadership

The Parable of the Bramble [Judges 8:28 to 9:21] is a classical Biblical passage on leadership. The Israelite leader, Gideon, died and Israel needed a new leader - one who would lead them in the ways of God.

Gideon had failed in preparing a successor - the nation had no leader.

The Prophet Jotham skilfully diagnosed the bad situation and told the Parable of the Bramble to teach the people an important lesson.

The olive tree, the fig tree, and the grape tree vine all refused to be the king of the forest when the trees were seeking a leader. The only one willing to become king of the forest was the Bramble - and disaster pervaded under his reign of terror and tyranny.

We learn from this event that when good leaders are slow to come forward evil ones rush in and take their place.

If you fail to accept a certain responsibility or a leadership role which God asks you to take on, you may be guilty of enthroning the bramble.

In any organization, if the good, gifted people do not accept responsibilities, then the evil and bad ones will accept. Then look out! Trouble lurks!

God has called each one of us to be light and salt in the earth. When we do nothing, evil reigns; tyrants become rulers. Are you letting brambles get into your organization, your business, your family, your ministry or your church?

ministry, business) is bogged down in the mud!" Yet there is more hope for you, a Christian, because you account to God and have access to His enablement to do better!

Summary

As we conclude this section on "The need for Leadership", we realize that we need to consider the character of leadership and a well-defined, through, Biblically supported definition of Leadership. This will help us to evaluate our own lives and circumstances.

We come to the conclusion that the trainers of tomorrow's leaders need to keep in mind and Biblical model of leadership and broaden their own focus on this subject.

As followers on their way to becoming leaders, they need to know what to expect from their leaders and understand the complexity of leadership **so they can choose well who will lead them.**

The question many are asking today, both from the front-line action to those standing by the stuff is: **"WHERE ARE OUR LEADERS?"** Nations need leaders; society needs leaders; churches need leaders.

We need leaders who are at the front-line, who move among the followers, who know their weaknesses and their strengths, who can listen, who see their followers at their work location, who visit in their homes, who share their joys and sorrows, and who stick close enough to the action to demonstrate that leadership is not separated from the followership and the front lines. Leaders need to be with their followers as together they climb the mountain to the summit.

So often our so-called "leaders" stay in their cosy air-conditioned offices, out of touch with reality.

If you consider yourself a leader or are aspiring to leadership, remember that you are responsible in a most solemn way to those people God has entrusted under your leadership. They are required of God to give an accounting and yet you will be responsible in part for how their potential was used and how much gold, silver and precious stones were sent ahead by that individual.

Do not try to force a person into a mould that God never intended him or her to fill. Disaster results!

W. Stanley Mooneyham, former President of World Vision International, wrote the "Forward" to Ted Engstrom's book, *The making of a Christian Leader*.

He stated,

Sadly...tragically...the Church has been so slow to train and qualify those on whom it has thrust leadership. He [a youthful friend who had assumed the leadership of an organization with great potential] asked me if I knew of an organization or school that was "turning out" Christian leaders. My answer was - Nobody "turns out" Christian leaders. Certificates, degrees and diplomas don't make leaders. They can't be mass produced like hothouse plants. Rather they are like rare wildflowers, discovered growing sometimes in the least likely places. Fortunate is the movement or organization which, on finding such a promising example of the species, is able to transplant and cultivate it for maximum benefit and use.

Brian Stiller in writing, *"Leaders: A Vanishing Breed?"* gave the following challenge -

...I hope for few more aggressive, up-front leaders in the Church. I also look for those to advance the meeting of human need and suffering...let's stop whimpering for leaders of yesterday or comparing ourselves to those of another country. Take hold of what is ours by His grace. Challenge younger leaders to carve our new ideas, methods, even organizations. **Then stand back and give them a chance.** Jesus is our Model and He hasn't given up on us...He will breed Peters, thundering out the good news, Pauls, carefully building and Barnabases, gently loving. God gives the gifts. And that includes LEADERSHIP.

To be more than a slothful steward of the talents given in his keeping, the executive has to accept responsibility for making the future happen. It is the willingness to tackle purposefully this, the last of the economic tasks in business enterprise, that distinguishes that great business from the merely competent one, and the business builder from the executive-suite custodian. [Peter Drucker]

"Shirtsleeves Christians" or "Roll-up-Your-Shirtsleeves Christians"

Shirtsleeves Christians are the kind who believes in wearing their Christianity on their shirtsleeves, who spend more time belly-aching about how immoral and godless the world is rather than making the world a better place to live. They worry about how high the steeple is on their church rather than if people really pray there or if a room can be used to tutor under-privileged children.

ON THE OTHER HAND, **Roll-up-Your-Shirt-sleeves Christians dig into life, teach their children values and support good causes...[they] believe Christianity is faith and action. They try to get things done in a real world in a Christian way... Convictions aren't just religious beliefs, though most**

good principles come from the scriptures. Convictions also mean staying true to your principles - whether you are in business, a community organization, or a single parent... I've learned the biggest successes are usually built from the grassroots up... [Dave credits his grandmother, Munnie Sinclair, for strongly influencing and motivating him.] She prayed a lot. She worshipped God, loved Jesus, and read the Bible every day. She also was a motivator. From Grandma Sinclair i learned seven lessons for living.

- don't waste
- work hard
- don't cut corners
- have fun doing things
- be strict, but caring
- tackle problems head-on
- pray

[Dave Thomas, Founder of Wendy's Restaurants.]

We constantly change the world, even by our inaction. Therefore, let us change it responsibly.

[Benjamin Franklin]

Rev. Ernest T. Campbell, an alumnus of Princeton theological Seminary, in his Commencement address in 1978 said it so well,

Excellence has been dethroned, Mediocrity is king. To change the figure, no one's at the wheel. To change it yet again, we are an "acephalus" generation, without a head, leaderless.

When finishing the address, he left a powerful challenge using the parable of the sower. What an encouragement and challenge those words are!

A sower went forth to sow. Not to discuss the soil; not to compute his pension; not to count the days to his next vacation;...not to introspect his psyche; not to puzzle why some like him a little, some a lot and others not at all. A sower went forth to teach! A leader went forth to lead! A preacher went forth to preach!

Jesus took a towel. Jesus said, "Follow me!" They also serve who lead. Let neither modesty nor intimidation find you holding back. Go with God.