



Notes from
Christian Reflections
on
The Leadership
Challenge

5 Leadership Practices





MODEL THE WAY

Work on yourself before you work on others.

Work on yourself more than you work on others.

As a leader you are the picture and the model. People don't buy into your vision until they buy into you. The only way you can ever get them to buy into you with conviction and credibility is to live it first.

As leaders we may teach what we know, but we reproduce what we are. Stanford University research indicates that 89% of what people learn is from what they see, and only 10% from what they hear.

Law of magnetism: We attract who we *are*, not who we want.

"Taking it Inside" is an important first step.

Modeling the way starts with getting honest with yourself and perhaps re-examining some things that you may have taken for granted or not thought about very much. You can't really live what you don't believe. So you have to come to grips with what you really believe about yourself, about others, about life and about God.

What are the values or principles that are very important to you? How, and how much do you want to demonstrate them in your life? If you were to write a psalm, what would be the theme of it? And if someone were to hear it without knowing the author, would they immediately attach your name to it?

Who really knows you? What do you think they remember most about you? Are you satisfied with that? How do you want to change? Who do you want to impact? What do you want to help make happen in this world? Are you willing to throw your whole being into making that happen? Is it that important?

Without knowing what you really care about, without a clear "talk" that you want to walk, it's hard to model the way. God works in you both to will and to do of His good pleasure. You have to focus in on what it is at your core that "worketh effectually in you" and put it to work. When it begins to change you, you are modeling the way for those you will lead.





INSPIRE A SHARED VISION

At the beginning, what leaders often have is a theme. They have concerns, desires, hypotheses, hopes and dreams – core concepts around which they organize their aspirations and actions. Leaders begin the process of envisioning the future by discovering their themes. Finding your vision, like finding your voice, is a process of self-exploration and self-creation.

There is in all people a deep yearning to make a difference. We want to know that we've done something on this earth, and that there is a purpose to our existence.

Exemplary Christian leaders are able to release this human longing by communicating the meaning and significance of what people do. When leaders clearly communicate a shared vision, they ennoble those who work on its behalf. They uplift people's spirits.

They forge a unity of purpose by showing constituents how the vision can meet their needs and serve the common good.

In order to sense the deeper meaning and purpose people are seeking, leaders have to listen. They have to listen not just with their ears but also with their eyes and hearts. In a sense, leaders hold up a mirror and reflect back to their constituents what they most desire.

Enthusiasm is infectious, and people want to catch that positive energy. Few will ever struggle for very long unless the experience gives them life.





CHALLENGE THE PROCESS

The work of leaders is change. To them the status quo is unacceptable. They search for opportunities, and they experiment and take risks. They constantly invite and create new initiatives that can make a difference. Leaders are always asking "What's new? What's next? What's better?"

People who become leaders don't always seek the challenges they face. Challenges sometimes seek leaders. But it's not so important whether you find the challenges or they find you. It's the choices you make that are crucial. Leaders must seize the initiative.

It's the responsibility of leaders to create the environment in which "Just do it" isn't an advertising slogan but a way fact of life. For innovation and continuous improvement, everyone needs to believe that they can make something happen.

We know from research that customers and frontline employees are the sources of most improvement ideas in the organizations.

You can't pay people to care. It's not what gets rewarded but what is rewarding that gets done well!

People get through the tough times because they have a strong sense of meaning and purpose. The motivation to deal with challenges comes when it feels like a calling and not a job.

Exemplary leaders encourage others to step out on an adventure into the unknown rather than play it safe.

It may seem ironic, but the overall quality of work improves when people have a chance to fail.

In challenging the process the dream may be grand, but the process of fulfilling the dream must be a series of small acts. We know we want to get to the mountaintop. We also know we can't get there in one big leap. Exemplary leaders break the journey down into measurable goals and milestones, demonstrating how progress can be made incrementally. Recovery, renewal, and transportation come in small steps, not in tectonic shifts. We get there one step at a time.





ENABLE OTHERS TO ACT

Grand dreams do not become reality through the actions of a single individual. Exemplary leaders put their effort into enabling others to be as effective as they possibly can be. They make sure there is collaboration between people. They work to strengthen each individual's skills, or help them find new approaches, resources or tools.

Collaboration is the master skill that enables teams, partnerships, and other alliances to function effectively. Leaders foster collaboration by creating shared goals with other leaders and groups, by bringing people together to solve problems, by recognizing or rewarding contributions to others' efforts, etc.

As a leader, when you share power with others or help someone to succeed, you are demonstrating that you trust in and respect that person's abilities. When you help others to grow and develop, that trust, respect and help is reciprocated. It comes back to you with interest.

People who feel capable of influencing their leaders are more strongly attached to those leaders and more committed to effectively carrying out their responsibilities. They feel like they *own* their goals ...and see to it that whatever needs to happens or needs to get done – does.





ENCOURAGE THE HEART

The climb to the top is arduous and steep. People become exhausted, frustrated, discouraged, and just plain run out of steam. The vision may be noble, and the cause may be just, but the work seems to never end. People are tempted to give up. A key role of leaders is to “encourage the heart” of each constituent to carry on.

To keep hope and determination alive, exemplary leaders recognize contributions and show appreciation for individual excellence, even for efforts that failed, but were in the right direction.

Recognition is most effective in a context of high expectations and clear standards. (Standards include values, goals, principles shared by the group).

Successful leaders have high expectations, both of themselves and of their constituents. These expectations are powerful because they are the frames into which people fit reality. There is ample research evidence that people act in ways that are consistent with our expectations of them. Positive expectations yield positive results.

You should be looking for people doing the right things and people doing things right. You’re going to notice lots of examples of people making contributions to the success of your mission and setting examples for others. When you do, call it out.

The reasons for active engagement in church are different for different people. A leader is wise to get to know the unique drives of each person, and provide both opportunities and recognition that match a person’s motivations. Leaders get the best from others, not by trying to build fires under people but by fueling the fire within them.

When leaders celebrate people demonstrating the group’s values and achieving large or small victories, they create a spirit of community. People feel like “we’re all in this together”, and that their own efforts are needed and valued.

With a heart encouraged, people will take on almost anything.





NOTES ON RELATIONSHIP

Strong human connections produce spectacular results. When people feel a strong sense of affiliation and attachment to their leader and colleagues, they are much more likely to have a higher sense of personal well-being, to feel more committed to the organization, and to perform at higher levels. When they feel distant or detached, they're unlikely to get much of anything accomplished. Most of their energy is focused inwardly, often on their fears, insecurities or unmet needs.

Because leadership is a relationship, people are much more likely to enlist in initiatives led by those with whom they feel demonstrate values that are important to them, people who they feel care about them personally, as well as the goals of the organization.

A Brief Note on Leadership & Love

A Leader who loves is willing to...

...seek and do what is in another person's best interest, regardless of whether it is difficult physically, emotionally or in other ways, and that effort is not dependent on the other person's deserving or their response

...receive what another person is able to offer, even when that does not match with your own abilities or expectations.

...seek God with and on behalf of another person, regardless of your evaluation of their worthiness, or yours.

...give, even beyond your perceived limit of your abilities, to meet another person's needs. In doing so, your abilities to do and to lead increase.





In Real Life

The 5 Leadership Practices are not an abstract concept dreamed up by someone trying to make a nice leadership model. In fact, they were identified through 2 decades of research into what leaders actually do when performing at their best, and producing extraordinary results.

Have you experienced someone doing one of the 5 Leadership Practices in a way that positively affected you?

What was the situation?

Which Leadership Practice did he/she demonstrate?
How?

What was the impact on you and others?

What might have transpired without that leadership action?





Procedure for “In Real Life”

- *Complete the worksheet describing your own example of experiencing one of the 5 leadership practices*
- *Form a Discussion Group with 2 or 3 others*
- *In the group, have each person share his/her example of a leadership practice in action*
- *As a group, prepare a poster describing, how to put your selected leadership practice into action, eg. “When **Inspiring A Shared Vision** it’s important to...”
Feel free to illustrate your poster.*
- *Present your poster to the rest of the class, explaining what is there*

