



EFFECTIVE CHURCH LEADERSHIP

a matter of the heart

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THE MAKING OF A LEADER

YOUR JOB, TITLE, EDUCATION, AND TRAINING won't make you a great leader—only God can do that. But *The Making of a Leader* can help you see where you are in the process and what steps you should take next. By studying the lives of hundreds of historical, biblical, and contemporary leaders, Dr. J. Robert Clinton has gained perspective on how leaders develop over a lifetime. In chapter 8, “Integrating the Lessons of Life: Toward a Ministry Philosophy,” he explains how to go from identifying ministry values to beginning to create a philosophy of ministry.



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CHAPTER 8

Integrating the Lessons of Life: Toward a Ministry Philosophy

*The Challenge/The Problem: Blessed is the man who
finds wisdom, the man who gains understanding.*

(PROVERBS 3:13, NIV)

John, William, and I were sitting in my living room discussing a ministry problem that was facing John. John had requested time to talk over some items that were bothering him in his church situation. His friend William had about four years of experience as a senior pastor. John had been a lay leader almost that long.

John's problem was common. There had been a recent transition in the church. The former head pastor had moved on to another ministry; a new pastor had since taken over. John had been involved in the church under the former pastor, who had communicated a sense of direction to the church. His vision for the church involved training young leaders and freeing those young leaders to serve in the church. He had articulated his vision and the reasoning behind it to the church. He was decisive, a risk taker.

John was growing in leadership skills. He had gained experience and skill while leading a small group. In fact, he had been assigned to head all small groups in the church. He had been in the church as long or longer than any of the present members.

The new pastor was not like the old one. He was very careful and deliberate. He was more cautious, but also indecisive. He was not likely to recognize innovative emergent leaders and free them for ministry. He did not communicate a clear vision to the church. People were no longer sure of the direction of the church. Folks who went to the pastor and asked for permission to do a specific kind of ministry did not get answers.

John was caught in the middle. He knew the old philosophy and operated under it. He saw that the new pastor was not operating under the former pastor's philosophy. People in the church frequently came to John for advice, when in his opinion they should have been going to the pastor. The new pastor had legitimate authority due to his position, but John was increasingly being recognized as the spiritual leader. As he described his situation, he asked me what he should do. He was frustrated, feeling the lack of direction. He didn't know what to say to the people who came to him for advice.

The problem was twofold. John did not want to usurp the spiritual authority of the pastor. What was he to do when people came to him who should have gone to the pastor? Under the former pastor the church had been clearly moving to carry out a plan (communicated as if it were God's plan) that reflected the ministry philosophy of the pastor. Under the present pastor people were not sure whether that old plan was still in effect.

I commented on the spiritual authority problem first. Before I could comment on the problem of indecisiveness, William interrupted. He had been carefully listening to John. He also knew the church and the new pastor. His comment showed wisdom beyond his young years.

William did not attack the indecisiveness directly. He pointed out that it was a symptom of a bigger problem. The new pastor did not have a clear philosophy of ministry. He had no framework in which to judge the requests that were coming to him from potential leaders. He pointed out that the former pastor did have a clear philosophy of ministry. When people had come to the former pastor with similar requests, he almost always saw immediately whether the proposed ministry fit with the philosophy of ministry of the church and the five-year plan that had been developed in line with that philosophy. If the ministry fit, even if it was new and different and not on the planning board, it would usually be given the green light. If it did not fit, the pastor would explain why he was turning it down. Sometimes it was a matter of timing; perhaps later it could be done. Sometimes it was a matter of not fitting. When that was the case, the former pastor would help the person find a church situation where that ministry would fit.

William had hit the nail right on the head. I mused to myself, “Would that all pastors had a clear understanding of their ministry philosophy, a framework through which they could screen ideas and make decisions.” It is just such a framework that allows a leader to influence people toward God’s purposes.

All leaders have a ministry philosophy. It flows out of their shared experiences with God. As leaders experience process items, whether in terms of spiritual formation (character building) or ministerial formation (ministry skills), they learn from them. These lessons form a growing reservoir of wisdom that leaders use in the future. Some lessons are more explicit; others are implicit.

I learned a number of important lessons in my early ministry processing. These lessons usually became pithy value statements. Because I valued these ideas, I began to develop principles that flowed from them, and I consciously developed life patterns and ministry patterns that were consistent with them.

A MINISTRY PHILOSOPHY¹

In early one-on-one Bible studies I learned that I needed to apply what I was learning or I would forget it. *Use it or lose it!* arose out of this repeated learning experience. Later, after studying spiritual gifts, I saw that this desire to apply truth came not only from my personality but also from my spiritual gift of exhortation. This simple principle has shaped all of my ministry. A corollary of this, *Learn a little! Use it a lot!* expresses a balanced learning philosophy.

From early experiences with discipling and in small groups in my church in Reynoldsburg, Ohio, I saw that for me *ministry has to be personal*. I saw the power of small groups and the dynamic of one-on-one ministry. These ministry structures were life-changing. Yet not all people were willing to accept my personal ministry. I learned to be selective in those whom I discipled in-depth. From these insights I developed a further specific principle: *I will give as much as I can to one who chooses to have it*. If a person really wants my help I will be available to give it as long as he responds.

When someone had just made a personal decision for Christ, I learned to get that person to share it. *Expression deepens impression!* came out of these experiences. This principle was applied more broadly in my teaching. When people were forced to articulate what they were learning, they were taking a step of commitment toward what they were expressing.

Through parables, Jesus forced people to learn by engaging their minds. He did not hand teaching to them on a silver platter. I learned in home Bible classes that *truth discovered by the learner sticks longer*. Wherever I could, I would lead people toward truth but let them discover it.

Frank Sells imparted to me one of his ministry philosophy ideas: *Be as clear as the Bible is clear; nothing less, nothing more, nothing else*. This principle has forced me many times to back off from dogmatic statements or requirements.

Later, as I learned about organizational leadership, I discovered that *in a power conflict the leader with higher power will usually win regardless of rightness of issue, and a person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.* Organizational change without ownership is treacherous.

I think you can get a feel for what I mean by value statements, principles, and underlying assumptions, which form a ministry philosophy. When I did identify a lesson and was able to put it into a concise statement, that lesson usually gained added significance and was applied more consistently and widely in my ministry.

Lessons learned in life situations become underlying assumptions that guide leaders. They become part of a ministry philosophy. All leaders operate from a ministry philosophy. Let me repeat. All leaders operate from a ministry philosophy. However, that philosophy may not be adequate, or it may be simplistic. It may be implicit and not explicit. Effective leaders can articulate much of their ministry philosophy.

The result of leadership emergence is a leader in whom God has developed character and ministry skills, who has learned some lessons in this processing, and who uses these lessons to shape his influence and to accomplish God's purposes. *Ministry philosophy* is the result of leadership emergence—the ideas, values, and principles whether implicit or explicit that a leader uses as guidelines for decision making, for exercising influence, or for evaluating ministry.

A growing awareness of one's ministry philosophy leads to more effective leadership. At lower levels of leadership the philosophy will be more simple and specific to the ministry situation. At higher levels² the philosophy will include general, umbrella-like guidelines, as well as specific guidelines.

One of the striking characteristics seen in effective leaders is their drive to learn.³ They learn from all kinds of sources. They learn from Scripture. They are pressed by their situations to see new truth in the Scriptures and in the situations themselves. They learn about their own uniqueness. They build on the natural abilities they have. They acquire

skills needed by the challenges of the situations they face. They learn to use their spiritual gifts. The processing, which I have been describing in the chapters leading up to this one, forms a major source of lessons for effective leaders with a learning posture. Let me state two observations about what I have seen in leaders who want to learn.

Effective leaders, at all levels of leadership, maintain a learning posture throughout life.

Effective leaders who are productive over a lifetime have a dynamic ministry philosophy that evolves continually from the interplay of three major factors: biblical dynamics, personal gifts, and situational dynamics.

I believe it is this ability to weave lessons into a philosophy that makes leaders effective. One strong indicator of leadership is a learning posture that reflects itself in a dynamic ministry philosophy.

Leaders must develop a ministry philosophy that simultaneously honors biblical leadership values, embraces the challenges of the times in which they live, and fits their unique gifts and personal development if they expect to be productive over a whole lifetime.

I'll first comment on the three dynamics involved in this statement.⁴ Then I'll discuss the ministry philosophy evolutionary pattern, principles as the bedrock from which philosophy is drawn, and some overarching guidelines for ministry philosophy. Finally, I will define the concept of a leadership value and point out that expression of a ministry philosophy starts with concrete identification of some leadership values.

HONORS BIBLICAL LEADERSHIP VALUES

The Bible is the leadership anchor. As a Christian leader, above all else, I should be concerned that my leadership has something that is unique. While there are many things that are common with secular leadership, there should be this one difference: A Christian leader bases values, methodology, motivation, and goals on what God has revealed in Scripture. The Bible is the standard for evaluation of a Christian leader.

The Bible does not speak directly to all issues of leadership—when it does speak there is freedom. It often gives general ideas or specific examples from which a leader must be led by the Holy Spirit to applications. But it is always the tether and yardstick to which a Christian leader goes for fundamental guidance.

In the early stages, through specific word checks and general word processing, God will inculcate lessons and principles. These principles later become part of the leader's ministry philosophy. As the years go by, a growing leader will add other biblically derived assumptions and values so that there is a broad framework, even though implicit, that guides leadership.

These assumptions will affect relationships with followers, standards for ethical conduct, guidelines for evaluation of ministry, life goals, and a host of other issues. Most of these assumptions will be learned early in the ministry and will change very little over the years. Through maturity, ministry discernment, and destiny processing, new ones will be added and old ones clarified or modified slightly. Life's experiences give new perspective on the Scriptures and force one to see things not previously observed. Even the biblical element of a ministry philosophy is dynamic and changing over the years, though much less so than the leadership growth and gift development of the leader.

EMBRACES THE CHALLENGES OF THE TIMES IN WHICH THEY LIVE

There are three basal elements of leadership: leader, followers, and situation. A leader should learn from the changes involved in leadership. New ministry will change the followers. Even where the followers stay the same, relatively speaking, the current situation is always changing rapidly. The change in followers and situations brings with it new potential for learning. Lessons emerge. These life lessons will affect many assumptions crucial to the leader's philosophy. Frequently these lessons will have biblical implications. They will be grounded in assumptions previously learned from Scripture but now adapted to new situations. Often they will be new and will force more Scripture searching. This leads to new discovery of truth. Occasionally the new situation will not be covered by biblical revelation and will require Spirit-led confirmation either individually or through some part of the body of Christ. The challenge of the times forces a ministry philosophy to be a dynamic, changing entity and not a static, perfect guideline for all times.

FITS A LEADER'S UNIQUE GIFTS AND PERSONAL DEVELOPMENT

A ministry philosophy must be tailored to fit each leader. The biblical values of a ministry philosophy can have much in common among many leaders. Leaders who have common situations will find much in common in their ministry philosophies. But that part of a leader's ministry philosophy that depends on the leader's own gifts will differ greatly from other leaders.

The giftedness set includes natural abilities, acquired skills, and spiritual gifts. Over the years, God refines an individual in the giftedness development pattern. This involves seeing the strengths of natural abilities and how they relate to ministry effectiveness. It involves

identification and development of spiritual gifts, eventually recognizing a gift-cluster and roles that will best enhance that gift-cluster. It also involves the acquisition of skills that enhance both natural abilities and spiritual gifts and that are needed in available ministries. It is easy to see that a ministry philosophy will change as a leader discovers his own identity in terms of giftedness.

A ministry philosophy must be dynamic because it embraces dynamic elements. There is the core that changes relatively little. But there is a larger periphery, involving God's continued development of a leader. This learning involves dynamic elements that change with the leader's personal growth in the Word, in leadership, and in the ongoing discovery of giftedness.

In essence, one develops a ministry philosophy by seeing the lessons of life and applying them to ministry. Awareness of how the philosophy arises can be a step toward deliberate recognition, development, and use.

THE EVOLUTIONARY PATTERN

Ministry philosophy can be a complex subject. It has been helpful to use the following three-stage model as I study and evaluate how various leaders develop ministry philosophy.

- Stage 1: Osmosis—leaders learn implicit philosophy experientially
- Stage 2: Baby steps—leaders discover explicit philosophy through experience and reflection
- Stage 3: Maturity—leaders formulate and articulate their ministry philosophy to others along with their own retrospective reflection

Young leaders operate with an implicit philosophy derived from the sponsoring group of which they are a part. If you are a leader just starting out and you begin your ministry on a campus under the auspices of a parachurch organization, then the underlying ministry philosophy,

whether known or not, will be imbibed by you as you fulfill the ministry tasks and assignments that come. Personal lessons, which affect ministry philosophy, are learned via critical incidents. Both ministerial and spiritual formation will be involved in these lessons. Positive lessons will reinforce assumptions, which then become part of the ministry philosophy. Negative lessons will create avoidance patterns. We use these lessons as we are given new ministry tasks and assignments.

Process items that involve particularly critical incidents cause us to think. We recognize that one of our assumptions is questionable or does not appear to work. We question and evaluate some of our implicit philosophy. One function of the reflective evaluation pattern (described in the preceding chapter) involves just such questioning. We see discrepancies between “what is” and “what ought to be” when we train others. We are often forced to see this, either by our own thinking as we design training, or by the people we train (who do not necessarily operate from the same assumptions). We discover some of the assumptions of our ministry philosophy. This leads to a better understanding as well as modification of our ministry philosophy. At this point, our ministry philosophy is represented by some explicit assumptions, although the majority are still implicit.

When a leader senses the need for more accountability, this leads to ministry evaluation, which in turn forces the process of identifying what motivates and controls ministry. The key ideas of this preliminary transition are control and accountability. The leader sees that direction for ministry needs to be specific and should be more controlled. Previous direction for ministry has been situationally controlled. Events have directed the emergence of a ministry philosophy. The ministry philosophy is increasingly becoming explicit.

Toward the end of ministry, a philosophy emerges by looking back over a lifetime. Motivation for this involves passing on to others from what has been learned. This necessitates careful formulation.

This may seem very abstract to you now. Most people in positions of

leadership are not philosophers but are doers. They want something to help them “do their ministry.” Let me give you my practical guidelines for developing a ministry philosophy. Make the most of the lessons you learn as God develops you. Principles are the backbone of any philosophy. You don’t need to have a systematic theoretical grasp of ideas for most specific direct ministry, just some principles that you can apply.

GUIDELINES FOR DEVELOPING A MINISTRY PHILOSOPHY

Here are three guidelines to help you develop a ministry philosophy:

1. Start by learning to identify principles.
2. Group principles into similar categories.
3. Look for obvious categories that are absent.

Most people probably only need to do step 1. Most lay leaders will need to learn only to identify principles and apply them directly to their ministries. But full-time leaders whose sphere of influence continues to expand and those who get involved in organizational leadership will need steps 2 and 3.

IDENTIFYING PRINCIPLES⁵

Principles refer to generalized statements of truth that are observations drawn from specific instances of ministry. Many principles of truth flow directly from the lessons in various process items. Reflect back to identify past lessons, and be more sensitive to current lessons. Start with a statement describing the lesson you see. Expect such beginning statements to be altered. When God is trying to teach me a lesson, He will do so through many means. Important lessons are usually repeated. From these repeated efforts I formulate and refine the lesson.

When I discover a value or principle, I see if it has biblical authority.

If I find generalized teaching containing the principle, I feel more certain about applying it to my own life and asserting it as a leadership principle for others. I place principles on the certainty continuum:

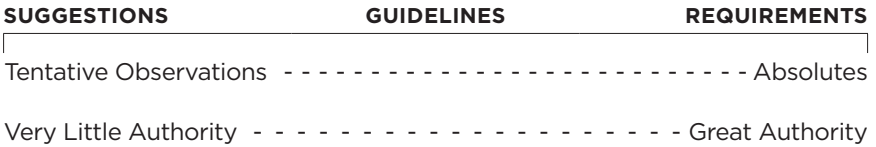


FIGURE 8-1 CERTAINTY CONTINUUM

This continuum is based on two ideas: (1) Principles are observations along a continuum. (2) We can teach or use with increasing authority those principles that are further to the right on the continuum.

Absolutes refer to replicated truth in leadership situations across cultures without restrictions (for example, observable in all leadership situations). *Guidelines* represent truth that is generally replicated in most situations but not necessarily in all (observable in many). *Suggestions* refer to truth observed in some situations. *Suggestions* are the most tentative—use with caution. *Guidelines* are more firm and have evidence for broader application. *Absolutes* are principles that evince God’s authoritative backing for all leaders everywhere. The Bible is the prime source for determining whether a statement is a suggestion, guideline, or absolute. The principle, *Be as clear as the Bible is clear*, underlies this continuum and forces me to see what the Bible actually says about lessons I learn in life.

GROUPING PRINCIPLES

When beginning to formulate a ministry philosophy, two major categories cover most possible statements. Some ministry philosophy statements deal with personal character development. Other ministry philosophy statements deal with actually doing the ministry. The ministry philosophy statements mentioned previously would fit under these two categories:

Category 1: Ministry Philosophy Applying to Character

- Use it or lose it!
- I will give as much as I can to one who chooses to have it.
- Be as clear as the Bible is clear; nothing less, nothing more, nothing else.

Category 2: Ministry Philosophy Applying to Doing the Ministry

- Use it or lose it!
- Ministry has to be personal.
- Expression deepens impression!
- Truth discovered by the learner sticks longer.
- Be as clear as the Bible is clear; nothing less, nothing more, nothing else.
- In a power conflict the leader with higher power will usually win regardless of rightness of issue.
- A person convinced against his will is of the same opinion still.

Some statements will apply to both of these categories (for example, *Use it or lose it!*). They affect character as well as ministry. As you look at principles, values, and lessons that God has taught, you may identify more than just two categories. Grouping is a helpful first step toward integrating a ministry philosophy.

LOOK FOR OBVIOUS CATEGORIES THAT ARE ABSENT

For those who have leadership responsibilities other than direct ministry, additional categories may be helpful.⁶ The following list may point out areas in your ministry philosophy that either need beefing up or need to become more explicit. These items apply to higher-level leadership with responsibilities beyond direct ministry. These leaders are responsible for the generic leadership functions. These functions can be helpful categories for identifying principles.

TABLE 8-1 EIGHT GENERIC LEADERSHIP FUNCTIONS

FUNCTION	TOPIC LABEL OF GENERIC LEADERSHIP FUNCTION
1	Motivation Toward Vision
2	Leadership Selection and Training
3	Decision Making
4	Crisis Resolution ⁷
5	Routine Problem Solving
6	Coordinating with Superiors
7	Coordinating with Peers
8	Coordinating with Subordinates

Function 1 deals with the central task of leadership—getting guidance from God and motivating followers toward that vision. Your track record in guidance processing (see chapter 6) will be a helpful source of ministry philosophy principles fitting that category.

A major responsibility of leadership is recognition of rising leaders, their selection, and development. The Bible has a lot to say concerning this category. Process items dealing with the ministry training stage (see chapter 4) will be a helpful source for philosophy statements.

Leaders regularly face decisions. Discernment processing, seen in the ministry phase, will be the single most helpful source of philosophy for this important function (see chapter 5 for details).

Functions 4 and 5 are similar. Conflicts and crises teach a leader lessons of life that aid in performing these functions (see especially chapter 5).

Functions 6, 7, and 8 deal with relationships. Most leaders face repeated disappointments in this area. Lessons from discernment and relationship processing form the basis for a ministry philosophy (see especially chapter 5).

PASTOR JOHNSON

At the beginning of this chapter, I discussed a case of difference in pastoral leadership—a former pastor with an explicit ministry philosophy contrasted with an implicit one. I went to the former pastor, Johnson, after this discussion, and interviewed him. He explained to me how he had developed his initial ministry philosophy. First, he derived a purpose statement, which described what he felt was the purpose of the church. He pointed out that he had imbibed much of the philosophy of ministry from the movement of which he was a part (see stage 1, osmosis). Following is his statement of the purpose of the church:

We are to be working for God as He establishes His kingdom through the teaching, preaching, proclaiming, and testifying about His kingdom. This will be accomplished if we not only speak His words, but also do His works. We are to be the extension of Jesus to the world. We need to maintain an attitude of service and give the Holy Spirit the freedom to move and empower and release us into ministry. The power of God should be evident in our people and church to such an extent that we are witnesses to both the unchurched (through evangelism) and to the church (through renewal).⁸

He took that as an overarching statement and developed principles that would be important to such a church.

TABLE 8-2 PASTOR JOHNSON'S EIGHT MINISTRY PHILOSOPHY PRINCIPLES

#	STATEMENT
1	The Holy Spirit is the administrator of the church.
2	The supernatural power of God can accomplish more than the combined fleshly efforts of sincere Christians.

- | # | STATEMENT |
|----------|---|
| 3 | Relationships are essential. Relationship to God is our chief goal. Relationships with one another provide the intimacy and accountability which the Holy Spirit uses to mold us. |
| 4 | Every believer has a special place in the body of Christ and it is vital that everyone be in their place. Some people are more visible but not necessarily more essential. God builds the church and places people where they need to be. |
| 5 | People must be free to be themselves. Each person needs to be loved where they are. |
| 6 | There has to be room for failure. Where there is no failure, there is no growth. There needs to be an attitude of risk taking. |
| 7 | We take seriously the Great Commission (Matthew 28:18-20). We are to be people who are sent into all the world to preach the gospel of the kingdom. |
| 8 | Because we are such an experientially oriented church we need especially to be constantly grounding our ministry in the Word of God. ⁹ |

This led him to identify and label some priorities, or further statements of ministry philosophy.

**TABLE 8-3 PASTOR JOHNSON'S MINISTRY VISION STATEMENTS
(FIVE-YEAR PLAN)**

LABEL	STATEMENT IN VALUE LANGUAGE
1. Worship	We must continually develop ways to express our adoration, praise, and thanksgiving for all that God has done for us. Worship should be a reflection of our relationship to God.
2. The Word	We need to know and understand what the Scriptures teach. The Scriptures provide the models and the guidelines for our lives and ministry.
3. Fellowship	We are to provide a loving, sensitive, supportive, and healing environment through relationships.
4. Training Ministry	We are to be an equipping center. We are to be training and activating the people of God for service.
5. Sending	We are to be a people who "go forth." We are to be active in sending forth laborers into the harvest both here and around the world. ¹⁰

Pastor Johnson then showed me a statement of vision, a five-year plan for the church, which flowed from these philosophical statements. This twenty-nine-page document contained statements that brought out the uniqueness of this church.

Pastor Johnson had a framework that he could use to evaluate potential ministries suggested by emerging leaders. His philosophy also led him to expect that these ministries would emerge. His values, priorities, and vision gave him a framework for decision making. They were developed over a four-year period in the context of ministry. At first they were implicit in the ministry. They then became explicit as the church planned for its future.

WARREN WIERSBE

I first met Warren Wiersbe in a seminar in Cedarville, Ohio, when I was an assistant pastor in a Baptist church. His seminar was titled “Send Us a Pastor Who Reads.” That seminar showed me the importance of a leader maintaining a learning posture. It also affirmed my desire to study biographies of leaders. He shared examples from his own literary processing. The seminar exposed us to his reading habits, the great books he had read, the kinds of books a pastor ought to have in a library, and many great ideas that were to be gained.

Pastor Wiersbe was superb, ministering to pastors and sharing some of the books and ideas that had been used in his life. He modeled a learning posture for us. It was clear to me why his ministry had such depth. What he learned was continually being fed back into his ministry. I knew immediately that he was a wise man with a solid ministry. I was not surprised when, seventeen years later, his article in *Leadership* carried insightful ideas about a philosophy of ministry. That article, “Principles Are the Bottom Line,” is one of the very best that has been printed in that magazine.

In the article, Wiersbe gave a broad philosophical statement that has guided him in all of his ministry. Using that statement he described

principles that guided him in his ministry, forming the bedrock of his ministry philosophy. (Wiersbe uses the word *principle* like I use *absolute* on the certainty continuum.) His principles apply to Christian leadership in general as well as pastoral leadership.

Wiersbe was stimulated to think about principles by a poem given in one of his seminary classes:

Methods are many,
Principles are few.
Methods always change,
Principles never do.¹¹

His meditation on this led him to look for principles (or absolutes). *Develop a ministry that is based on absolutes.* He evaluated his own and other ministries on the basis of underlying absolutes, as well as on the basis of the success of the ministry. It kept him from “fad” chasing. Means and methods may be good, but Wiersbe went beyond them.

I learned never to adopt a method until I understood the principle behind it.¹²

With this basic attitude, Wiersbe began to minister and to identify absolutes for ministry as he went. He wrote his article as a retrospective reflection on this process. I have captured the gist of his observations in the table that follows. The ten statements were worked over and reworded to make them apply generically. (The labels are my own, and I have listed these principles in my own words.)

I am sure that Pastor Wiersbe had many day-to-day principles such as the ones I shared from my own life. I am also sure that each of them was evaluated in terms of these ten overarching statements.

These two examples give the framework around which leaders have developed their ministry philosophies. Pastor Johnson portrays

a ministry philosophy that is moving from stage 1 to stage 2 in the ministry evolutionary pattern. Wiersbe illustrates movement toward a stage 3 ministry philosophy.

TABLE 8-4 WIERSBE’S PRINCIPLES ADAPTED TO INCLUDE VALUE LANGUAGE

LABEL FOR PRINCIPLE	SIMPLE STATEMENT OF VALUE/PRINCIPLE
1. Character	A leader must recognize that God’s work of developing character in him is foundational, for effective ministry flows out of being.
2. Ministry	A leader must serve, for the nature of ministry is service—first of all to the Lord and then to those we lead.
3. Motivation	Ministry must fundamentally be motivated by love for those being ministered to and not by gain nor duty nor giftedness.
4. Sacrifice	Leaders must recognize that effective ministry will require sacrifice.
5. Authority and Submission	A leader must first learn submission to authority; it is essential in order to exercise authority properly.
6. Ultimate Purpose	A leader ought to know that God must receive the glory in the leader’s life and work.
7. Dynamic Balance	A leader must grow in and effectively use the basic tools of the Word and prayer.
8. Faithfulness and Capacity	A leader must strive for faithfulness in ministry with a result in an increase of his capacity for ministry.
9. Spirit Empowered	Ministry must be empowered by the Holy Spirit.
10. Modeling Principle	A leader should recognize that Jesus is the supreme model for ministry.

MINISTRY PHILOSOPHY AS A GRID¹³

These two examples show the importance of a ministry philosophy as a guidance framework for a leader. Some of them might be suggestive to you. If, in fact, God develops a leader over a lifetime and if, in fact, He teaches

lessons concerning character and ministry, then it follows that identifying and using these lessons is crucial to God's purposes for that leader.

Read again the statement I have been working on during this chapter.¹⁴

Leaders must develop a ministry philosophy that simultaneously honors biblical leadership values, embraces the challenges of the times in which they live, and fits their unique gifts and personal development if they expect to be productive over a whole lifetime.

I want to suggest a minimum approach to fulfilling this leadership value statement. Rather than get overwhelmed with the idea of doing a full-blown ministry philosophy, start by writing up any of your basic ministry principles as leadership value observations¹⁵—that is, by using leadership value language. Let me explain what I mean by leadership value language.

TWO DEFINITIONS NEEDED FOR CAPTURING ONE'S IMPORTANT LEADERSHIP CONVICTIONS

Different authors use the concept of values differently. Let me define how I am using value.

DEFINITION 1

A leadership value is an underlying assumption that affects how a leader perceives leadership and practices it.

The leadership conviction, when identified and written out (using value language), moves to the status of an explicit leadership value.

DEFINITION 2

An explicit leadership value is a statement of commitment by a leader to some insight concerning his leadership/ministry which is written in the format of a first-person commitment to the statement and uses one of

three auxiliary verbs to endorse the commitment: should, ought, must, in that emphatic order.

The strength of the commitment is shown by which modal auxiliary verb—*should* or *ought to* or *must*—is used.

THE FORMAT—THREE POSSIBILITIES

- I *should* . . . plus the commitment statement (*possible* value for others)
- I *ought to* . . . plus the commitment statement (*strong guideline* others must consider)
- I *must* . . . plus the commitment statement (*will* apply to most leaders; nearing an *absolute*)

Let me illustrate by giving some examples. Here are six explicit leadership value examples from my personal spiritual DNA list¹⁶ along with a parenthetical (explanation/rationale, why I hold the value). Note I have already taken them out of the first person (my value) and applied them to leaders in general. But you can be sure that I am personally committed to each of these values.

TABLE 8-5 SIX CLINTON SPIRITUAL DNA LEADERSHIP VALUES

VALUE LABEL	STATEMENT OF VALUE
Value 1. Intimacy	A leader must seek intimacy with God in terms of beingness, for ministry flows out of being.
Value 2. Developmental Mindset	A leader ought to have a developmental mindset, for God is a God who develops people. Leaders ought to be developing emerging leaders from those they minister to.

VALUE LABEL	STATEMENT OF VALUE
Value 3. Growing in the Word	A leader must continually be developing in terms of his grasp of God's Word, for God's Word is His foundational revelation of Himself and His purposes.
Value 4. Obedience Track Record	Over a lifetime, a leader must walk in obedience to God, for obedience is the key to knowing God's will for a life.
Value 5. Growing in Christlikeness	Over a lifetime a leader must be transformed into the image of Christ by the power of the Holy Spirit, for a major goal of God's is transformation of an individual toward Christlikeness in terms of the leader's uniqueness.
Value 6. Gifted Power	A leader should minister with gifted power, for the essential ingredient of leadership is the powerful presence of the Holy Spirit in the life and ministry of the leader.

In my ML524: Focused Lives class at Fuller Seminary, I have my students do a section of their paper titled "Values Section," which includes a timeline and their ten most important explicit leadership values learned thus far. The following, table 8-6, is one student's 10 Top Explicit Values.¹⁷ Notice how all three modal auxiliary verbs occur. Note also his explanation of the value. This is an extended table continued over several pages.

**TABLE 8-6 VALUE SECTION, STUDENT PAPER IN ML524:
FOCUSED LIVES CLASS**

FOUNDATIONS 1979-1999 (20 YEARS OLD)	DECADE OF 20S TO 30 1999-2009 (30 YEARS OLD)
V1: 1987-1992 Learning Posture	V6: 1999-2006 Networking to Connect and Empower
V2: 1987-1996 Genuine Interest in People and Cultures	V7: 2000-2003 Small Groups as Leadership Training Outlets
V3: 1991-present Ministry Pioneering Through Risk	V8: 2000-present Active Listening
V4: 1994-2004 Mentoring Toward Life Change	V9: 2001-2004 Relational Leadership
V5: 1997 Attitude of Surrender	V10: 2008 Family as Ministry

Value 1: I *must* at all times maintain a *learning posture*.

Explanation: Many leaders feel that they have attained sufficient aptitude in their skill repertoire to “do the job” and stop learning. Yet, a lack of personal development can plateau and even disempower a leader, rendering him less effective, if not useless. In my ministry, I must maintain a constant desire to develop in my abilities and seek to learn something new in every possible circumstance. By reminding myself that being an effective leader is about lifelong personal development, I will be less prone to conceit, apathy, and pride.

Value 2: I *must* take genuine *interest in people and other cultures*.

Explanation: The key to understanding people and their culture is showing genuine interest in them. If my interest is insincere, I will jeopardize my ability to develop friendships, adapt to unfamiliar circumstances, and effectively minister to my surroundings. I must therefore never allow myself to forget the inherent value that people and therefore their culture possess.

Value 3: In pioneering new ministry expressions, I *ought to* take *risks*.

Explanation: Taking risks is part of doing ministry, in particular when it involves pioneering new ministry expressions. While I must always seek to discern the directing of God’s Spirit, there will be times when He remains silent or purposely unclear. In times like these, I must invoke my gift of faith and continue to press forward, even at the risk of personal failure. After all, I am a (developing) pioneer, and my job will undoubtedly entail making decisions based on an outcome I cannot yet foresee. I must remember at all times that God is in control.

Value 4: I *should* use one-on-one *mentoring to change people’s lives*.

Explanation: People are commonly most transparent in intimate settings. When given a safe and inviting environment, they are prone to open up and share their hearts, in particular when it involves a person

with whom they have developed a relationship of trust and respect. It is in these places where I am best able to challenge and develop individuals toward life change. I should therefore find people who desire to make a kingdom contribution and seek to mentor them in such a way that their lives are permanently redirected.

Value 5: Everything I do *must* flow out of an *attitude of surrender*.

Explanation: Ministry flows out of being. Leaders whose lives are unconditionally surrendered to God's purposes are His most effective tools. If I am to be useful to God, I must constantly evaluate whether there are any strongholds in my life that are keeping me from such surrender. Because distractions creep into our lives so subtly and often go undetected, I must allow others to call me out when they detect deviation.

Value 6: I *should* use my *networking skills to connect* people with each other and thereby *empower* them toward a more effective ministry.

Explanation: Networking is a great way of empowering leaders. Because I will be limited in my ability to develop and resource certain leaders, being in relationship with those whose gift-mix is more fitting will help me to pass on these leaders to them. I should therefore seek to continue developing relationships with people from around the globe, and I must be willing to hand off mentorees when others can train them more appropriately.

Value 7: I *should* use *small groups to train developing leaders*.

Explanation: Small group settings can provide wonderful leadership development opportunities. Because the level of responsibility is limited and the scope of potential failure manageable, I should regularly allow budding leaders to take charge in small group settings as a means of growing in their leadership abilities. I should also seek to debrief the experience with them, encouraging and redirecting them toward progress.

Value 8: I *ought to* be an *active listener*.

Explanation: Active listening helps guide a conversation toward an intended outcome. By asking good questions, making comments when appropriate, and exemplifying an overall attitude of interest and concern, I can help direct a mentoree toward a set of desired results, for example, insight, clarity, or direction. I ought to therefore adopt a conversational style in which all of these elements can be encompassed. My priority should be listening, with giving advice or providing personal insight taking the proverbial back seat.

Value 9: I *ought to* lead from *relational and not positional leadership*.

Explanation: People have always and will always follow me based primarily on relationship. While there will be instances in which I will have to exercise authority based on rank, I should seek to keep such instances at a minimum. Human dysfunction provides enough opportunity for dissent, and I will be able to most effectively counter squabbles within a highly relational framework. I should therefore make people feel valued and taken seriously at all times.

Value 10: I *must* remember that my *family life will be the key component of my ministry*.

Explanation: The way I lead my family will determine the way I lead in public ministry and will serve as evidence for my integrity as a leader. In fact, my family will be *the* key component of all that I do. Unless my family life (as far as it depends on me) is healthy, I have no business leading others. I must therefore prioritize my family over anything else I do in ministry, paying careful attention to my wife and children's physical and spiritual well-being. I should also seek to encourage others to do likewise by both example and direct challenge.

CONCLUSION

I believe that most leaders can list ten important explicit leadership values. Start there. Then, if you can, do a full-blown ministry philosophy as I have described it in this chapter. But if you cannot, at least do your Top Ten Explicit Leadership Values.

HOW ABOUT YOU?

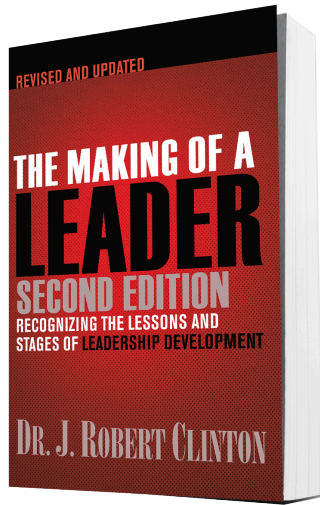
1. What are some of the most important lessons God has taught you personally concerning your leadership character? Define two of these in terms of an explicit leadership statement, a commitment to the lesson that was learned. Use one of the three modal auxiliary verbs to reflect it as a suggestion, guideline, or absolute for you in ministry.
2. What are some of the most important lessons that God has taught you concerning your ministry? Define two of these in terms of an explicit leadership statement, a commitment to the lesson that was learned. Use one of the three modal auxiliary verbs to reflect it as a suggestion, guideline, or absolute for you in ministry.

ENDNOTES

1. Chapter 8 (first written in 1988) was my first attempt to articulate what a ministry philosophy is and first steps at how to derive one. Since then I have written or compiled further works dealing with specific aspects of ministry philosophy. My last efforts have been to help leaders identify their top ten explicit leadership values.
2. I do not in any way intend to indicate that higher or lower is better or worse, simply different and requiring different leadership functions. Here I am simply indicating that higher-level leaders will have both general categories of guidelines as well as specific guidelines. The lesser levels will have identified specific guidelines but not yet generalized them to higher categories.
3. I have verbalized this observation as one of my seven major leadership lessons: *Effective leaders maintain a learning posture throughout life.*
4. One would tend to think that a ministry philosophy would be unchanging. In other words, we find some principles and assume that they never change. While this is true with some core principles, the thrust of this chapter is how ministry philosophy is dynamic and changes over a lifetime because of continual learning from the Bible, learning from life, learning about one's giftedness, and learning from ministry experience.
5. In my booklet *Leadership Perspective* (chapter 5), I develop the whole concept of identification and confirmation of principles in much more depth than given here. In that treatment I give

six assumptions underlying derivation of principles, a certainty screen for analyzing biblical principles, and an applicability screen. I also talk about truth drawn from sources other than the Bible. Such a treatment is beyond the scope of this book.

6. In terms of leaders who are on certain leadership levels, types A and B are usually most concerned with direct ministry. Types D and E are usually most concerned with indirect ministry. For them these additional functions are extremely important. Type C leaders are usually more direct than indirect but both apply.
7. Crisis resolution is a form of decision making and a form of problem solving, but it differs in that decision making and problem solving can become rather routine. Hence, you can adapt styles to these regularly occurring leadership functions. When a crisis comes unexpectedly, most likely you will revert to a reflexive style that will be a major function of your personality. Crisis leadership acts are aperiodic rather than recurrent.
8. Dr. J. Robert Clinton, "Interview Notes with Pastor Johnson" (unpublished research notes of interview, August 1987).
9. Clinton, "Interview Notes."
10. Clinton, "Interview Notes."
11. Warren Wiersbe, "Principles Are the Bottom Line," *Leadership* 1, no. 1 (Winter 1980): 80.
12. Wiersbe, 80.
13. I have not mentioned the powerful effect that worldview has on shaping one's ministry philosophy. I am assuming that this book will be used primarily by leaders with a Western worldview. Discussing ministry philosophy for non-Western cultures would require a very different chapter indeed.
14. I am writing this section in 2011 along with my revised version of *The Making of a Leader*. In retrospect, I have seen that few leaders will really develop in detail a ministry philosophy. So in this last section I am going to suggest as a minimum that a leader ought to identify at least some important leadership values. I will define a leadership value in terms of format of leadership value language.
15. I have captured a number of *my leadership values* that I want to pass on in an important position paper titled "Passing On My Heritage." See my website Resource Store where this position paper is available. In this final section of chapter 8, I am suggesting that a leader should identify at least a set of leadership values that are important—and pass them on to others.
16. These six spiritual DNA values come from my position paper, "Passing On My Heritage," available in my website Resource Store.
17. I received permission from the student to use this example.



In his book, Dr. J. Robert Clinton identifies six distinct stages of leadership development. As you read his book, you will learn to recognize God's providential shaping in your life, determine where you are in the leadership development process, identify others with leadership characteristics, and direct the development of future leaders. This revised and updated version includes several new appendices and expanded endnotes as well as an application section at the end of each chapter.

<https://www.tyndale.com/p/the-making-of-a-leader/9781612910758>

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HIGH- PERFORMANCE ETHICS

THERE IS A BETTER WAY TO DO BUSINESS. And this better way—the ethical way—will lead to amazing results: highly committed employees and customers, financial gains, and strong, healthy organizations. Wes Cantrell, a highly respected and well-known business executive, knows the importance of strong values. In *High-Performance Ethics*, he teams up with Jim Lucas, an internationally recognized leadership consultant, to reveal a surprising secret: The road of principle is also the road to higher performance and richer results. In chapter 5, “Principle 5: Respect the Wise,” they explain how every leader is a mentor by default and that good leaders have good mentors. They also explain the characteristics of good (and bad) mentors and how we can learn from both.



WES CANTRELL, retired Chairman and CEO of Lanier Worldwide, Inc., is known as a world-class leader and an expert in marketing and sales. Through nearly five decades at Lanier, Wes built a history of personal performance and a reputation for integrity. His experience has made him an authority on sales management, marketing, acquisitions and divestitures, sourcing and product development strategies, and leadership of multinational organizations. Wes is a member of several boards of directors. He and his wife live in Atlanta.



JAMES R. LUCAS is an authority on leadership and organizational development. He is a groundbreaking thought leader, provocative speaker, and experienced consultant. Jim is president and CEO of Luman Consultants International Inc., an organization he founded in 1983. This consultancy is dedicated to developing passionate, thinking, high-performance leaders, people, teams, and organizations. Jim is the author of four landmark books on leadership and organizational development. He lives in the Kansas City area with his wife and four children.

PRINCIPLE 5

Respect the Wise

**If you can't honor the savvy,
you're in the wrong organization**

One old saying defines maturity as following the advice of older or more experienced people—even when they're right!

By respecting the wise, HPE [High-Performance Ethics] leaders access wisdom that they can't gain any other way, at least not for a very long time or at a very high cost (and all too often *after* it's really needed).

HPE leaders are often successful and respected mentors in part because they are also great followers. They learn from their mentors and follow the principle of respecting the wise. And so they're even more worthy to be followed.

EVERY LEADER IS A MENTOR BY DEFAULT

This principle isn't about only respecting people who are all-wise. HPE leaders respect anyone in a position of influence in their lives, and they follow their lead *whenever it's the wise, right thing to do*. Jesus told His disciples to follow the formal religious leaders of the day—even though they were corrupt—whenever they sat “in Moses' seat,” that is, whenever they spoke truth.

People who are in leadership positions are mentoring the people around them all the time—for better or worse, in word and deed, and through

what's unsaid or undone. They can't help it. People naturally model themselves after (or develop themselves against) those who have authority, power, fame, money, or charisma. Mentoring is the default position.

This HPE principle encompasses the whole range of leaders, including those who mentor by choice and those who mentor by default. Even bad bosses can instill something of value if we learn to deal with them well.

ONLY A FEW ARE WISE MENTORS BY CHOICE

In addition to my wife, two others helped me during times of difficulty in my career. I met George DeBenedetto in 1956 when he joined the company. We worked together and became friends. When I became district manager in Baton Rouge, George was based in New Orleans and was a regional sales manager for dictation products. I felt I could talk to him about any problem without fear that he would use the information against me or share it with others. George was an excellent mentor with no vested interest; he was a good sounding board and gave wonderful advice and encouragement.

The other notable mentor in my life was Carl Reith, president of Oxford Industries when they became Lanier's parent company in 1969. We also became good friends, and I found that Carl was willing to provide high-quality advice with no strings attached. He was always interested in my success, even years after he retired.

Both of these men meant a lot to me, both professionally and personally. Through their influence, I realized the importance of good mentors.

A true mentor is an experienced and trusted adviser. There is a lot to unpack in this brief definition:

- A mentor is an *adviser*. Good mentors don't tell people what to do; they make suggestions, helping others work out their own idea of what they should do. Mentoring means using informal authority, influencing people through power that is willingly invited rather than structurally mandated. It is very difficult for someone in a position of formal authority to be an effective mentor. It can happen, but it is an exception to the rule, and it is exceptional when someone can pull it off.
- A mentor is *experienced*. Good mentors are not peers with the same level of knowledge and experience. They know more—about one particular thing, or about everything. They might have more education in the school of business, or more education in the school of hard knocks, but somehow they've picked up the knowledge or street-smarts that we need.
- A mentor is *trusted*. By strength of character or skill with relationships (or both), good mentors prove that they are trustworthy. They won't use their knowledge of our defects to destroy us. Even while pointing out problems and blind spots, they make those they mentor feel bigger rather than smaller. The very fact that they are willing to invest in us, with no obvious return to themselves, bolsters our sense that they are people worthy of our attention.

Good mentors are usually mentors by choice. They know the power they have to influence others and the legacy they want to leave by doing it. They won't leave the development of other human beings to random encounters. They know that a well-placed investment of their time and wisdom will still be creating value years into the future.

MOST LEADERS ARE NOT WISE MENTORS (MOST OF THE TIME)

Most leaders—even older, experienced, or powerful leaders—don't usually act as wise mentors. In most organizations, leaders leave mentoring

to happenstance, enjoying the power that comes with their formal authority and forgetting that their power can be a tool for cultivating the good of those around them. In fact, even very wise mentors are still flawed human beings.

When mentors don't set a top-notch example, or when formal leaders focus more on power than on mentoring, we can at least learn what *not* to do. We can offer due respect to their experience and authority without putting them on a pedestal. But respecting the wise does not mean kowtowing to every leader's every whim.

Of course, families often face the same dilemma. Respecting our parents can be complex in practice. Some parents are wise mentors, and honoring them includes building a life on their example and teaching. Other parents use their position of authority selfishly or foolishly, and honoring them includes learning what lessons we can (with or without their intentional cooperation) and following their advice as long as it aligns with ultimate principles. In reality, most parents combine elements of wise mentoring and selfish misuse of power. Honoring them requires a mixed approach.

Respecting the wise in organizational life involves a similarly complex relationship between leaders and those who have chosen to follow their leadership. In the best cases, this relationship reflects the principles of good mentoring, which we should receive with gratitude and strive to practice in regard to others.

However, in most cases, the relationship between formal leaders and their people usually involves a complex combination of power, authority, influence, legacy, and the potential for abuse. Our approach to these leaders requires a shrewd mix of respecting their role and the way their influence can shape us for good—while learning from their example what *not* to do.

It was a typical weekend in the spring of 1955, and I was waiting at the Greyhound bus station to go home. I was

graduating from Southern Tech in May and I was extremely excited about starting a career. I already had a few job offers including one from IBM that would allow me to stay in Atlanta.

While I waited for the bus, I looked across the street at the headquarters of Lanier. Remembering that they had written a letter to our placement office regarding technical jobs, I decided to make a “cold call.” Even though my clothing (blue jeans and sweatshirt) was not appropriate for an interview, I decided that I would use the time profitably and take a chance on selling myself.

In just a few minutes, I found myself standing in the Lanier reception area asking to see the man who had written the letter to the placement office at my university. After a brief wait, I was shaking hands with Gene Milner. First impressions are important and Gene made a strong one. He was six-foot, five inches tall, rugged, and rough-hewn.

It was not long into our conversation before Gene had sold me on Lanier and convinced me that someday, this would be a company to be reckoned with. He also spoke of big commission earnings and that impressed me. After a little bargaining, I left with a job offer for a starting position making \$325 per month.

Gene Milner’s friends and relatives all called him Jikker. His older brothers had given him the nickname as a child and it stuck. Even though he was informal in his style, we all referred to him as Gene or Mr. Milner within the company.

Not only was Gene a big man but also he was large-boned and exceptionally strong. As a youngster, he learned that he could lick almost anyone, and he loved to fight. This translated into a tough brand of courage that carried over into his sales and business career.

He was fearless even in the face of overwhelming odds. He loved to challenge everyone, and that challenging and competitive spirit was a hallmark of his leadership style. Age did not mellow that love of fighting. After open-heart surgery, he welcomed a fight over an auto incident. Gene, in his sixties with a zipper in his chest, fighting on the street in Buckhead!

He was tough as nails, an extremely difficult boss who on rare occasions managed to act as a mentor. In any case, he had a forceful impact on my business career.

A WISE MENTOR IS MORE THAN A COACH

Mentoring is not merely coaching. A coach is an instructor, trainer, or tutor. While coaches can be valuable, theirs is a limited role.

Gene Milner's leadership style was most like that of a coach. He definitely had an agenda and usually used fear combined with big incentives to motivate people. I once asked one of Bear Bryant's old players about the legendary college football coach's leadership style. He said it was based on pure fear coupled with the hope of being a winner.

A coach develops job skills or leadership skills, while a mentor develops *you*. Coaches make you a better performer, while mentors make you a better *person*.

A mentor sees your future success before you do and expects you to keep progressing even when the going gets tough. When we find this kind of inspiration, something special can occur.

Early in my career it seemed that Gene decided that I would be successful. He had confidence in me—always challenging me and pushing me to perform above others. This created

some problems for me. Being known as Gene's favorite didn't win me many friends, especially with those he pitted me against. It was obvious that Gene loved internal competition; it was his main leadership ploy. But he also used other notable techniques.

Gene would say to me from time to time, "Wes, I drove through Hiram the other day and on the water tank they have painted a sign that says 'Hiram, Georgia, Home of Wes Cantrell.'" I knew he was spinning a tale because Hiram was so small at that time it didn't even have a water tank. Nevertheless, I loved Gene's comment because I knew it was his unique way of visualizing success for me. Gene had a narrow perspective: Success was the only option.

Gene used every opportunity to sell our products or to show how they could be used more effectively. At parties or sales meetings given by our suppliers, Gene wanted to influence everyone there, and he wanted me to do the same.

"Someday they will be working for you," he told me, "so start building your relationships now." Gene clearly had a long-term vision for my career.

I was only twenty-seven when Gene first discussed my becoming district manager in Baton Rouge. I knew that the failure rate for sales reps who became managers was quite high, so I asked Gene what would happen if I didn't make it as a manager. Gene's answer reflected his sink-or-swim philosophy: "In this company, it's either up or out."

MENTORS OPEN THEIR STRENGTHS AND WEAKNESSES TO US

Legitimate mentors allow others to witness their lives. This includes the whole picture: their successes and strengths as well as their failures and

weaknesses—and how they deal with them. They show us what they learned (and what they *didn't* learn), why certain things went wrong, and even what they contributed to the failures.

Whether we're learning from wise mentors who choose to be open with us or learning by observing “less-than-mentor-quality” leaders, we should look closely at their strengths and weaknesses, as well as how effectively they translate these qualities into success.

Perhaps the single most outrageous story in Gene's history was the one concerning an infamous Mailgram. Early in my career, there was no e-mail. If you wanted to get a rush, high-priority bulletin out to the field, the best choice was to use Western Union's Mailgram. Western Union set up company addresses in its computer and through a satellite connection, any Mailgram could be sent overnight to locations across the United States.

Near the end of the 1962 fiscal year, we were running somewhat behind our sales plan and Gene wanted all the reps in the field to understand what they needed to do in the final month of the year. He dictated the following Mailgram that clearly spelled out the mission:

*To all regional, division, and district managers,
I am counting on your tails being out in the field selling for the rest
of this month and all of May. I don't want to hear nothing [sic]
but that you are producing. Don't hire --- don't do nothing else.
Don't fiddle with papers.
Don't talk on the phone to your grandmother. Get the --- busy
selling for the rest of this fiscal year.
Lanier Business Products, Inc.
Gene W. Milner
Chairman*

This message reached our managers, but by some strange electronic quirk, it also went to most of the Catholic schools across the country. Can you imagine the publicity this generated? In the beginning, to say the least, it was not good. One Catholic nun, the principal of a school in Texas, sent Gene the following note:

Dear Sir:

I assume this letter was incorrectly addressed and not meant for me at all. Besides the incorrect sentence structure, the language is not inspiring nor uplifting. I certainly will never recommend any of our graduates to work for your firm.

But in his inimitable fashion, Gene liked to turn lemons into lemonade. He issued a press release and the story captured the hearts of people across the country. Most people saw it as a homespun pep talk that accidentally got into the public domain and, of course, that's what it was.

One sister in New Orleans marked up the Mailgram with corrections and sent it back to Gene. He sent her a note of thanks, along with a gift of one hundred shares of Lanier stock. In her response, she was gracious and said, "If you ever move your tail to New Orleans, be sure to come by and see me!" Gene loved it and enjoyed telling this story on himself for years to come.

It is excruciatingly difficult to learn from those who make excuses or blame others for their flaws. Leaders like this do have something to teach, but it's usually about what *not* to do. People who are too arrogant and insecure to show their flaws are also too petty to teach us much—except to avoid becoming like them.

MENTORS CHALLENGE US TO LIVE OUR PRINCIPLES

Mentors start where all good things start: with values. They know that character is destiny, and they want us to know it too. A wise mentor—or even a formal leader with a sharp eye—can be a tremendous asset to someone who is ready to grow. Even leaders with different values and those who normally don't bother to practice mentoring can help us to identify our own values and challenge us to live up to them.

Gene definitely knew himself. *Fortune* magazine had interviewed us, and we were waiting anxiously to read the story when it was published. We were in Hawaii at a dealer meeting when the magazine hit the newsstands, and Gene's secretary sent us a copy by overnight air express.

I was waiting my turn to read the article and finally, Gene called and said to come by his room and pick it up. I knocked, and Gene was laughing as he opened the door. Gene's wife had read the article and she had said, "Why is it that in articles like this, you always sound like an --- and Wes comes out smelling like a rose?" Gene's reply: "Because I am an ---!"

But Gene also knew me. Once in casual conversation, I used some inappropriate language and Gene noticed it immediately. He said, "Wes, you shouldn't use those words. It doesn't become you."

A mentor must have the freedom to point out the blind spots in our value system. It is too easy to be illusioned and even self-delusional. We might assume that our interaction with others is just fine, when in fact it is disrespectful and detrimental, and perhaps even obnoxious and destructive. We might think we are being honest and firm in negotiation, when in reality we're leaving out critical data or taking unreasonable positions. This is when a mentor's insight is invaluable.

But a mentor's efforts to point out blind spots won't work if we aren't listening. When HPE leaders are called on an ethical weakness or unacceptable behavior, they are open to listen and don't react defensively.

GREAT MENTORS DON'T TAKE CONTROL

Great mentors are distinguished by their comfortable relationship with power. They let people do things on their own. They don't take control, but rather help others learn to use their own authority and influence wisely.

When George Washington led a fledgling United States to victory over the greatest empire in the world of his time, many urged him to become king. The defeated king, George III, asked an American-born painter what Washington would do after the war. He would resign all power and go back to his farm, the painter told him. "If he does that," King George answered, "he will be the greatest person in the world." Washington did just that. He was, arguably, the greatest person in the world in his time. And he mentored an entire generation of outstanding leaders.

Mentors help people to learn and grow into competence and responsibility, free to make decisions independently. They want us to be greater than we are, perhaps even greater than they are.

Even though it was not apparent to me or anyone else at the time, Gene gave me quite a bit of freedom to make decisions. Once, a business coach asked me to list the last ten major business decisions our company had made. Then he asked me how many of those I made without consulting Gene. I was surprised to find that I had made eight out of ten without his involvement. Gene's dominant personality covered the fact that he had actually granted me more responsibility than I had realized at the time.

RESPECTING THE WISE MEANS GIVING THEM A FORUM

HPE leaders recognize that mentoring is too easily lost in the push for performance and results, so they intentionally formalize the process, both for themselves and for others within their organizations. They create mechanisms to ensure the regular and effective practice of mentoring.

Respecting the wise includes connecting them with people they can mentor. In great organizations, this connection is not left to happenstance. Mentoring must be part of our leadership model and our organizational design. Good mentors can make a huge difference in what our teams are able to accomplish, both by passing along vital knowledge and skills and by providing support to those they mentor.¹

To build mentoring into their organizations, HPE leaders could use this next checklist to evaluate a person's qualifications to mentor others. (Or they might ask those being mentored to complete it.)

MENTORING EVALUATION

Rate your mentor on a 1–10 scale (with 10 meaning excellent and 1 meaning very poor). A score of less than 80 says, "Not a mentor."

- ___ This person listens well and spends much more time listening than talking.
- ___ This person asks probing questions to promote discovery and learning, rather than making declarations.
- ___ This person guides rather than instructs, and demonstrates the importance of processing information, making good decisions, and doing self-corrections.
- ___ This person challenges me to think for myself rather than prescribing solutions.

- ___ This person observes a situation for a long time before providing succinct feedback on behavior.
- ___ This person provides honest and useful information about his or her own past experiences.
- ___ This person assesses progress and gives input in an organized, systematic, comprehensive, and well-conceived way, rather than making constant, random suggestions.
- ___ This person provides encouragement and hope.
- ___ This person role-plays and provides opportunities to simulate new ways of talking and acting.
- ___ This person is content to work behind the scenes, but is ready as necessary to step out and speak up for those who don't know their way.

If mentoring isn't being done in your organization, it can begin with you. And as soon as you start, mentoring *is* being done in your organization.

RESPECTING THE WISE MEANS SHOWING GRATITUDE FOR THEIR INFLUENCE

Once we've found truly wise people who choose to mentor us, we need to show them our gratitude—because it's morally right, of course, but also because it's smart. Gratitude is often the only way to pay a person back for being there, and for being willing to invest in us.

If we are serving as formal leaders, we'll need to remove from our organizations anyone who is unwilling or unable to respect the wise. Even if the reasons are understandable, they have to go. The cost in lost transfer of wisdom and increased arrogance is just too high.

THERE'S A FORM OF RESPECT EVEN FOR UNWISE LEADERS

HPE leaders respect the position of authority even if they can't respect the personality. There are no perfect leaders, but if they're in charge they deserve to be honored in appropriate ways.

What are "appropriate ways"? We should give them full attention and listen respectfully. We should question and challenge them, asking them to elaborate so we can see the full range of their thinking (and occasionally even get them to see the error of their ways). We can support them fully when they're right, even if we would do things differently. And finally, we can salvage the core of what they want to do even if we must first modify it for HPE reasons.

Gene Milner hated our major competitors, and Dictaphone became the object of his disdain due to their sales tactics. In fact, the rivalry with Dictaphone became a driving force within the company. One night we had dinner with our Pittsburgh dealer at a well-known restaurant near our headquarters. As we were finishing dinner, we noticed a number of Dictaphone employees seated nearby. Gene said, "What are all those Dictaphone bums doing in my restaurant? Let's go over and find out." As we approached their table, we could see the surprise on their faces. It was obvious they couldn't believe what they were seeing. Soon the surprised expressions turned to smirks as they bragged about their new product, known as "the tank."

The subject turned to the recently retired chairman of Dictaphone. Gene made some derogatory remarks about him, not knowing that he had died just a few days earlier. One of the Dictaphone executives became so angry that he was literally trembling, and he expressed his disgust. You might say that he

rose to defend his deceased chairman, and the executive was visibly shaken. Realizing his blunder, Gene leaned over the table, took his own necktie in his hand, and held it out toward the defender. With a smile he said, "If I felt that strongly about something someone said, I'd grab him by the tie" (he was trying to hand the guy his own tie), "drag him out in the parking lot, and whip his ---."

Some of our suppliers did not particularly like Gene, either, but they all worked with him because our results were consistently good. In fact, we were at the top of most all standings as reported by our suppliers.

Gene could be just as difficult as a boss. He dominated every meeting he attended, whether or not he was in charge. Intimidating folks was his method of getting his way and keeping others off balance. Gene was emphatic in his use of profanity and his right to use it. Once he had dictated an interoffice memo to our word-processing center and they "cleaned it up." After proofreading it, Gene was furious. In no uncertain terms, he told them that no one was ever to edit any of his dictation unless he ordered it.

Sometimes working for this extremely authoritarian boss was very difficult for me, but I had to learn how to respond to him. Fortunately Gene had a great sense of humor and I sometimes pushed it to the limit. Once we drew an organization chart for the company and it looked like a wheel with all two thousand employees reporting directly to Gene. He laughed at it and told me, "The only reason for an organization chart is so you'll know who to fire when something goes wrong!"

Rarely did anyone receive a compliment from Gene. If you received one of his compliments, you remembered. His style was a pat on the back, but it tended to be delivered lower on the anatomy. Quick to point out mistakes and shortcomings,

he seldom gave any encouragement. He demanded absolute loyalty and gave rare snippets of praise.

In short, Gene was demanding, insulting, sarcastic, and demeaning. In appealing to Gene, if I wasn't extremely creative, I took the risk of being verbally abused. I had to do my homework because he would always challenge my position. I had to learn how to respond effectively to his management style.

Does principle require us to work for someone like Gene Milner? No, absolutely not. But if we choose to do so, we have to find a way to respect that person and add value to his or her efforts.

RESPECTING UNWISE LEADERS HAS COSTS AND BENEFITS

Every person in authority—even a “stinker”—can build something useful into our lives. One of the most frequent reasons people give for leaving organizations is that they can't get along with their supervisors. Unfortunately, they may be leaving a supervisor who is just the right “iron” to sharpen their own professional “iron,”² a person who might move their success to the next level. HPE leaders know that there is always something to learn from a person in authority—even if it's a lesson about how *not* to do things.

Recognizing this fact can provide a breakthrough way of thinking about unpleasant leaders.

It took a spiritual breakthrough for me to learn how to deal with Gene Milner. I found that in the Bible, the apostle Peter writes, “Slaves, submit yourselves to your masters with all respect, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh. . . . How is it to your credit if you receive a beating for doing wrong and endure it? But if you

suffer for doing good and you endure it, this is commendable before God.”³

In reading other translations of the Bible, I realized that *harsh* could also be rendered *angry*, *surlly*, *overbearing*, or *cantankerous*. When I read this I thought, *Surely Peter knew Gene Milner!* Of course, I wasn’t a slave. I was choosing to work for Lanier, and I had the freedom to leave at any time. I owed Gene respect and my best performance—but not the unquestioning obedience masters demand from slaves.

Still, I recognized a principle for dealing with leaders. When we have done something wrong, we should suffer for it. We should expect it and take it without complaint. When Gene berated me for doing something wrong, that was as it should be. But if Gene treated me harshly when I stood up for principle and had done the right thing, the Lord was still pleased. This understanding made it much easier for me to work with Gene.

There might be enough value in our relationships with difficult supervisors to justify the ongoing wear and tear. In any workplace, we’re going to encounter obstacles, difficult relationships, and imperfect leaders. But we need to look at the whole picture and ask, “Is this relationship causing me to grow? Is it worth the cost?”

If the value exceeds the cost, we may still need to set up some boundaries (or even barriers). It’s too easy for a soul subjected to constant beatings to change for the worse, becoming either cowardly and subservient on the one hand, or tough and cynical on the other. The worst outcome is to become just like the flawed leader, treating people as we are treated rather than as we want to be treated. Respecting the wise does not mean copying our leaders’ bad points or mimicking their destructive behavior. If we’re at all wise, we’ll learn to pick and choose—to see the good and see the bad, to know the difference, and to select the good.

Often the value of working for a difficult boss does not exceed the cost. There is nothing that requires us to continue working for a scoundrel, no matter how much he or she knows or has accomplished. We won't get extra points for career inertia, for taking beatings we don't deserve, or for supporting an organization doomed to failure by its oppressive culture.

If we can't in good conscience follow those whom the organization has deemed leaders, it's time to admit that we're in the wrong organization. Staying will only limit us, limit our leaders, limit the organization, and limit results all around.

DEALING WITH UNWISE LEADERS TAKES EMPATHY

If we discover that the value makes a difficult work relationship worth the cost, then understanding the pressures our leaders are under may help us to deal with their difficult qualities.

When Gene married Joyce, the daughter of Hicks Lanier, he was introduced to the business. At that time, he was in the electrical wholesale business and Hicks, recognizing Gene's sales talent, recruited him for Lanier. His first challenge was to move his family to Kansas City and open a new office there.

The Laniers positively would not keep people on the payroll unless they were worth their salt, regardless of the relationship. Gene had to prove himself, even to his father-in-law. Being the boss's son-in-law was difficult and Gene took much ribbing about it throughout his business career.

In later years, I realized that the family had put tremendous pressure on Gene, and I could tell that some of his direction came from that pressure. Gene made no secret of the fact that his wife had the money in the family. And of course, the Lanier brothers had originally owned equal parts of the business.

At a dealer meeting in Hawaii, Gene was carrying on in his usual fashion, relentlessly kidding Joyce and making all kinds of exaggerated threats about what he was going to do. She was quiet for a long time, but finally she had had enough. She turned to Gene and said in her syrupy Southern drawl, “Let me tell you one thing, bustah—if you do that, the only thing you’ll have left is two bird dogs, a sleeping bag, and a shotgun.”

Gene loved her response and burst into boisterous laughter. The tension was relieved, and we all laughed with him. Having a great sense of humor, Gene saw both the truth and the humor in her comment.

DEALING WITH UNWISE LEADERS REQUIRES MORAL COURAGE

If we’re not careful, a strong personality can transmit everything to us—the good, the bad, and the very ugly. If a leader has values different from our own, the gap is going to present huge difficulties.

But it is possible to honor our own principles and commitments in ways that add value to the work of the person with whom we disagree. In the long run, sticking by good values benefits everyone.

Many people wondered how Gene and I got along and worked together so well for so many years since our management styles and personal values were so different. Gene’s definition of success was mostly based on making a lot of money. If someone made a fortune but neglected his or her family in the pursuit, Gene still considered that person to be successful. On the other hand, I believed that success was measured primarily on the basis of one’s character and successful family relationships.

There were some things at Lanier that I could not do because I wanted to honor my convictions and commitments.

Although alcohol was often present at company functions, I never imbibed. During dinner meetings, Gene often explained to those we were negotiating with that between the two of us we had an “average drinking habit.” Because I didn’t drink at all, he had to “make up the difference.” Often he would ask me detailed questions the next morning regarding the agreements we had made. This provided a good reason for me to be there and not drink: My memory was always clear.

Perhaps Gene accepted my differences because his father had been a Christian. He deeply admired his father, who was a Bible teacher and a successful insurance executive. He realized that there were actually some advantages to my being a Christian. He had certainly learned that my word was good and that he could trust me. He knew that I would always tell him the truth even when he didn’t like it. Once he even referred to me as “Mr. Dependable.” In an interview in 1984, Gene was asked why I had been successful. He said, “Every job I gave Wes, he did uncommonly well. He just stood out no matter what the job was. I don’t like the concept that I selected Wes. I didn’t select him. He selected himself.”

DEALING WITH UNWISE LEADERS DEPENDS ON SHARED VISION

Here’s a key: If we’re going to work with people with whom our values don’t align, we’re going to have to find some place where we *do* align.

Shared vision and fundamental business standards can provide needed common ground with an authority figure who disagrees with our personal values or has a flawed leadership style.

My common ground with Gene was found in business principles—we agreed on many. Such things as honesty,

customer satisfaction, hard work, cost control, making a profit, and firing incompetent employees were important to both of us. The art of salesmanship and the importance of viewing it as a profession were also core beliefs that we shared. In all the important areas of business relationships with customers, dealers, employees, and suppliers, we had broad and general agreement.

Gene was a legendary leader; I often thought of him as the John Wayne of the office products business. We worked side by side for thirty years and I learned many lessons—good and bad—from him, lessons that had a profound effect on my life. I have an enormous sense of gratitude to Gene for the opportunities he gave me and for his confidence in me.

HPE LEADERS MENTOR TO MULTIPLY HIGH PERFORMANCE

HPE leaders don't rely on their position or power, but rather on what they can accomplish with those tools. Not only do HPE leaders seek out strong mentors, they also intentionally mentor others, passing along what they have learned.

HPE leaders often have the following objectives as they mentor:

- To help people plan their near and long-term futures
- To help people develop a good definition of success with a clear picture of victory
- To bring out the best in people, helping them to find their areas of passion and performance
- To impart a sense of vision and values to people, so they will know why they are here and what they can contribute
- To provide positive framing about the organization, so people are able to approach problems with an attitude that will allow them to create solutions

- To remove fear and develop confidence, helping people to take advantage of every opportunity
- To help people assume responsibility, take risks, and accept accountability
- To help people assume authority and find motivational resources to pave their own road to success
- To facilitate relationships and enable people to make the valuable connections that can improve their lives and careers
- To serve as an advocate who protects, promotes, and sponsors people, helping them climb ethically as high as they can go

SUMMING IT UP

The truth of this HPE principle reminds us that if we can't honor the savvy, we're in the wrong organization.

The wise can help us catch a big vision for our own lives, perhaps bigger than the one we started with. They challenge us to live up to our principles, but they avoid the trap of taking control or responsibility for our lives. Good mentors are so important that HPE leaders create forums for the wise to work their magic in many ways with many people.

Every leader is a mentor by default, and we can learn something from every one of them. Much of what I've learned about leadership, I've learned from observing leaders in my own corporate career and from spending several decades working with leaders in my consulting practice.

HPE leaders know that there is wisdom locked up even in "unwise" leaders. They understand that respecting unwise leaders can offer benefits in the long run—if the cost isn't too high. It will take real empathy, great moral courage, and substantial common ground to pull it off, but if the value outweighs the cost, following a difficult leader is worth the effort.

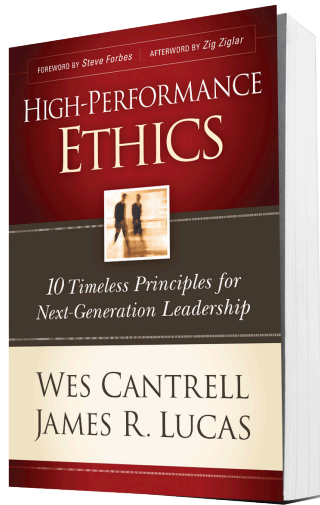
HPE leaders become great mentors by choice. They understand

the value of mentoring, make time for it, and use it to deliver high performance and a legacy for themselves. They know that mentoring includes coaching, but is also much more than that. And they have enough humility to know that they aren't perfect and don't have all of the answers. They are willing to expose their problems and weaknesses to shorten others' learning curve and make them more effective right now.

Wise people want to pass their wisdom along. Mentoring is "passing the Olympic fire" of wisdom. Those who see a strong runner approaching gladly take the torch. They carry the fire to the next runner, who can bear the flame into a distant future.

ENDNOTES

1. At Luman Consultants International, we have developed tools for building mentoring into the organization's structure. We call these tools "*The LCI 12-Part Passionate Mentoring Program*™." As our clients have been exposed to this, some of these approaches seem familiar, some seem cutting-edge, and some completely change their perspective on how human beings can be developed by other human beings.
2. See Proverbs 27:17, NIV.
3. 1 Peter 2:18-20, NIV.



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MASTER LEADERS

IMAGINE SITTING DOWN WITH thirty of the world's best-known and most-respected leaders as they share their hard-won insights. Bestselling author and researcher George Barna did just that and came away with intriguing answers to some of the toughest questions and challenges leaders face. In *Master Leaders*, Barna lets us eavesdrop on his provocative conversations with “the greats” (including Ken Blanchard, Tony Dungy, Newt Gingrich, Seth Godin, Lou Holtz, John Kotter, Patrick Lencioni, and many others) on a range of subjects: defining what makes someone a leader; knowing how to identify, communicate, and get commitment to your vision; leading effectively; and earning and maintaining people’s trust. In chapter 5, “Developing Leaders,” the conversation shifts to the process of determining who has leadership potential. The speakers refer to selecting and growing leaders as an art. Let’s listen to some of the things they are saying about this matter.



GEORGE BARNA is the author of more than four dozen books and founder of The Barna Group, a leading research firm focused on the intersection of faith and culture. He currently leads the faith development ministry Metaformation and is also a founding director of the Strategenius Group. He lives with his wife and three daughters in California.



BILL DALLAS became the CEO of United in Purpose after spending ten years as the founder and CEO of Church Communication Network (CCN). He is the coauthor, with George Barna, of *Lessons from San Quentin: Everything I Needed to Know about Life I Learned in Prison*. Bill is a graduate of Vanderbilt University and lives in northern California with his wife and daughter.

CHAPTER 5

Developing Leaders

I returned from the stage to the greenroom, having dismissed the crowd for the midmorning break. After a brief huddle with the production team to review how things were going and make a few minor adjustments to our process, I was back with all of the speakers, who were busy interacting with each other. Things were going very smoothly so far.

After getting a bottle of water and a banana, I wedged into one of the groups and listened in. They seemed to be discussing the process of determining who has leadership potential.

“Leader selection is critical. You do your best to identify those who are leaders. Sometimes you’re right, sometimes you’re wrong,” admitted Bob Dees, thinking back on his years in the army and his subsequent stint as an executive at Microsoft. “But I think we often have it out of balance in terms of leader selection and leader development. We need to place greater priority on leader selection. Often, when we select leaders, we spend a brief time assessing their true capabilities and figuring out what’s the right seat on the bus for them, but then spend a lot of time trying to turn a Chevy into a Cadillac after we’ve put them in a position they’re not well suited for. We really have to figure out what is the best place for each leader, based on his or her abilities, motivations, and all that. We also have to place people in positions in such a way that they’re not in a box so that if we have to shift things around, they’re thrilled by it rather than disappointed or threatened.”

No doubt about it, selecting and growing leaders is an art. The difficulty of getting it right was confirmed by Tony Dungy. “That’s the trial-and-error process,” agreed the respected coach, “but I think you try to bring out the best in everyone, and then you see which people have those natural leadership skills, the ones whom other players watch and gravitate toward. You pick those guys out pretty quickly and say, ‘Hey, I need you to be on board with me, number one, but I have seen some other skills in you, too.’ And then you encourage them to become leaders.”

The comments from Bob and Tony helped me to realize that it’s not often that someone taps you on the shoulder and acknowledges a leadership gift. My research had shown that when you seek out raw talent to nurture into leaders, you search for two primary elements: a sense of calling to lead and the kind of solid, enviable character that enables the leader to make appropriate choices and to attract people by virtue of who he or she is deep inside. Competencies are the third element that makes someone a genuine leader, but skills can be taught and refined, whereas calling and character are part of a leader’s innate package. With this team of leaders gathered, I wondered aloud what they felt someone should look for as a potential mentor to the next generation of leaders.

“It helps to be wise more than smart, smart more than dumb, and persistent more than anything else,” suggested Newt Gingrich matter-of-factly. “If you’re persistent, wise, and smart, then you probably get Lincoln. Wisdom beats being the smartest. That’s the great problem Bill Clinton had. Clinton is tremendously smart; he just has the least wisdom of a senior leader I’ve ever seen.”

Oh boy. Now we had the makings of a heated debate among a group of people who, by definition, don’t shy away from conflict. Inevitably, someone noted that President Clinton had left behind a good track record of policy accomplishments and economic stability, and asked

Newt why he had such a dour assessment of the abilities of the former president.

“Because he’s existential. His entire life is spent on the now. The first time I ever saw him in the cabinet, I said, ‘This is FDR without polio.’ He is the most skillful politician of his generation, but he has none of the iron that polio drove into FDR. He’s a brilliant politician.”

Fortunately, that did not set off a range war based on the divergent political perspectives in the room. I was most intrigued by the fact that Newt had pointed out that wisdom and persistence are essential qualities in a leader. Colleen Barrett deftly sidestepped the political land mine and added a new twist on the search for future leaders.

“I think you can identify leaders by asking people questions—not specific questions, but just questions about their life. You can find out if they have natural leadership skills, whether you ask them about their school, life experiences, charitable causes, or community efforts. What I try to do is get a feel for the person’s philosophy of life. It’s not a right or wrong thing, but I will ask people to tell me about a time when they handled conflict. I will ask people, ‘How did you use a sense of humor to diffuse a bad situation?’”

What an interesting statement. Colleen had connected her company’s core values—in this case, having a good sense of humor—to her search for someone who had leadership potential and could express that potential in harmony with the organization’s cherished values. I wondered aloud if these leaders did much in terms of trying to determine if a person has been called to lead.

“Let me tell you a funny story,” said Ken Blanchard, who has to be one of the best parable tellers I’ve ever met. “I was doing a program in Canada for the Young Presidents’ Organization with Henry Blackaby. We were sitting there on stools and they were asking questions. And one of the questions that came up was, ‘What do you think about the Gallup research that says you should first find out your strengths and then that will tell you what a good job fit would be?’”

I'd heard several of the leaders present raise this very matter—the StrengthsFinder process—and had only heard complimentary things about that research and the tools that emanated from it. Ken continued his story. “And Henry, in his beautiful way, said, ‘It’s an interesting theory. It’s just not sound biblically. You name one person whom the Lord called who was qualified. They all complained, whether it was Abraham or Moses or Mary. The Lord doesn’t call the qualified, the Lord qualifies the called.’

“So I asked Henry, ‘Well, what does it mean to be called?’ He said, ‘It means to be humbled and to be open to learn.’ Isn’t that interesting? Suppose you have an opportunity to lead but it’s not in your strength area. What are you going to do? Well, if you’re called to do it, you ought to do it, but then you should be humble enough to say to people, ‘I’m going to need your help.’

“The timing of Henry’s comment was really great, because we had made a mistake in appointing somebody as the president of our company. It was a woman with great energy and a lot of skills, but when she became president she became an animal. She attacked our people and all that kind of thing. So right after that our family had to regroup, because my wife and I and our two kids and my wife’s brother run the company. But none of us wanted to be president at that particular time, so we had to do some reorganizing. They asked my daughter to take over sales. We’ve got sixty salespeople. The only experience Debbie had ever had in sales was working for Nordstrom’s one summer when she was in college. So you would think, ‘Yikes! They’re putting Debbie in as vice president of sales. How ridiculous is that?’

“So what did Debbie do? She called a meeting of all the salespeople and said, ‘If I told you I know what I’m doing in this job, we could all have a great laugh. But the one advantage is that I’m a Blanchard and what I’m going to do is travel all over the country to meet with you and find out what you need and what we can do to help you be more effective. I think I can carry that ball.’ Well, nobody complained at all.

So the idea of being called and then being humble and open to learning turned out to be a wonderful concept.”

It was a great story, but I was not yet convinced that such openness enables a person to rise up and become an effective leader. I took on the role of the skeptic.

“I hear you, Ken. But is it really that simple? Everyone in this room has extensive education and experience, and it seems perhaps too simplistic to believe that all you need is someone who wants to lead and is open to growing. Newt talked about a few qualities that you need to look for. Don’t we need to somehow screen people a little more carefully instead of training them just because they showed up?”

John Townsend came to Ken’s aid. “You have to convince people that they should learn to lead and then they should lead. They should develop whatever skills they have and then use those skills. There is no leadership development process that occurs overnight. It’s going to take time; it gradually happens. But keep in mind that if the person really doesn’t see the point of developing the skills or doesn’t want to use them, then it’s not going to happen. So I think a very important up-front piece is to help the people who want to lead and are willing to work at it. I’m not convinced that the first thing to do is to drag in people who don’t know much about leadership or don’t know much about why it applies to them.

“Once someone has internalized that, you don’t have to just shove leadership training down their throats. They’ll go out and look for it—jobs that help develop them and other kinds of growth experiences. I’m beginning to think that may be the biggest single key in all of this. There are plenty of opportunities out there that are real opportunities—both on the job and off the job—to test, and try, and learn from your successes and mistakes.”

Okay, so my skeptic’s approach hadn’t panned out too well; John had largely reinforced Ken’s point of view. Point made. But I was still wondering how to identify genuine leaders who are worth investing

in. Certainly it takes more than wisdom, intelligence, and perseverance. It must demand more than an open mind and a willingness to lead. So with John Kotter standing among us, I asked him for his thoughts on the issue. This was the guy who had trained hundreds of CEOs and other top-notch executives. How do we figure out who is really a leader?

“I’ve heard that question often over the years. Let me flip it around. Why wouldn’t you know?” John laughed at this turning of the tables. “I think that’s a more honest question. Maybe because you never look at them or you never talk to their subordinates? Let’s turn it around the other way. If you pay any attention to your people and watch them with their own subordinates and even talk to their subordinates—not necessarily by asking, ‘How good a leader is he?’ but by listening to the way he or she talks about the leader—wouldn’t you know? I don’t think it’s that mysterious.”

“John, it sounds to me as if you’re saying that leaders know their own kind—with a little bit of awareness and effort they can see it, sense it, and understand that capacity in others. And conversely, if you’re not a leader, you wouldn’t know what you’re looking for anyway.”

“Correct,” he said, nodding at me. “I make speeches around the world, usually to a company’s senior management. Beforehand we will create a video clip about a really good leader from the country I’ll be speaking in. Let’s say I don’t have an example from that country. What will I do?”

“First, I will e-mail the person who invited me and ask him or her to ask around to find out what CEOs in that country are good leaders. Now what did that take me, maybe six seconds to type? Then I get an e-mail back with three names. Next, I e-mail back and ask the person to find people who know these three CEOs well. Include one or several subordinates, maybe a customer or two, but give me six people who know them, and here’s a good way to do it. You put a little questionnaire in front of them that takes them all of thirty

seconds to fill out. You put the guy's name on it who they know very well and ask them how good that person is on six or seven different kinds of actions ranked on a scale of 0 to 10. How good of a finance guy is he? How good of an entrepreneur is he? How good of a manager is he? How good of a salesman is he? How good of a leader is he? How good of a manufacturing manager is he? You kind of slip the leadership factor in there. So she does this routine and comes back with information, and one of the people rates, across the six samples, 9.5 on leadership. And I go get a video of him on the Internet, watch it for four minutes to see if the 9.5 seems reasonable. As I expected, it probably is a good number. And so I figured out who a good leader is based on a total time investment of about five minutes. People can't figure out who has got leadership potential? That's a mystery to me." We all laughed at how simple John had made something that often seems complex.

I was hoping that these experts would similarly simplify the process of leadership development. I plunged forward with a series of questions on this front. Henry Cloud had been watching with amusement and entered the fray.

"Remember that any closed system deteriorates over time. That's the law of entropy. But the way you reverse a closed system is by introducing two things: a new energy source and a template to organize that energy. So if you take a potential or new leader and you want him or her to become more ordered over time toward leadership and not more disordered, then you've got to do both of those; you've got to make sure that that leader is an open system where you are pouring in two things.

"The energy can be in the form of support, inspiration, encouragement, motivation, pushing, driving, lighting a fire under them, giving new experiences that add heat to the fire.

"But then you also need a template. Just like DNA: when your body eats broccoli, that's fuel and energy, but your brain and your

DNA organize that to become a particular kind of a bone. An organization really needs a structured leadership template, which is what they have decided leaders in the organization must know, and how they must behave, and what they must do in order to accomplish what they're trying to do.

“Just as spiritual formation is forming a character in the ways of God, leadership formation is forming the makeup of leaders in the ways of a company and the ways that they want to see their leaders performing. To do that you create experiences that give the leaders bite-size spheres in which they can fail, kind of like a dress rehearsal before the performance or practice before the big game. You want to put people in actual situations where they use their gifts and they go out and try things, where the world's not going to blow up if they don't get it right because they're learning. But that only helps if you've got feedback mechanisms and coaches and models to help them in the process.

“So I'm a real strong believer in the idea that leaders are built in part by modeling. They really learn from people who are coaching them. And I always try to coach my leaders to become coaches. Leadership development, in some form or fashion, is always about leaders being coaches.”

But exactly how does that coaching happen? What does it look like? Is it formal or informal? Scheduled or spontaneous? Based on a checklist of qualities to promote or built around the needs of the moment? Inquiring minds want to know!

John Kotter took the floor again, sharing some of his many years of experience in how a leader is formed. “I personally think education can play a big role in the transfer of information, but books do that too—and books are much more efficient,” the professor noted. “I can read them in my living room, but I can't take your class in my living room. And books are cheaper. As long as you define education as information transfer, frankly books are the way to do it. So what is the unique role

of face to face?” John asked rhetorically. “It not only passes on information but it can grab attention. All great instructors throughout history have not only known their subject matter but they’ve been inspirational. They don’t have to have a big, extroverted personality; they don’t have to be charismatic. But I think all great instructors are inspirational around their topic. People walk out not only with more knowledge, but wanting to learn more, excited about it. Their level of passion around that topic goes up. With all of that, much more happens beyond just taking a course. On average, books aren’t nearly as inspiring as a good classroom setting can be.”

A few comments were made reinforcing the value of an inspiring teacher. Some of the leaders in the room had grown through classes they had taken with Professors Kotter, Bennis, and Blanchard, and had undoubtedly been inspired by those great teachers. Jimmy Blanchard affirmed the place of both books and classroom-style training.

“I have been reading all the books I can, and I love the opportunities to go to any kind of leadership training. We made a decision twenty-five years ago that we might make some mistakes, and some big ole alligators might grab us and take us under, but putting people in jobs that they are not prepared for because we have not invested in their training is one mistake we are not going to make. And so we have had basic leadership, high-level leadership, and mid-supervisory leadership; every kind of leadership training you could have. In 1999, *Fortune* named us the best place in America to work. I’m not going to sit here and pretend we really are the best place, but we were flattered with the recognition, and it validated to us that training and preparing leaders, teaching them the basics, and trying to enthuse them to seek their own highest level of leadership was a good approach and a good investment in a corporate environment.

“It has certainly paid off. One thing we learned is that developing leaders is probably the most appreciated benefit in the company. When current or would-be leaders realize that you are investing in their

growth, it's more important to them than money. It's more important, in my opinion, than a supervisor taking personal interest in their person and encouraging them along the way in their career, although that is probably second. So we learned that it is an incredibly important investment, not only for the company, but in the minds of the individuals who are participating.

“By the way, we found that our best leaders always just couldn't wait to get to the next training program because they knew they were going to get something good out of it. The worst of our supervisors—I won't call them leaders—would gripe and grouse and complain. 'I don't have time.' 'How do they expect me to do my job and take two days off for leadership training?' 'How many times do I have to learn about Maslow's triangle?' These were the people who said, 'I don't really need this; I'm already a good leader.' And they were the worst. So it's been a pretty good little test for us. When you look at people who are eager to learn more, you can bet they are on the right track. And when you talk to people who just don't want anymore instruction, then they have pretty much hit the wall. They are done.”

Someone asked Jimmy what Synovus does to train leaders in-house.

“The most successful training that we have had for the really top-level folks is similar to an executive MBA program. We believe that the courses we have developed are as good as any of the six-week programs that so many top-level guys have done. Ours is high level, with all kinds of participatory programs that you get involved in and simulated business experiences. But we make sure we don't leave out basic conceptual stuff even at the top-level training. You just cannot overdo basic conceptual training.”

Warren Bennis indicated his admiration for such in-house programs but pointed out an unstated principle that was fundamental to what Synovus and other companies are doing to elevate their leaders.

“I think the most important and difficult thing is to create a culture

in the organization where leadership is really important. It's important for people in the company to realize that this is a growth-oriented company, and the biggest thing we have to grow here is you, because it's you who will make this company better and better by your own growth. So there are some measures to put in place. What percentage of the payroll goes into leadership development? What kinds of formal training do they do? To what extent do they reward leadership? Do they have a directory of good mentors? So I would think making a culture aware of the significance of developing leaders is valuable. The main things are the visible efforts, like the percentage of payroll designated for training, or the number of opportunities they give people to attend conferences on the topic, or that they reimburse for classes taken at a university. Intel has done this for years. Andy Grove and Gordon Moore used to teach that. PepsiCo is another good example. For a long time their leaders have been very conscious of pushing leadership training, and I think they've done pretty well. Roger Enrico, their former CEO, was a good example of a leader consistently tutoring a group of people inside the organization."

There we were again, back at the idea of creating a particular kind of culture—in this case, one that affirms and supports good leadership. And we had been given some practical examples of how it works: books, classes, mentoring, performance rewards, and the like. A couple of people picked up on the comments that both Jimmy and Warren had made about in-house coaching and role modeling as necessary components.

"Role modeling is such a powerful way to develop certain kinds of behaviors," John Kotter reminded us, coming back to the admonitions Henry Cloud had given us a few minutes ago. "If you keep people by you all the time who need to learn something about leadership, then by definition the amount of time you're spending, in a sense, teaching other people your leadership approach is 100 percent."

Kirbyjon Caldwell climbed on that bandwagon. "I'm not the kind

of leader who will hold your hand and sit down with you once or twice a week and go over stuff. The way I mentor people is by having them watch me and ask questions. It is more of a 360-degree learning experience.”

“So if I’m hearing this right, Kirbyjon, with your style of leadership it’s important for you to be accessible to people, to be visible, and perhaps even vulnerable?”

Kirbyjon gave me the eye. “Yeah, that’s right. Accessible, visible, vulnerable. I like that.” He turned to the person next to him and said mockingly under his breath, “I need to write that down. Accessible, visible, and vulnerable.” We all laughed as he clapped me on the back.

It turned out that Kirbyjon was not alone in his method of coaching leaders. “When I travel, I always bring somebody with me. I never go to an event or a client without a person from my staff,” said Patrick Lencioni. “That’s my time to be with them, and, honestly, I think that’s when I do my coaching and my leadership evaluating. When I come back from a trip, I will have spent four hours on a plane, plus other time with this person, and then four hours back. Goodness gracious, that’s more time than an hour spent one-on-one. And it’s good time, too, because we are talking about life.”

Patrick’s energy had sparked heightened interest in our conversation. And people’s attention multiplied as Lou Holtz joined in. Coach doesn’t speak much—he’s a classic “speak when you’re spoken to” kind of guy—but when he does speak, I’ve learned that you’re a fool not to listen.

“These days I get hundreds of letters from athletes thanking me or saying they accomplished this or that and just wanted to share it with me,” he said softly, his eyes perhaps glistening a bit. “When we had many of our former Notre Dame football players come back, I used to say to them that I didn’t coach football, I taught life. The same things that make you successful in football will enable you to be successful in life. With our players, I’d say to them, ‘I go all over the world speaking.

Companies want me to come and speak, and they're willing to pay me a huge sum of money to speak to them. And I speak to you for free, and you don't even take notes.” He smiled that warm, friendly smile of his. “Yeah, I'd ride them about that all the time. And they laugh about it now and say, ‘We wish we had taken notes.’ You don't always get through to all of them. Sometimes they acquiesce to your demands because you're in charge; some do so because they realize you aren't going to compromise and give in to their standards. But it's after they're gone that you have to look in the mirror and say, ‘I think I did the best I could for that individual.’”

Laurie Beth Jones brought up an important caveat about the process. Her research had led to a book—in fact, an entire training process—in which she associates every person to one (or a combination) of the four elements (wind, earth, water, fire), recognizing the differences in how people are wired and how that wiring affects execution. “But remember, you cannot treat everybody the same way and get the same results. That's where the science of leadership comes in. When you realize that you are dealing with somebody who is not going to be moved by sentiment, then you start giving them facts and time to process. If you are dealing with people who are very relational, you better start showing them how this is going to improve their relationships and how you are thinking about people in whatever decision you are making.”

Then she went back to something that Kirbyjon and others had been emphasizing. “An almost universally neglected commitment is making it a primary practice of the leadership team to develop leaders internally. That requires having a personal mentorship program and recognizing that everyone's role is developing leaders for the next generation. It's one of their most important roles.

“That is what Jesus did, and I think He was very aware of what motivated His individuals. He really cultivated and developed the workers who were going to carry on the work after He left. You need

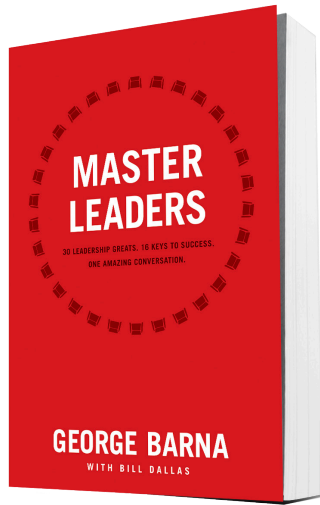
to give daily examples and reward, in the moment, the behaviors you want to see multiplied. Jesus showed them that even if you give a drink of water to someone who is thirsty, you will be rewarded. That's a cultural establishment principle. It's not just about the big things, it's also about the little things. Showing them that this is what God is looking for in terms of behaviors, this is what will be rewarded—this and this, but not that. A good leader shows people what a good day looks like.”

Bob Dees was totally on board with Laurie Beth's ideas and seized the opening to add on a complementary experience he'd had.

“I recall an incident when I was a cadet at West Point. I was in Germany in a training environment and we didn't have any training aids, like PowerPoint or projectors. But I always thought it was a sin to bore the troops when you were training them, so I asked my platoon sergeant for some chalk and an armored personnel carrier. He got them, and we used the side of the carrier as a blackboard. I recognized you can talk to the troops all day long, but working in pictures and simple concepts is far more powerful. So I started imparting vision to them regarding where, how, and why in very simple terms. As a developing leader myself, I began to appreciate the power of simplicity, the power of figuring out the vocabulary of the people you're talking to and the necessity of selling the solution ahead of time, and the power of empowerment. When you sell the solution, the essence of that is convincing them that they thought of it and they are understood and respected as a member of the group that will get to the desired destination.”

Bob's experience reminded me of the axiom that it's amazing how much a leader can get done if he doesn't care who gets the credit. Overall, then, my mentors seemed to agree that training leaders is critical, the process must be multifaceted, and it will probably only work if you have the right people involved—people who want to lead, want to learn, and realize that they have a lot of room for growth.

Sadly, the break time was over and I had to run out to the main stage to corral everyone back to the auditorium. We had another great session about to start, and people needed to get back in their seats. And I was already thinking about the next set of questions I wanted to pose to our leadership experts.



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JESUS ON LEADERSHIP

LISTEN TO THESE WORDS OF THE AUTHOR: “What did I learn when I laid aside every model of leadership I had read or heard about? Who was this Jesus I became reacquainted with when I took off my shoes and walked with him through the pages of the Bible? Let me tell you.” And that he does, in his book *Jesus on Leadership*. Here you will find timeless wisdom on servant leadership. In the third chapter, “Principle 3: Find Greatness in Service,” Wilkes will refer to Jesus’ definition of greatness and how certain truths that arise from this are key to understanding the mind and mission of Jesus. Then he will point out two natural kinds of leading that ought to be avoided and explain how Jesus presented a better way.



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PRINCIPLE THREE

Find Greatness in Service

Keep your eyes on the task, not on yourself.

The task matters, and you are a servant.

PETER DRUCKER

MANAGING THE NON-PROFIT ORGANIZATION

*[Shepherd] is not a figure of strong over weak
or “lords” over servants. Quite the contrary. The
shepherd figure is one of love, service, and openness.*

LYNN ANDERSON

THEY SMELL LIKE SHEEP

*Power, for the sake of lording it over fellow-creatures
or adding to personal pomp, is rightly judged base.*

WINSTON CHURCHILL

IN CHURCHILL ON LEADERSHIP

*Whoever wants to become great among
you must be your servant, and whoever
wants to be first must be your slave.*

JESUS

MATTHEW 20:26-27, NIV

After Jesus corrected the thinking of James and John, his job as leader was not over. The work of leadership is not complete until the mission is accomplished. Before that, leadership is a 24-7 job. When the two brothers' request got back to the other ten disciples, a turf war broke out. The ten did not like James and John's getting in front of them to receive recognition when Jesus' kingdom was set up. Their ongoing who's-the-greatest argument turned into a who-gets-the-best-seats argument.

When Jesus heard the noise, he called his leadership team together to lay down the ground rules—again. Here's what he said:

You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.

MARK 10:42-45, NIV

These words are Jesus' most clear yet most avoided teachings on leadership. His words are almost never quoted when the discussion turns to leadership. Few conferences invite potential or actual leaders to begin with this description of a leader when building a personal leadership style. We tend to either read over his blatant message or, at best, use the passage as illustrative material in a call to service.

Jesus redefined the vocabulary of leadership among God's people when he spoke to his disciples that day. Let's take Jesus' words at face value and see if we can translate them into our daily living.

Jesus Demonstrating Greatness

The incident in Mark 10 is the setting for our third principle of servant leadership. It came immediately after James and John's request to sit next to Jesus when he entered his kingdom. The lesson that follows is born out of the other ten disciples' response to their fellow disciples' request. Often a leader's best opportunity to lead is when conflict arises among his followers.

THE TEN'S REACTION TO JAMES AND JOHN

The other ten disciples did not appreciate James and John's request of Jesus. Matthew and Mark said they became "indignant" with the Sons of Thunder. I believe part of their anger came from the fact that the others would have asked the same thing—if they had gotten to Jesus first! The other disciples became agitated because they shared James and John's misconception about leadership. Otherwise, they would not have been up in arms over their friends' request. If the ten other disciples had understood that leadership is not a matter of position, James and John's request would not have been a threat to them.

Ambition cloaked in piety is an unhealthy mixture. The ten reacted to their friends' request like jealous siblings rather than followers of the humble Messiah. For, since following Jesus is the prerequisite to reigning with him (principle 2), the ten should have had their attention on preparing to suffer rather than on their brothers' misguided request.

JESUS' RESPONSE TO THE TEN

When the ten began their assault on James and John, Jesus must have felt more like a parent than the leader of a messianic movement. He was near the end of his earthly ministry. He must have wondered if these guys would ever get along in order to carry on the mission after his victorious death. Jesus spent much of his time disciplining and correcting his family of followers. These are responsibilities for every servant leader.

Jesus addressed his disciples as children (John 13:33). This was not a put-down. It was a term of endearment. Children are precious to parents who love them. Jesus gave those who followed him one commandment: to love one another (John 13:34). Parents continually tell their children to love each other.

Ken Hemphill, former president of Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, has noted that leading a church as the pastor is much like being a parent in a family. Hemphill noted that Paul compared his ministry in Corinth to the role of a father when he encouraged the Corinthians to imitate his actions (1 Cor. 4:14-21). The concept of church as family permeates the New Testament. Hemphill advises pastors:

Keep the biblical context of family constantly before the church through your preaching and teaching. But you must begin the process of modeling family before it will become reality. Start with a few key leaders and parent them to maturity. . . . As they grow to maturity, teach them to parent-disciple others. Put mature, parenting leaders in places of leadership in your small groups so that the process of parenting can be extended throughout the church.¹

Parenting is a model of pastoral leadership. Leading includes both the nurturing and discipline that parents must balance with their children.

Parents and shepherds

Parent leader fits the biblical model of shepherd leader. The shepherd is the biblical model for God's relationship with his people (Ps. 23:1). It was also the designation of the Old Testament king's role among his people (2 Sam. 7:7; Zech. 11:4-17). Jesus adopted the shepherd as his model of leadership when he said, "I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (John 10:11, NIV).

I want to affirm the shepherd model of leadership among God's people. In my personal journey to discover how I should lead, I have tried to act out every leadership style I learned about at a conference or read about in a book. I have viewed my role as a "rancher" to the head of a corporation. Several years ago I stepped into the new year and announced that it was time to move forward. We needed more space to grow. I thought since I held the position of leader, others would follow automatically. The need was real. I was motivated. The goals seemed clear. The project fell flat on its face! There are many reasons why the project failed, but one reason was that I tried to lead in a way that was neither natural for me nor appropriate to the situation. I pushed the project rather than led the people. I acted more like a CEO with the leverage of salaries and stock options than like a shepherd who knew each sheep by name and laid down his life for them.

That failure began my discovery of these principles of servant leadership and a return to a biblical model for leadership in the church. I gave up my efforts to lead as someone told me I should lead. I began to lead as God had designed me to lead. Biblical models began to take precedence over worldly models. I am convinced that pastor as parent and pastor as shepherd are still accurate, vital models of leadership in the church. The principles inherent in both models can apply to any leadership setting.

I appreciate Lynn Anderson's work *They Smell Like Sheep*.² It is a balance to many church leadership models that call God's people to adopt

styles based on nonbiblical patterns for leadership. Dr. Anderson has recaptured the biblical model of leader as shepherd. He reminds us that we do not have to fear the apparent dichotomy between leader and follower that this model may present. He addresses our fears when he writes:

While some may not feel comfortable thinking of certain people as sheep and others as shepherds, our discomfort will likely disappear when we realize that the shepherding model revolves around the relationship between the shepherd and his flock. It is not a figure of strong over weak or “lords” over servants. Quite the contrary. The shepherd figure is one of love, service, and openness.³

Relationship is the key concept in shepherd as leader. Love, service, and openness are the characteristics of a shepherding style. Likewise, a relationship built on these characteristics works in the parent-child model. Children rebel against those with whom they have no relationship. Parishioners refuse the leadership of those who they sense do not care for them.

After Jesus corrected the thinking of James and John, he gathered his followers like a parent stopping a fight among siblings and a shepherd gathering his endangered flock. He knew that both unity of fellowship and unity of direction were necessary to carry out his mission. Jesus must have sighed as he pulled the boys together again to set their thinking and relationships straight.

THE PARADOX OF LEADING LIKE JESUS: TO BE GREAT IS TO SERVE

Leaders define what actions and attitudes will be rewarded and recognized among their followers. When followers try to define new values, the leader’s responsibility is to restate the core values of the group.

Businesses, organizations, and families benefit from knowing and living by their core values. In business, core values are “the organization’s essential and enduring tenets—a small set of general guiding principles; not to be confused with specific cultural or operating practices; not to be compromised for financial gain or short-term expediency.”⁴ James Collins observes that all enduring visionary companies have a set of core values that determine the behavior of the group.

Acknowledging and living by strongly held core values can build unity and effectiveness in a church. As we began the process of enumerating our set of core values, a member of the team said, “I don’t get it. Why do we need core values? We have the Bible.” Good observation. I agreed that the Bible was our ultimate guide for our thinking and behavior. I said, however, that what we were looking for were *the unchanging values that made our church unique in our mission field and in the kingdom of God*. Willow Creek Community Church has helped churches understand what core values look like and the impact they can have on how a church carries out its mission.⁵

Jesus defined a core value for his leaders (then and now) when he pulled his disciples aside and taught them how to lead in the kingdom of God. He did this in response to James and John’s misunderstanding of position and leadership, along with the indignant response of the other ten who shared their fellow disciples’ false perception.

Jesus taught the third principle of servant leadership when he gathered his disciples to himself:

Servant leaders give up personal rights to find greatness in service to others.

How do we arrive at that principle? It is inherent in Jesus’ definitions of greatness. We will see how this concept of greatness and leadership was as foreign to Jesus’ followers as it is to us today. We will also see that these truths are key to understanding the mind and mission of Jesus.

Paradox is part of life and should not be feared by those who follow Jesus. Life is not—as some want it to be—simply black and white, up and down, front and back. Holograms have replaced one-dimensional drawings as models of reality. The universe is as small as it is large. We watch death give way to life, and we watch instant wealth breed poverty. We find fulfillment in suffering and emptiness in unrestrained pleasure. Children bring joy and pain to parents. Marriage is bliss and hard work. Jesus said leaders are servants. Those who lead are often bound to the goals and values of those they are leading.

Paradox is often part of a leader's style. Donald T. Phillips has recorded some of the paradoxes identifiable in President Lincoln's leadership style:

- He was charismatic yet unassuming.
- He was consistent yet flexible.
- He was the victim of vast amounts of slander and malice, yet he was also immensely popular with the troops.
- He was trusting and compassionate, yet he could also be demanding and tough.
- He was a risk taker and innovative yet patient and calculating.
- He seemed to have a revolving door of generals whom he often removed and replaced; yet, in reality, he gave them ample time and support to produce results.
- He claimed not to control events, that his policy was to have no policy, when, in actuality, he did control events to a very large degree by being aggressive, taking charge, and being extraordinarily decisive.⁶

Lincoln led as the situation demanded. While he may have appeared inconsistent at times, he modeled a style to meet the need at hand. Paradox was part of this leadership style.

Jesus exhibited paradoxical styles of leadership. He adapted his style according to those he addressed and the context of the situation:

- He was gentle as a lamb yet courageous as a lion.
- He was yielding yet aggressive when cornered by injustice.
- He was gregarious but spent much time alone.
- He was meek yet in control at all times.
- He never had a formal education, yet he taught with great authority.
- He was a conformist yet an iconoclast.
- He was a friend to the outcast yet dined with insiders.

Jesus' character never changed. He remained committed to the Father's call on his life. Out of that call and character, however, he adapted a style of leadership to meet the moment. Jesus' leadership style often presented a paradox to those who tried to follow and to those who observed him.

Jesus also used paradox in his teaching. Jesus taught, "Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it" (Matt. 10:39, NIV). "So the last will be first, and the first will be last" (Matt. 20:16, NIV). "The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed" (Matt. 13:31, NIV). "Whoever humbles himself will be exalted" (Matt. 23:12, NIV). Jesus effectively wove contrasting images to introduce his message to the various people who sought him.

Paradox gives a leader the power to relay the complexities of a vision. Seemingly opposite images create a tension that is necessary if we are to find the truth. Great leaders use paradox to state the values of the new reality. Jesus defined greatness and leadership with paradox. The images confused the disciples, as it baffles some of us today. What was his picture? Jesus painted greatness as the work of a servant. He defined leadership as the place of a slave. Both pictures seemed distorted to those who saw them through the lenses of their culture.

HE STARTED WHERE THEY WERE

Jesus knew that his followers were trapped in the world's way of seeing things. Part of his service to them was to lead them into a new view of God's kingdom. He began his lesson about leadership by noting prevailing attitudes toward greatness and competition. The disciples did not have to look far to find the negative and positive models of leadership Jesus would use to teach them. Part of the power of Jesus' leadership is that he understood and articulated the culture around him. He chose examples from his followers' culture to help them understand.

The power of stories

Stories often help the leader paint a picture of the future. Stories help leaders address the issues of change. Doug Murren, author of *Leadershift*, calls pastors to be leaders of change within the church.⁷ Murren draws from his personal experiences of leading a church through several stages of change. He explains that effective leaders “help people experience their future before they live it. Leaders who are able to manage paradigm shifts must learn to make others comfortable with a vision of the future.”⁸

Murren suggests that “anecdotes, folklore and metaphors” serve to help paradigm-pioneering pastors. He believes that “storytelling personalizes our mission and establishes memorable patterns for the future.”⁹ Max DePree calls the practice “tribal storytelling.”¹⁰ Tom Peters reminds us that “people, including managers, do not live by pie charts alone. . . . People live, reason, and are moved by symbols and stories.”¹¹

Jesus was a master at telling stories to show what the future would look like under his reign. Matthew, Jesus' first chronicler, wrote, “Jesus spoke all these things to the crowd in parables; he did not say anything to them without using a parable” (Matt. 13:34, NIV). Jesus chose stories of lost coins and sons, masters and servants, celebrations and terror, hope and loss to paint pictures of his kingdom. Jesus began where the

people were. He chose pictures they understood and told stories about real people. He did this for one reason: to introduce people to the reality of what things will look like when the Son of God reigns in the hearts of people.

One day a religious leader asked Jesus what he must do to inherit eternal life. Jesus asked him if he knew what the Law said about this. He did and said, “Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength and with all your mind”; and, ‘Love your neighbor as yourself’” (Luke 10:27, NIV). Jesus said that the man had answered correctly. But the religious leader wanted the others to know he had a degree in Law, so he asked, “And who is my neighbor?” Jesus, undaunted and always having a story up the sleeve of his tunic, answered with the story of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10:30-37). When he finished the story and the religious leader had answered the teacher’s question, everyone in the room walked away with a new definition of *neighbor*.

Jesus also used metaphors and analogies to illustrate his present and future kingdom. For example, Jesus knew that true agents of change create new containers to hold the future. He taught that the results change brings cannot be contained in old methods. “What do you do with this new reality?” people asked Jesus. “Do you stuff it into current ways of doing things? Do you build a whole new container?”

To answer the questions, Jesus used an analogy from his day to illustrate his point. He said that you cannot patch old clothes with new cloth; you cannot pour new wine into old wineskins (Matt. 9:16-17). His point? Trying to patch a tear in an old garment with new cloth only makes the tear worse when the new cloth shrinks to find its own shape. Putting new wine in well-worn, stretched containers causes them to explode. The new juices age and give off new gases that create pressure in old containers. The results of change do not belong in old containers. If you try to fill old ways with new values, both will be lost—to no one’s good.

Anyone who has tried to make change in a church or business knows the explosion that can occur when a new plan is poured into old ways of doing things. Jesus knew that change demanded new forms as well as new content. He painted an analogy from everyday life to help his followers understand the dangers of clinging to old methods when new realities come into their lives.

When I began to lead our church to a new model of doing church, I told a story using the analogy of an entrepreneur who wanted to build a new product. It went like this:

The Product

From Warehouse to Factory: Moving the Church to Do What It Was Commissioned to Do

A wealthy entrepreneur, who made his money taking risks, wanted to produce a product. He did market research, studied manufacturing trends, and discovered that fiber optics was the industry of the future. Since no one would want to buy cables and switching stations, he conceived a video/voice mailbox in which one could send and receive both information and digital images. If it could be manufactured cheaply enough, every home in America would have a 2V box by the year 2000.

The entrepreneur brought his American investors together. They agreed to the project and raised sixty million dollars in less than a month. The entrepreneur hired a project manager to begin producing the product. “I want to build a video/voice mailbox. Can you do it?” asked the entrepreneur.

“Sure,” said the project manager.

And he began to build the most modern, efficient, state-of-the-art warehouse.

Having provided the resources and the authority for the project, the entrepreneur left to begin another venture.

The project manager hired a staff to begin plans for a warehouse to gather all the pieces needed for the product. He traveled around the country going to seminars and other state-of-the-art warehouses so he could put together the best warehouse. He hired engineers, suppliers, and managers for the warehouse. Each month he hired more employees to code, shelf, and inventory the contents of the warehouse. He even traveled to Japan to study warehouse management, and returned with years of plans for acquiring, systematizing, and storing materials.

Halfway through the third year, when the warehouse had grown to over 100,000 square feet, 200 employees, and had an inventory of 20 million dollars, the project manager threw a company picnic. All employees, from the dockhands to the shift managers, were there with their families. They celebrated their warehouse.

Suddenly, out of the blue, a helicopter appeared over the picnic. It was the entrepreneur. His helicopter landed in the middle of the picnic, and he stepped out with a smile.

“Gentlemen,” he proclaimed from a picnic stage, “I see you are celebrating. I heard about this event and came as soon as I could. I wanted to see the first video/voice mailbox you have produced. Where is it?”

The employees looked at one another, “Who is this guy? What video/voice mailbox?”

A shift manager stepped up to the entrepreneur, “Sir, you must be mistaken. This is a picnic to celebrate the most modern, efficient, state-of-the-art warehouse.”

“A warehouse? I gave your project manager the authority and resources to produce a product—not build a warehouse! Where is that man?” the entrepreneur said in a big voice.

The project manager left his place at the head table and made his way to the entrepreneur. “Here I am,” he said in a small voice.

“What are you doing building a warehouse? Warehouses don’t produce products; they store them.”

“Well, sir, I thought we could gather the goods and organize them before we built the factory and produced the product,” the well-meaning project manager said.

“You thought wrong. You are fired, and I will sue you for breach of contract. I want a product, not a warehouse,” said the entrepreneur.

After firing the project manager and laying off all the employees, the entrepreneur went to a group of Korean investors. “I want to build a video/voice mailbox. Can you do it?” asked the entrepreneur.

“Sure,” they said.

And they began to build the most modern, efficient, state-of-the-art factory.

Jesus commissioned his people to make disciples, not warehouse Christians. Matthew 28:19 makes this very clear: “as you go, make disciples.” Too many churches are warehouses of well-planned, well-managed programs for storing and shipping out believers. Jesus, on the other hand, commissioned his church to produce a product, not build warehouses.¹²

Why do I stress these parables and stories? Because authority can’t accomplish much until followers understand what the leader is talking about. Jesus had the ultimate authority—and people were learning to follow him. But time and time again he had to work away at their prevailing views and guide them to the vision of the kingdom to come.

In the same way, stories, metaphors, analogies, and examples from

the experiences of your followers can build a bridge from their present to your future.

WHAT THEY LEARNED IN BUSINESS SCHOOL

Jesus began his lesson on leadership with two examples from experiences common to his disciples: (1) “Lord it over them,” and (2) “Exercise authority.” Interestingly enough, both models are still prevalent natural styles of leading in the world.

Jesus took a jab at his culture’s understanding of leadership by describing his examples as “those who are *regarded* as rulers of the Gentiles” (Mark 10:42, NIV, italics mine). Jesus made it clear that authentic rulers do not evoke these styles of leadership. Let’s look closer at Jesus’ two negative examples of leadership.

“Lord it over them”

The disciples knew about the “lord it over them” style of leadership. They saw it every day in their rulers, the Romans. This style is simply “might makes right”—if you have the biggest army, you run the show. I think it is called “market share” in the corporate world. We know this style very well. We daydream of opportunities to tell people what to do—with no back talk or passive-aggressive behavior. If you choose this style of leadership, the first task on your to-do list is: 1. Get a bigger army.

To lord it over someone means to subject him to your power. It implies that someone is the master and someone else is the subject. This is a very effective style of leadership—ask Hitler or Pol Pot. The concept of *lord* implies absolute power over another. You don’t have to deal with questions or dissension. You herd people together and tell them what to do. If they disagree, you eliminate them.

This style of leadership was common in Jesus’ day too. The Romans understood how to lord it over their subjects. This is one reason they

ruled the world at that time. People tend to do what they are told when they walk on a road lined with their crucified relatives. Even today governments and organizations know how to subject people to their power. Little has changed in the hearts of people since Jesus walked the earth.

Jesus used lording it over others as a negative model of leadership. On the other hand, he presented himself as “Lord” over his disciples. How did that fit with his negative example of leadership? Jesus knew that lordship without compassion breeds abuse. Arrogance and power foster tyranny. Jesus could wear the title of Lord because of who he was as the Son of God and because no other title could describe his relationship with those who followed him.

Jesus warned against trying to lord it over others; yet, as Lord, Jesus used his power to demand absolute allegiance of his followers. Matthew 10 is a manual of discipleship. Jesus spelled out what it meant to be one of his followers. He commanded, “Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his cross and follow me is not worthy of me” (Matt. 10:37-38, NIV).

We need to remember that, as true Lord, Jesus could make these claims on his followers. The problem with human leaders is that we are not Jesus; therefore, any attempt to be lord will result in our ultimate destruction and the ruin of others.

Jesus held up a popular model of leadership for his disciples. He wanted them to know that this was a choice they could make when leading others. Their selfish nature and their culture’s acceptance of this model made it a potential option of leadership. Jesus, however, desired his followers to lead another way.

“Exercise authority”

Jesus’ other negative leadership model involved those he called “their high officials.” We get our English prefix *mega-* from the Greek word

Jesus used to describe these leaders. This leadership style involves using the authority of your position to make things happen. This concept fits James and John's request of Jesus. They thought that if they could get the position, they could exercise authority over others. They wanted to be megadisciples!

Authority is a leader's vehicle of power. It gives him the ability to move others to action. If you choose this style of leadership, the first item on your to-do list is: 1. Get a bigger office. James MacGregor Burns notes, however, "All leaders are actual or potential power holders, but not all power holders are leaders."¹³

You may find yourself in a position of leadership, yet you cannot seem to get people to follow you. One of two problems may exist. Either you haven't gone to the seminar on "how to use your positional authority to get people to work for you" (hard to fit on the front of a brochure), or you have not studied Jesus' source of authority. Richard Foster concludes that "the spiritual authority of Jesus is an authority not found in a position or a title, but in a towel."¹⁴

Jesus understood authority. He knew leaders could misuse their authority to make innocent people do what they wanted them to do. During the last week of his earthly ministry, Jesus attacked the misuse of authority by the religious leaders of his day. He told the people to do what their leaders taught them to do because the leaders held positions of authority given by God. On the other hand, Jesus told the people not to do what their leaders did because "they do not practice what they preach" (Matt. 23:3, NIV). Jesus recognized the authority of the religious leaders (even though they did not recognize his authority) while pointing out their misuse of it. We will see in principle 6 of servant leadership that shared authority is essential to a leader's success.

Jesus used his authority to teach his design for discipleship. Matthew 5–7 is the heart of Jesus' teaching on how life would look if he reigned in people's hearts. He raised the Old Covenant laws to new heights of expectations. Yet he offered the blessedness of an impoverished spirit.

When he had concluded his teaching, Matthew wrote, “the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and not as their teachers of the law” (Matt. 7:28-29, NIV).

Jesus used his positional authority as leader to accomplish his mission. He used these aspects of leadership to guide his followers toward his vision of the kingdom of God. So in a sense, Jesus was able to be Lord in the way that earthly leaders could only attempt to lord it over others. Jesus cautioned against these two natural methods of leading because he knew people’s hearts and how easily such authority could be abused.

What Style of Greatness Do You Seek?

We can study Jesus' definition of greatness. But it becomes difficult to apply in an atmosphere of the world's competition. How do we become great in the way Jesus taught?

A MOVE AWAY FROM THESE NEGATIVE LEADERSHIP STYLES

Currently there is a trend away from the two negative styles of leadership that Jesus described to his disciples. The trend is toward service in the marketplace. This is not self-serving customer service to ensure greater bottom lines, but it is a call from self-interest to service. Peter Block, the author of *Stewardship*,¹⁵ calls for heads of organizations and companies to see themselves as stewards. Block asks leaders to have the goal of stewardship, not leadership.

Stewardship asks us to serve our organizations and be accountable to them without caretaking and without taking control. And in letting caretaking and control go, we hold on to the spiritual meaning of stewardship: to honor what has been given us, to use power with a sense of grace, and to pursue purposes that transcend short-term self-interest.¹⁶

Stewardship is about governance of an organization, according to Block. It is about holding something in trust for another. It is

“giving order to the dispersion of power.”¹⁷ Stewards choose partnership over patriarchy, empowerment over dependency, and service over self-interest. Service, Block argues, comes when a person commits to something outside herself. Block has captured the sense of service as an essential ingredient in the leading process.

Max DePree asks us to look at leadership as service and the leader as a steward:

Try to think about a leader, in the words of the gospel writer Luke, as “one who serves.” Leadership is a concept of owing certain things to the institution. It is a way of thinking about institutional heirs, a way of thinking about stewardship as contrasted with ownership. . . . The art of leadership requires us to think about the leader-as-steward in terms of relationships: of assets and legacy, of momentum and effectiveness, of civility and values.¹⁸

DePree teaches that the leader owes the institution certain assets like financial health and a legacy of empowered people. Leaders are obligated to give momentum through a clear vision. Effectiveness comes from “enabling others to reach their potential—both their personal potential and their corporate or institutional potential.”¹⁹ Leaders owe those who follow the civility of “identifying values” that give meaning to their work. Leading, writes DePree, is the “opportunity to make a meaningful difference in the lives of those who permit leaders to lead.”²⁰

These current trends away from “lord it over” and “exercise authority” are healthy ones. They provide a starting point for people to consider Jesus’ teachings about leadership. The acceptance of books like *Jesus, CEO*²¹ signal that Jesus is still a source of wisdom in the marketplace. As a follower of Jesus, you have the opportunity to build a bridge from contemporary leadership situations to the teachings of Jesus. The use of Jesus’ stories, metaphors, and analogies is an excellent way to introduce God’s truth into a conversation or board meeting.

“NOT SO WITH YOU!”

Jesus abruptly turned his lesson away from contemporary thinking to kingdom priorities when he said, “Not so with you” (Mark 10:43, NIV). This statement is a sign of God’s presence. Following Jesus means that the rules have changed. The landscape is different. The road ends on another horizon. “Not so with you” declares that the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Those who follow Jesus must recognize that conventional wisdom and power methods are not the best way to lead among God’s people.

By saying, “Not so with you,” Jesus made a distinction between how the world leads and how his followers are to lead among themselves. *Please remember that what Jesus teaches about greatness and leadership cannot be expected of leaders who do not embrace Jesus as their final authority.* Naturally, without the presence of Jesus’ Spirit and the values of his kingdom in our lives, we cannot accept the definitions nor the actions his words imply. Without the Spirit of Jesus in our hearts and minds, we will gravitate to natural ways of becoming great and getting to the front of the line. Those outside a relationship with Christ may appreciate the wisdom of Jesus, but they cannot live out his teachings fully. A heart in relationship with the Teacher is necessary before you can know the meaning of greatness and leadership in the kingdom of God.

YOU KNOW YOU’RE A SERVANT WHEN . . .

Jesus modeled greatness through service to others when he did not seek a public office, earn a degree, lead an army, or discover some scientific truth. Jesus’ entire ministry was about service to his Father in heaven, service to his mission, service to his followers, and, ultimately, service to those he came to save. Jesus was a great man because he was a servant. We acknowledge him as great because he lived beyond the noise of life and purposefully lived to bring people closer to their

Creator. As Lord of all, he might have lived above us and demanded blind allegiance. But he served us, teaching us the truth and how to live by it. He served us in our misunderstanding, our selfishness, and our weakness. He saw what we needed and helped us. He knew where we needed to be and took us there—with great love and respect for us.

We have lost this fundamental model of greatness in our personality-centered culture. Greatness seems to belong to the builders and those of influence. Greatness is equated with name recognition and social status. Churches and nonprofit organizations have become too much like the world in this respect. We hand out certificates of greatness to those who grow the biggest organization or gather the most people on a weekend. We honor those who sit in places of power. We have forgotten that greatness among God's people begins with service, and service implies labor without accolades.

I led a church leadership conference a year or two ago in a southern state. When I came into the place where the meal was served, I noticed two tables with the sign: "Reserved for Servers." Both tables were empty, while the other tables were full. People were even looking for places to sit because all the other places were filled. When I got up to speak, I wondered out loud if it was their respect for the "reserved" sign or their fear of being known as "servers" that kept people from sitting at those tables! We too often forget to equate greatness with service. I told the group that under Jesus' model of leadership, one of those "Reserved for Servers" signs should have been on every table.

Being a servant is not one of our natural goals. After the deaths of Princess Diana and Mother Teresa, a friend asked me, "Who would you rather have been?" He knew I would have to choose between what I thought I ought to say and what I wanted to say. Given the choice, most of us would rather be the prince or princess of Wales than a servant to orphans in India. I said that I would rather have been Mother Teresa and explained that her life modeled more of how

Jesus lived his life than Diana's did. I must admit that I have wondered what it would be like to be treated like royalty. My human desire to be known as great sometimes outweighs my call to be a servant in the streets of my city.

The test of whether or not you have accepted Jesus' teaching about greatness is how you react when others treat you like a servant. One of my staff members attended a Bill Gothard seminar several years ago. Once you go to one of his meetings, you receive a birthday card from him for the rest of your life. I think you can move seven times without ever leaving a forwarding address and still count on your birthday card from Bill! One day, the staff member came into my office and showed me the birthday card he had received from the Gothard organization. It read, "The true test of a servant is if I act like one when I am treated like one." He had teased before that we all like to be referred to as servants of God until we are treated like servants. The reality is that if you seek to find greatness in service to your peers, you can count on being treated like a servant.

BEING FIRST IN LINE

Jesus then said, "If you want to be first." This phrase implies leadership. We get our English prefix *proto-* from the Greek word for *first*. It means first in a line or series. Leaders are first in line. They are out front defining reality, painting the future, and showing the way to it. Leaders are first in line for a new type of reality.

Robert Greenleaf recognized two concepts of being the leader. One is being the lone chief on top of a hierarchical structure.²² The other is being the principal leader as *primus inter pares*—"first among equals."²³ He notes that in this latter model there is still a "first," but that leader is not the chief. Greenleaf concludes, "The difference may appear to be subtle, but it is important that the *primus* constantly test and prove that leadership among a group of able peers." Greenleaf's "first among

equals” is another way of being first as Jesus taught his followers. The constant test and proof of being the primus under Jesus’ definition is how you serve the others.

Jesus created an apparent absurdity when he said, “Whoever wants to be first in line must become a slave.” The disciples understood “first in line.” They scratched their heads over becoming a slave. Slave in this verse was a *doulos* slave. In the first century, this human being was the lowest rung of the social ladder. These people were bought and sold as property. A *doulos* slave had no rights or privileges, no wants or desires, only the commands of the master. The disciples, as Jews, refused to be slaves to anyone. That was what the Exodus was about. They rejected Jesus’ picture of leadership initially because it was too strange to put the pieces together. How could you be first in line by becoming someone on the lowest rung of the ladder?

Being a slave involves several things: the loss of property, separation from roots, abuse by unkind owners, loss of individuality, and, of course, no freedom to choose. Being a slave means giving up personal rights. This is the first step to being first among God’s people. Why? You cannot be a servant until you give up your personal rights to be served. Greatness in service to others can never occur as long as you insist that it is your right that others serve you.

What advantage is there to giving up your right to be served? How does that act enhance your ability to be a servant leader? Richard Foster helps us see that giving up our right to be served actually leads to freedom.

When we choose to be a servant, we give up the right to be in charge. There is great freedom in this. If we voluntarily choose to be taken advantage of, then we cannot be manipulated. When we choose to be a servant, we surrender the right to decide who and when we will serve. We become available and vulnerable.²⁴

Giving up our right to be served frees us to serve others. Choosing the place and work of a slave removes every barrier that keeps people apart.

We live in a culture where the individual has been moved to the center of the universe. When that takes place, the rights of the individual reign over the needs of others. Until rights are relinquished, service is less likely to happen. Service can occur, but it will be self-serving rather than others oriented. Learning to serve begins with following the Master. Becoming a slave to God is how we become “first” among our peers. Being a slave is not part of our natural feelings. How can we understand this principle?

Wellington Boone, the author of *Breaking Through* and a popular speaker in the Promise Keepers movement, has put a unique twist on what it means to be an African-American and speak of becoming a slave of Christ.²⁵ He writes that blacks in this country have a two-hundred-year advantage over others in learning to be slaves of Christ and servants to others! He writes, “Blacks have had more than two centuries of training in being a slave of man. It can be added as long-term qualification to prepare them to be a fine slave of God or to rule as a king.”²⁶

I agree with Rev. Boone that being a “slave to God” (Rom. 6:19-23, NIV) is a biblical model for a Christian’s lifestyle. I would add that the model of slavery as a pattern for discipleship among white Americans may be even more difficult to comprehend. Why? Whites have been the owners! Moving from owner and master to slave may be more difficult than returning to a previous historical era to comprehend the teachings of Jesus. This model for following Christ is a primary reason it is so hard for postmodern people to risk true discipleship.²⁷

Finding greatness in service begins by giving up your personal right to be served. This principle of servant leadership may be the most difficult to comprehend today. We have so few contemporary models to observe and follow. Centuries separate us from the context of Jesus’ teaching. How can this principle become part of your leadership style?

HOW CAN I LEAD THIS WAY?

What does this picture of leadership look like in real life? How can servants and slaves really lead? The answer poses a real dilemma for a disciple of Jesus. How do you take what you learned in business school and join it to the sayings of Jesus? Is that possible? Is there another way?

Servants and slaves do not define leadership in the world's dictionary. Many people understand the idea of being a servant and forfeiting personal rights as self-effacing. I remember when my wife, who was a public-school teacher at the time, was confronted by a school counselor. My wife had confessed her faith in Jesus. The counselor said that she didn't like Christians because they caused such a low self-esteem in others. The counselor equated confessing that you are a sinner with having a low self-esteem. She would no doubt have felt that seeing yourself as a servant meant not having a "healthy" self-image too.

Jesus came to show what life in the kingdom of God looked like, not to modify how the world did things. The ways of God work in the hallways of humanity only when Jesus reigns in people's hearts. Any follower of Christ who seeks to lead as Jesus led must be willing to be treated like Jesus. Some will follow. Others will throw stones.

By his own example

Jesus lived the answer to the question of how to lead like a servant. He concluded his lesson on greatness by saying, "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many" (Mark 10:45, NIV). Jesus stated his mission with those words. He knew his disciples would not get it until he completed his mission. He had to say, in essence, "Watch me. I will show you how this works. I have not come to be served by you, I have come to serve you. I will also give my life as a payment so that many will be freed to a relationship with God." Jesus knew he had to model this lesson before his students would ever be able to live it out.

Jesus was not a teacher who only defined his terms; he also modeled what he called others to do. James, John, and the other ten disciples experienced what Jesus taught as they followed him to his death, burial, and resurrection. They soon saw that servant leadership meant ultimately giving up their lives so others could have the life God desired for them.

This kind of service is the basis for servant leadership in the home. Marriage is in many ways giving up personal rights to find greatness in service to another. The traditional vows of marriage, which continue to be the ones chosen by the vast majority of couples I marry, imply service to the partner no matter the circumstances. Marriage works when you come to the place where the other's well-being is as important as your own.

I realize that some counselors could argue that giving up personal rights can be dangerous to an individual's self-image and, therefore, can create an unhealthy marriage. And I admit that I have seen marriages where a husband sees his wife as a servant and she does not know how to protect her personal boundaries. On the other hand, the nature of love is to lay down willingly what is rightfully yours in order to serve the needs of another person. Marriage can be healthy when both partners find greatness in service rather than in being served.

Sacrificial service is certainly part of parenting. I once co-led a Jesus on Leadership group with our Women's Ministry Team leader. The group was made up of women who led different areas of ministry to women in our church and community. When we came to the principle about giving up your personal rights and finding greatness in service to others, I commented that this was a difficult concept for many men. I wondered how they felt about it. They began to laugh. I asked, "What's so funny?" One woman spoke for the group when she said, "Look, when you're a mother, you gave up your personal rights to find greatness in service the day you had your first child!" I laughed too. Parenting is giving up your personal rights and finding greatness in service to your children. I guess most mothers learn that principle sooner than fathers.

In the same way, a father can live out this principle when he chooses

to modify his career goals in order to serve the mission of his family above the goals of a company. This does not mean living your life out through your children. It does not mean setting aside providing in the best way you can for your family. It does mean, however, that you serve the young person growing under your care in order for her to live out God's plan for her life. Modeling greatness in service is one way to teach your children this principle.

The one true model

Jesus deserves service from those he created! He, however, came to serve. He came to give his life as a payment for the sins of others. Jesus came to give his life as a ransom so creation could be set free from its separation from its Creator. A ransom in the ancient world was a payment to free a slave or prisoner.²⁸ As the Son of Man, Jesus saw his life as one of sacrifice so that others could benefit.

I believe Jesus is our only true model of servant leadership. He served others by giving his life for them. His entire life mission was to free others, not to gain position for himself. This is a mystery to the world, but it is the heart of servant leadership after the teachings of Jesus. Anyone who seeks to lead in the body of Christ must submit himself to the lordship of Jesus in his life. Only then can one begin to understand why servants are great and slaves are first.

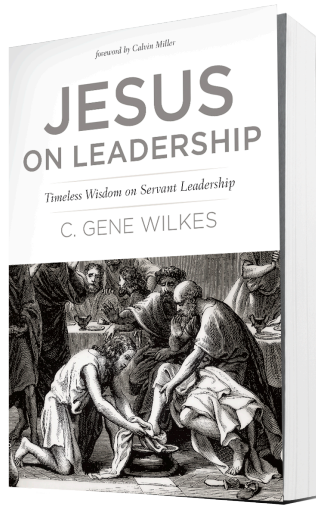
FOR STUDY AND REFLECTION

- What were your first impressions when you read Jesus' teaching on leadership to his disciples? Did you accept it at face value? If so, have you discarded it or embraced it? If not, how have you explained its clear message?
- Complete the statement, "I am like the ten disciples because . . ." Your answer may be like mine, "I am naturally competitive and want to be up front. It irks me when someone else reaches the finish line before I do."

- Make a list of five ways you can lead by taking the place of a slave in the marketplace, in your home, and in your church.
- One of Jesus' core values for leadership can be summarized as "Greatness is defined by service" and "Leaders serve others first." What are the core values for your leadership roles?

ENDNOTES

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7. Doug Murren, *Leadershift* (Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 1994).
8. *Ibid.*, 151.
9. *Ibid.*, 154.
10. Max DePree, *Leadership Is an Art* (New York: Doubleday, 1989), 72.
11. Tom Peters, *Thriving on Chaos*, Perennial Library Ed. (New York: Harper & Row, Perennial Library Edition, 1987), 506.
12. The principles of this story have been published in *Growing Churches* (April, May, June 1993), "From Warehouses to Factories" (also published in *Ministry Advantage*, a newsletter of Fuller Seminary, Pasadena, Calif.). If I were telling the story today, I would title it "From Mainframe to Local Area Network: Moving the church from being single server to customized service." The next generation would understand "From a LAN to the Internet: Moving the church from local area mentality to being a world-wide influence."
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14. Richard J. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline* (New York: HarperCollins, 1988), 128.
15. Peter Block, *Stewardship: Choosing Service over Self-Interest* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 1993).
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19. *Ibid.*, 16.
20. *Ibid.*, 19.
21. Laurie Beth Jones, *Jesus, CEO* (New York: Hyperion, 1995).
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23. *Ibid.*
24. Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*, 132.
25. Wellington Boone, *Breaking Through* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1995).
26. *Ibid.*, 77.
27. Popular books like James Redfield's *The Celestine Prophecy* (New York: Warner, 1993) spell out the self-becoming-god pattern of thinking among many Western minds. Without a reference to God or an awareness of God's work in a person's life, the choice of "vibrating to a higher realm of existence" or becoming a "slave to God" seems an obvious one.
28. William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament & Other Early Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), 483.



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MOVING FROM I TO WE

IN DR. FORD'S BOOK, *MOVING FROM I TO WE*, the premise is this: Together is where God lives and works to fulfill His outcomes. God is calling churches and ministries to realize His vision of life together in the body of Christ. Our culture elevates individuals, but God demonstrates through His Word that He works through the whole body of believers to accomplish His Kingdom work. There is no flashy strategy, perfect church model, or formula for leadership training that can get it done God's way. In chapter 8, "Tending to the Flock," Dr. Ford focuses on the primacy of relationships in God's strategic plan.

DR. PAUL R. FORD has helped more than ten thousand Christian leaders discover and fulfill who they are in Christ. An ordained pastor with ten-plus years of experience in church ministry, he has taught paradigm-busting body-life leadership principles to leaders and teams in eight cultures. Paul and his wife, Julie, are part of Church Resource Ministries and live in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

CHAPTER 8

Tending to the Flock

Act as if relationship is primary in every conversation, committee, and circumstance.

RAY SIMPSON¹

If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am a noisy gong or a clanging cymbal. And if I have prophetic powers, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have all faith, so as to remove mountains, but have not love, I am nothing.

1 CORINTHIANS 13:1-2, ESV

Conversations with these [people] revealed a troubling history of brokenness between Christian workers who had any interest in this country. The brokenness was so great. . . . “If that individual shows up for any of these discussions, I won’t participate.” Remember, these were Christians committed to preaching Jesus’ power of reconciliation and restoration.

PHILL BUTLER²

I do not ask for these only, but also for those who will believe in me through their word, that they may all be one, just as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be

*in us, so that the world may believe that you have sent me.
The glory that you have given me I have given to them,
that they may be one even as we are one.*

JOHN 17:20-22, ESV

One thing that God will not share with individuals is His glory. Many times in my own life, when seeking the praises of men and women, I have wanted to bring notoriety to myself. But even spiritual gifts, His Spirit-energized power in each of us, are enacted to bring glory to Him, not us (see 1 Peter 4:11). Yet in John 17, Jesus gives us that very glory, the glory the Father has given to Him. Why did He do this? For our strategies to be world-reaching in their missional impact? For our vision to be crystallized? For us to be raised up as role models for the world as “church-planting movement” creators, facilitators, or whatever language we throw into that newest trend in world missions?

It is clear that Jesus shares the glory God the Father gave to Him so that we would be one, just as He and the Father are one, and thus the world would know that He came from the Father. Human bonds are the essence of how we reflect our fellowship with God. Relationships are the primary means through which He reveals His strategies among His people. One of the ways that abiding in Christ, as Jesus shared in John 15:1-11, is reflected most deliberately is in our relationships—the branches. I understand why Jesus shared these words immediately following in verses 12-13 (ESV): “This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that someone lay down his life for his friends.” Love God, love one another. Wait a minute, those are the two Great Commandments (see Matthew 22:37-39)! Life really is about relationships. It is God’s economy, His channel for revealing His grace, power, and love to the world.

THE PRIMACY OF RELATIONSHIPS IN GOD'S STRATEGIC PLAN

In the back of my mind are the words of those Russian believers in the mid-1990s, so thankful that we brought the gospel: “Please send your teams home to America until the team members like each other. *Then* come back and share the gospel.” It was—and still is—crushing to grasp the implications of those words. As Christian anthropologist Paul Hiebert wrote,

Relationships are at the heart of its [Scripture's] message, our relationship to God and our relationships, therefore, to one another. . . . It is clear that we need to rearrange our priorities. We must make people more important than programs, give relationships priority over order and cleanliness, and spend more time in *corporate* prayer than in planning. We can learn much from the churches in relationally oriented cultures.³

Partners John Blake, Steve Hoke, and I, through our Leadership Initiative focus, had the joy of establishing such friendships among the Teso and Bugandan tribes in Uganda. It took me a while to grasp some of the particulars in how they approach relationships in the whole of life and work as compared to our Western patterns. For example, as noted earlier, honoring one's time schedule holds no weight in comparison to honoring relationships within tribal cultures.

Through this I have learned a new sense of natural flow, both relationally and in the Spirit, which takes place in relationally focused cultures. It has helped me to trust God's timing for scheduled meetings. It also helps me to watch even more intently for Him in relational interaction or even strategic planning when things do not happen as I had anticipated.

The most dramatic “relational reality therapy” occurred for me when I was communicating with Simon Peter and Timothy, national leaders of a ministry with whom our Leadership Initiative team

partnered. I know that sometimes the question of financial contributions from the West can become an issue when establishing a commitment in such settings. As we spoke about the nature of our commitment to their ministry and our training support to be provided, I mentioned the issue of finances: “I think it important for me to communicate at this point that neither I nor my mission have money to give. The only commitment I can make, for my part, is to commit to share my life with you.” Simon Peter looked at Timothy and gave one of those serendipitous glances—implying something to the effect of “Wow! I think he finally is getting to know our culture. Hallelujah!” It was relationship that they desired, first and foremost, and not material resources or strategies. It is the grid through which they see all of life and its priorities.

In this situation, by complete accident, I had crossed the most important cultural barrier for an American in relating with brothers and sisters from African tribal cultures. In reality, I communicated the primacy of relational investment as the real purpose of our work together. I cannot tell you how God has blessed our team through the relationships we have with Simon Peter, Timothy, Matthew, Franco, Samson, and others in their ministry. Earlier Simon Peter had sent an e-mail to finalize preparation for one of our trips to Uganda. We were in the process of preparing for ten days of ministry together. This trip was designed to expand the work we would do together in the future in other African countries. His closing note in a brief “business” e-mail included my wife, Julie: “God give you safe journey, may your queen smile at you to remind you of those early days of love.” Such personal care in a simple, along-the-way communication reflects the ever-central role of organic relationships. These bonds are the life-giving blood of God’s purposes among us and to the lost.

Relationships drive everything of substance in the Kingdom of God. His economy for reaching the world is driven by strategies created and prepared through His people, the dwelling place on earth where He

works. Relationships provide an amazing perpetual classroom God has set up for His Word to be made flesh and dwell among us.⁴

The greatest impact for me in comprehending God's organic purposes has been capturing this truth: Unity in the body of Christ is both the foundational framework and essential outcome for the Church. Our starting point, Ezekiel 34, has forever changed my understanding of how the body of Christ affects leadership, evangelism, and even strategic planning. Do you remember how angry God was with the shepherd leaders to whom He had entrusted His people?

Ah, shepherds of Israel who have been feeding yourselves!
Should not shepherds feed the sheep? . . . The weak you have not strengthened, the sick you have not healed, the injured you have not bound up, the strayed you have not brought back, the lost you have not sought, and with force and harshness you have ruled them. So they were scattered, because there was no shepherd, and they became food for all the wild beasts. . . .
Behold, I am against the shepherds. (verses 2,4-5,10, *ESV*)

Shepherding care was so important for His people that God's discipline for those leaders was to remove them completely. They did not safeguard those in their sheepfold nor pursue those beyond the fold who were lost.⁵ It began the sequence of prophetic events in Ezekiel 34–37 that led to every one of God's people being filled with the Spirit, and then corporately filled to become a great army. The promised Good Shepherd, Jesus, gives His life for the sheep to defeat sin and death. At His resurrection, He leaves His Holy Spirit to fill what would become the Savior's presence in the world, the one body of Christ. We have become that army, the priesthood of all believers.

This organic army is now God's dwelling place, an ever-growing holy temple that will grow by the masterful design of its Creator. The shepherding care will be provided, and the body will grow and build

itself up in love. Each one is now a grace-filled, power-endowed priest with a role in body-building and body-extending.

God’s desire to shepherd His people is a principal reason why a number of the spiritual gifts given by Jesus are focused on the provision of care for His people. Paul challenged not one leader, but the whole group of elders at Ephesus, that they were to be watchful in care: “Pay careful attention to yourselves and to all the flock, in which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to care for the church of God, which he obtained with his own blood” (Acts 20:28, *ESV*). Body-building leadership is to realize its crucial role in shepherding the flock. It is not the job of only one person, but of the whole.

In this chapter our body-building roles overview continues with two roles that enable this care-giving, mending, and multiplying process: the *team builder* and the *values keeper*. We will see God’s priority for building and keeping unity in relationships. It will also provide core biblical values that enable body-building relationships to stay on track.

THE TEAM BUILDER: BUILDING AND STRENGTHENING THE TEAM

The team builder works to enable and preserve the grace-driven unity essential to effective, life-giving, shared ministry. Supernaturally enabling the body to function with a priority on growing together as one is the critical function of this vital role. Keeping the unity that Jesus prayed for in John 17 is imperative—for obvious reasons.

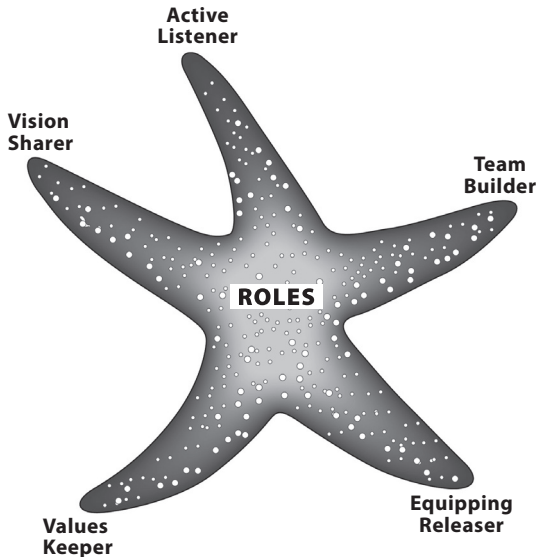
Body-Building Role Definition	Role or Function	Motivation for Fulfilling This Role	Indicators of Function Fulfilled
<p><i>Community Connector</i> Gives priority to the people no matter what the process; unity is always a priority. Leads most effectively from alongside.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unifying • relating • including • bonding 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • bringing people together • valuing everyone’s contributions • esteeming team members • strengthening cohesion among team members 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • unity • camaraderie • shared process • openheartedness/body-life caring

As I write this, I am confident that many who read this book, when they focus on the five body-building roles, will highlight the equipping releaser from chapter 7 and then the vision sharer coming in chapter 9. Those two are the two most “exciting” and “strategic” roles in today’s church and missional cultures. But as I read Ezekiel 34, I do not understand God to be concerned about whether or not the leaders were calling out the vision. I read nowhere that He was angry that they were not training new undershepherds to multiply the flock. Foundationally, His concern was focused on a deeper issue. He was disturbed about the lack of care and nurture of the people. Vision and strategy are actually outcomes of unified, Spirit-led body life. God was concerned about the need for true kinship and unity among His people. Without this, the people were scattered and received no care or support, with predatory wolves pursuing.

What I have come to realize is that body-life unity is both the foundational framework and an essential outcome of the Church. That is, if body-life unity does not exist or is broken and battered, the vision will likely fall on deaf ears. It will only be a shadow of what it could be as a widely divided and dispersed body of Christ regularly hits or misses with the message. Regarding body multiplication, if the Russians could not see that American Christians loved each other as we shared the gospel with them, the message was lost on the people. That is, independently minded, entitled Christians will struggle greatly to be a team in the way they carry out—or do not carry out—the vision and mission of making disciples.

If the We-lifestyle is not dominant among believers, there will be a loss in shared power from the gifts. There will be individual hotspots where gifts are active, but no dynamic, whole-body life as in Acts 2, where gifts rose up together in a most powerful way. Also, the encouragement and building that dominate true community may be seen as secondary and often nonexistent because there is so much focus on the strategic tasks to be completed. In other words, the body will not be

acting like the body: growing, building, and extending itself in love. It will be living piecemeal, here and there. The whole body will not have the synergy of working cooperatively like a living organism.



It would be like planning to use our starfish system, but with 50 percent of the cells unavailable because they are off doing their own thing, and the other 50 percent not certain that they want to live together with the other cells. It does not work when the cells are not functioning together as a sharing, life-giving group. Team builders are the powerful connectors who encourage unity among those cells. They are the powerful supporting ligaments that hold the body together so that each part can do its work.

The spiritual gifts team builders commonly possess can be one or more of the following:

- *Pastoring*—to shepherd, protect, counsel, and bring unity among members of the body

- *Leading*—to orchestrate people and their gifts together into a common vision, direction, and ministry, releasing many to their God-prepared parts
- *Exhorting*—to encourage, build up, inspire, and challenge to action in body life
- *Mercy*—to love alongside in action, showing kindness, compassion, and sympathy
- *Helps*—to serve and support others in the body so they are free to use their gifts
- *Word of wisdom*—to bring resolution to disputes and sensible counsel to We-issues

It has taken me a long time to understand that the vision for missional lifestyle is to be lived out within a foundational framework of community. That truth is reality because of how God has designed His body to grow: in tandem, with one another, sharing life's work and each other's needs. We are indeed being built together so that God can continue to live among us and fulfill His purposes through us. Multiplication is a by-product of such healthy communal lifestyle.

Team builders see unity and shared ministry as the heart and soul of God's strategy. The various team-building gifts are empowered, different gifts in different ways, to enhance our oneness and enable We-ministry. This will enable His plans to be executed through the body and not simply by a few strong individuals. Encouragement from the team builder breeds encouragement among the rest of us. As the crew of twenty-eight on the *Endurance* survived their days trapped in the snowpack of Antarctica, Captain Shackleton found great encouragement from the optimism his team exhibited. The fascinating part of that story is that Shackleton's very presence and demeanor is what encouraged that optimism in his crew.⁶ So it is with unity and team builders. Those who powerfully hearten and build up others literally hold the ship together in ministry teams during crisis or conflict. Some

provide a shepherding safety net that allows others to heal amid crises. Team builders gird up the body so that it may be mended, built up, mature, and staying the course together.

As an equipping releaser and vision sharer in my own spiritual gifts, I confess I have fought this body-building role many times over the years. Too often, investing in relationships or working in community seemed to slow down the process of moving biblical strategy into action. But now God's design has become more apparent. God employs relationships as the starting point for revealing His body-life vision and as the power center of the varying body-life gifts available in a team. Stewardship of relationships is not optional—it is the center of the organic starfish activity.

SPIRITUAL GIFTS AND LOVE

First Corinthians 12 and 13 provide helpful insight into why team builders are central to God's plan for a healthy, multiplying body. In chapter 12 we find a crystal-clear picture of how the body of Christ works together. Take a few minutes to read the chapter. In summary, the Spirit has given a variety of gifts apportioned to each one as the Father wills. Gifts are given for the common good, not for the individual's benefit but for the good of the whole. These many members with different manifestations of the Spirit are all part of one body and have the joy of functioning that way. That is, we do connected, body-building work together.

Feet, eyes, and noses are all needed and valued. No body part can be set aside or pushed aside. Each is essential to the organic workings of our life together. The unity is such that “if one member suffers, all suffer together; if one member is honored, all rejoice together” (1 Corinthians 12:26, *ESV*). There is great power in the many different gifts, but the true synergy of dynamic ministry is found in community. That is how we who are in Christ are designed. Team builders encourage the process of coming and staying together. They help people

understand how they fit together, and they mend broken relationships to restore fullness to the body and its functioning parts.

First Corinthians 13 continues this body-building summary by addressing the heart implications of life together for gifted believers. As in Acts 2 and the parable of the cream-filled cookie, we see the inextricable link between gifts and relationships. In the first few verses, Paul defined that connection. Having angelic words but having no love means that I will come across as a loudly banging gong. If I have prophetic powers but no love, I am nothing. The impact of my gifts is about more than the execution of dynamic spiritual power. The implications are lived out through the filters of friendship, partnership, and team life.

In the middle of 1 Corinthians 13, Paul went on to list the qualities of love. He included patience and kindness, not arrogant or insisting on its own way but bearing and enduring all things. These are all relational, “one-another” qualities. No matter how powerful my gifts, or how impressive my appearance or leadership or strategies, the real litmus test is still love. It is there, in fellowship and partnership, where we grow together and mature in Christ. It is there that we give up our childish ways, the finale in chapter 13. Moving from “I to We” is the heart of gifts-empowered body life. Together is where God dwells and moves to fulfill His outcomes.

TEAM-BUILDER RESPONSIBILITIES

In 1 Peter 5:2 (ESV), Peter was clear: “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you.” No one person is given the responsibility for pastoral care. Rather, it is a shared-oversight issue, body-building and encouraging in nature, that has to be revisited regularly for the sake of unity and health in the body. Peter also makes it clear that this is a willing choice. The elders have been exhorted to make certain this happens.

A recent American TV show, *Friday Night Lights*, had a run of

success for a most interesting reason: “Story line after story line on *FNL* is about taking responsibility for someone else.”⁷ The underlying theme of the show? We need each other. You may remember that this issue became a vital concern for our apostolic church-planting leadership team and how it has multiplied into so many other relationships and new house churches. Such is the core of this body-building role. We were not designed to be independent entities who come and go as we please. We were designed to find our fit and purpose in the context of the whole. Shared responsibility breeds ownership and deliberate care one for another.

Galatians 6:1-2 (ESV) gives another perspective on the essential need for team builders: “Brothers, if anyone is caught in any transgression, you who are spiritual should restore him in a spirit of gentleness. Keep watch on yourself, lest you too be tempted. Bear one another’s burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ.” The call is to support and encourage one another, whether tempted, caught in sin, or coming out of pain. Here is where team builders are most powerful in coming alongside for body-building purposes.

While I can be a great encourager to many, sometimes as an exhorter-prophet, I challenge people in a way that can feel very threatening or intimidating. That is, it may not be done in a particularly gentle way as Paul asked. Here is where I need a gifted pastor or pastor-exhorter to come alongside. Together we can shepherd, encourage, or call out according to the need in the situation. Approaching others in tandem can allow for addressing the various body-building issues as they arise. Sometimes a loving presence without words is most needed in a crisis situation. There I seek out one of our dynamic mercy givers to provide that ministry of presence.

Since body-life parts were built for specific functions, such a range of gifted team builders allows for meeting many different needs in the body. We are set up to serve the common good, as we saw in 1 Corinthians 12:7. As an example, I know a group of house churches

who meet regularly to gather material gifts to take to the needy in the larger community. They meet the needs of the hurting, showing a strategic body-extending ministry where a range of team builders and other gifts are used.⁸ Such is the way of body life, where we “are standing firm in one spirit, with one mind striving side by side for the faith of the gospel” (Philippians 1:27, *ESV*).

The most common misconception about team builders, with their high value for relational unity and health, is to assume that such a priority will breed an inward focus. Because of the safety and togetherness, if separated from other body-building roles, such unity certainly can turn inward. Also, if a church or ministry is dominated by one or two team builders, it will regularly struggle to look outward. We realize the need for the whole body of Christ and the full range of gifts to be activated and involved. That is exactly why God designed body-life leadership to be covered with a multiplicity of equipping spiritual gifts.

Team building lived out in tandem with other body-building roles provides a safe place for believers to grow together. It is also the base from which evangelists, leaders, teachers, exhorters, and prophets can move out with the gospel. It also provides the most powerful environment—friendships and safety—for welcoming people to experience the love and grace of Jesus. As we will see when we look at the values-keeper role, we are given specific guidance on how to treat unbelievers as a part of Christian lifestyle. Peter Drypolcher, long-time friend and missionary in sub-Saharan Africa for more than fifteen years, talks about how it was the Philippians 2 love modeled by a number of Christians around him that drew him to Jesus Christ. What a window of constant opportunity we have to welcome seekers into our relationships! Consider a most interesting question regarding how we do evangelism: Should we invest most of our energies getting people into churches to hear the Word preached or encouraging them into groups where they can watch the Word acted out in relationships? How about a combination favoring the latter?

VALUES KEEPER: GUARDING THE BODY-BUILDING STANDARDS

Body-Building Role Definition	Role or Function	Motivation for Fulfilling This Role	Indicators of Function Fulfilled
<p><i>Systems Guide</i> Focuses on quality in the process, establishes guidelines, and provides real accountability. Equips most powerfully from alongside.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • organizing • protecting • maintaining • evaluating 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • conserving core values • encouraging values-based decisions • bringing quality and depth • providing wise counsel 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Word-based standards • biblical integrity • accountable systems • thorough, wise decisions

Semper Fi.

Latin for “always faithful,” *Semper Fidelis* has been the motto for the U.S. Marines for more than a century. It has become far more than a slogan. It represents a set of core values that drive the lifestyle and brotherhood that is the Marines. When you hear *Semper Fi* spoken, you know there is an impassioned commitment behind the words. Note the following words from the Marines website:

Latin for “always faithful,” *Semper Fidelis* became the Marine Corps motto in 1883. It guides Marines to remain faithful to the mission at hand, to each other, to the Corps and to country, no matter what. *Becoming a Marine is a transformation that cannot be undone, and Semper Fidelis is a permanent reminder of that. Once made, a Marine will forever live by the ethics and values of the Corps.* (emphasis added)⁹

Behind the actions, attitudes, and motivations of every marine is a set of values. These guiding principles set the standard for life together from the first day of training. Somehow, to this non-marine, there is an aura of invincibility about marines. The commitment of brotherhood for life is very real, and demands a great deal from every marine. But I have never heard a complaint from a marine for the commitment demanded or the

promises made. Not one. These standard bearers for authentic commitment and loyalty far beyond words give us the perfect introduction for *values keepers*. These are the standard bearers of the body of Christ.

If team builders represent the heart and passion for body-building unity among Christians, values keepers provide the framework and standards for that body life. You might call them the stewards of biblical Christian culture.¹⁰ Team builders shepherd the process of moving from “I to We,” while value keepers provide biblical guidelines and structure that support the organic system God has prepared for His body to function for the common good. They focus on quality of process, established guidelines, and resolute accountability. No body-building role is more important to the long-term spiritual health and multiplication of the organic starfish than the values keeper.

Having grown up in the northern plains of the United States, I have been a lifetime fan of the Minnesota Twins baseball team. I used to listen to their games on my little transistor radio, rooting passionately for my team. I have vivid memories of attending but two games in my youth. Our family drove five hundred miles to see my hero Harmon Killebrew and the team.

In the baseball world, the Twins baseball team is termed a “small-market” club. That is, they have a much smaller fan base and income than, say, a New York, Chicago, or Los Angeles team. No surprise, the smaller-market teams in baseball do not do as well in the win-loss column as the higher-income teams. Surprisingly, over the past ten years, the Minnesota Twins have been among the most successful teams in all of baseball. What has caused this?

I have talked to many Twins fans and baseball aficionados, trying to understand why this has happened. There appear to be some important values-driven reasons for the Twins’ success. The management of this baseball club has a long-haul strategy, with a consistent set of core values that drive the organization. They are relentless in remaining true to their values-focused strategy because they have so little margin for error financially.

Here are several important values that drive the club's success: First, the Twins know that they cannot afford to buy high-quality, veteran baseball players, and that they will lose some of their own best players to free agency. So they have an excellent farm system of teams at a number of levels. They groom their own players and eventually give them a chance to excel at the major league level before many teams would allow. Over many years, the Twins have had many highly skilled players who were groomed in their farm system and have made the team successful. The Twins are good baseball equipping releasers because of this.

Second, the Twins highly value longevity. They have had only three managers over the past thirty years. Each manager has coaches who work with the team, and the same guiding principle of longevity holds for them. A number of coaches have been with the Twins for ten or more years, an amazing statistic in baseball. There are more values in play beyond just these two, but suffice it to say that the Minnesota Twins would not be the successful smaller-market franchise they are today if they had not had values keepers communicating and maintaining a core set of principles.

In the spiritual arena, values keepers are essential to God's purposes. He has established a plan of action for reaching the world with the mystery of the gospel of Jesus Christ. As we touched on in previous chapters, we call this "God's economy," in part because of a phrase in Ephesians 3:1-3 (ESV):

For this reason I, Paul, a prisoner for Christ Jesus on behalf of you Gentiles—assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery [of the gospel] was made known to me by revelation, as I have written.

The phrase "the stewardship of God's grace" has also been translated as "the administration of God's grace." There is a system God has prepared to fulfill His purposes. Ephesians is about helping us grasp the essential role of gifting and relationships through that body-life process. I am pleased to remind you that the stewardship of God's grace is found

in His economy of relationships. Just before this passage in Ephesians 3, in 2:19-22, we find the framework God is using to fulfill His plans in the world. It is the household of God that He has prepared, the body of Christ being built together to become His dwelling place by His Spirit.

But what principles and values drive this systematic movement of God to reach the world with the gospel through His people? God has given us His Word, with principles to help us stay on track and fulfill His purposes. Values keepers are the guardians of those biblical principles, values, and priorities. They are the ones in body life whom God has prepared to provide biblical guidance on core beliefs and accountability checkpoints to keep us on track. Consider these spiritual gifts God has designed to fulfill the values-keeping role in body-building:

- *Teacher*—to provide biblical understanding of God’s principles and wisdom
- *Prophet*—to keep biblical truth on track by calling people to action regarding truth
- *Word of wisdom*—to protect the integrity of the Word with wise counsel, moving knowledge to action
- *Administration*—to bring quality, order, and organization to body-life processes
- *Discernment of spirits*—to discern values or actions as from God or Satan

These values keepers conserve the core principles from the Word. They encourage values-based decisions, and bring quality, structure, and depth to plans, ministry systems, and critical decisions. I rejoice in these body-life sentinels God has raised up to give guidance from the Word to the body. They offer principled steps we can take to stay on track with His purposes. He provides supernatural power for organizing people and systems to help us remember and enact what He has shown us in His economy of relationships.

As Abraham Lincoln and his talented but cantankerous cabinet led the United States through one of its most traumatic seasons, staying on a principled course was imperative for the president. Doris Kearns Goodwin explained, “Mr. Lincoln’s perilous task had been to carry a rather shaky raft through the rapids . . . but cautiously to assure himself with his setting pole where the main current was, and keep steadily to that.”¹¹ In other words, his values-keeping leadership, with a fully functioning team all around him and running on all cylinders, was central to what happened in the country. Peter put a spiritual frame on such conviction lived out in relationships in 1 Peter 1:22 (ESV): “Having purified your souls by your obedience to the truth for a sincere brotherly love, love one another earnestly from a pure heart.” Such are the principles of body-building values keepers as they hold to course direction by the Word of God.

We have no option but to keep visibly in front of us the biblical values that fix our attention on Jesus’ purposes for His body. We are to unflinchingly hold to them as God continues to move among us.

BODY-BUILDING CORE VALUES

Values keeping for believers is the backbone to our body life together, and our witness to the world. What are some of the core values that drive this Spirit-led movement of God from the Word and through His people?

One fundamental, driving value among us is the call to the lordship of Jesus Christ in all areas of our lives. Scott Rodin eloquently stated the issue: “Before it is about vision casting or risk-taking or motivating others or building teams or communicating or strategic planning or public speaking, it is about Lordship. Where Jesus is singularly and absolutely lord of our life, we will seek to be like him and him only.”¹² We are each one a member of His body, with Jesus as the head. No principle is more foundational in our lives as Christians. As Jesus described,

“Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost?” (Luke 14:27-28, ESV). Daily we are to seek Him first and release all life controls to Him.

As we consider our body-building and body-extending lifestyle among those whom God has given each of us, this is the appropriate principle with which to start, praying, *Lord Jesus, have Your way on our wall of relationships. Give wisdom and creativity as we steward those whom You have placed around us, both believers and seekers. Reveal Your purposes and the body-building roles among us as we set out to take the next steps together.*

Another critical body-building set of values that dominates the New Testament Church is the “household code.” Though we have referred to these principles earlier, they are among the most strategic passages that reveal how we are to act as the body of Christ toward one another and unbelievers. In Christ, these values show how we are to act in our relationships. Under this code, new relational guidelines dominate the way we treat each other in and beyond our fellowship. Clear guidance is given to husbands and wives in their relationship,¹³ as well as principles for parents and children.¹⁴ Slaves and masters are also given specific exhortation on how to act.¹⁵ And, because of our body-extending call to be witnesses, direction is given for seasoned conversation to share your hope in Christ.¹⁶ To be in Christ as a part of His body is to portray a clear-cut set of biblical values to all. Values dominate, and our values keepers provide needed structure and accountability for the body-building Church.

Beyond these behavioral guidelines that affect every part of the believer’s daily life, there are many more biblical principles for living healthy, forgiving, honest, and fruit-of-the-Spirit-filled relationships. Since God lives among His people, our relationships manifest His love. While we are to steward our dynamic body-life gifts, the matching call to steward relationships is encouraged in more than a dozen passages in the New Testament. Ministry partner Stacy Rinehart loves to call these the “one another” passages. These are the responsibilities God has given

to each of us in the body. God's economy, the administration of His grace, is revealed through these attitudes, actions, and values toward one another. It is the ground floor of Jesus' love for the world.

To illustrate this, here are a few Scripture passages for your reference. After the spiritual-gifts passage in Ephesians 4 and before the household-code guidance in chapter 5, Paul exhorted very specifically on life together in 4:17-32. Peter inserted the same body-life principles between household behavior and using one's gifts in 1 Peter 3:8-17 and 4:1-9. Paul encouraged distinctive body-life care in Philippians 2:1-11 and helpful community-worship guidance in Colossians 3:12-17. On and on it goes.

BODY-BUILDING VALUE SETS

As I have trained the body of Christ in various cross-cultural settings in many countries, certain body-life values have risen up as priorities in almost every setting. During hours spent equipping and releasing believers, ministry teams, organizations, and leaders, these issues came up time and time again. I offer you two companion sets of three foundational principles that I have gleaned through this process. These are imperative for sharing in any ministry setting where body-building becomes a primary process. They are essential for healthy growth.

The first I call the "One Set." If you want to enable Christians to discover and use their spiritual gifts as a means to mobilize your house church, team, group, or overall ministry, these three core values are foundational for every person who wants to discover and steward his place in body life. Without these as foundational values, the organics will undoubtedly break down into disunity. As you seek your fit in body-building and body-extending, realize first that God calls you to be:

1. *One submitted*—the willingness to follow your spiritual leadership is not optional. It is a key part of how we learn obedience to the Father in body life.

2. *One among*—you are one among, designed to fit in and build the body of Christ by playing your unique, essential part. You are not a “superstar” individual, destined for stardom above others, or a “sad sack” lone ranger who claims to have no place to fit.
3. *One who serves*—the call to body life is one of serving others as a part of finding your own place. A servant heart and attitude frees you to be like Jesus and serve rather than waiting to be served. Entitled, self-serving attitudes are not helpful.

Communicating these values regularly and forthrightly on teams and in ministries will provide guidance for every Christian on issues that will *always* arise. When the Spirit begins to move, many will want to live out body life together. These are essential We-principles as a starting point for understanding one’s place in the body.

Following the “One Set” values, our second set of foundational principles dials in on our unity in life together. Unity is *the* major target of the Evil One. I hope the reasons will be clear for you after reading this book. Christians are more powerful in body-life ministry because the body of Jesus literally fills out and plays so many dynamic roles in building and extending itself in love. They are encouraged, built up, and matured with others when they move from “I to We.” Satan much prefers that we simply attempt to stand alone.

Rather than sharing with you the three main ways the Evil One seeks to break community, let us approach those challenges from three positive angles. I call this the “Body Life Design Team” set. In these four words are three core principles that define what moving from “I to We” means for every believer for whom Jesus died. May these values free you to greater joy, purpose, and stewardship.

First, “Body Life” means that you are absolutely significant in Christ. It is not what you do for God that is important, the works you do or the roles you play. No, “Body Life” means that right now, at this very moment, you are fully and completely significant in Christ because of

the cross of Jesus. You are fully accepted, entirely forgiven, and fully released as a child of God. You fit and you are loved.



“Design” means that you also have a unique part to play in body life. Separate from finding your ultimate significance at the cross is the fact that God has wired you to play your unique part in body-building and body-extending. He has built you to be just who He wants you to be.

Do not confuse your significance with your role. Your worth and value at the cross of Jesus is settled. Period. No job, position, popularity, perceived success, or other person can make you any more significant than you already are in Christ. Nothing you can do or say or write or speak will increase your value in the Kingdom. Your role fit, on the other hand, is a part of your God-design and something that you steward as a part of the body. What a privilege to play your special part in one of the body-building roles!

“Team” means that you choose unity. Unity among believers in

the body of Christ is not something that happens accidentally. It is a choice that each of us makes. It is a values decision that allows grace to dominate our relationships. It chooses forgiveness to be an active, ongoing part of daily life. Team means acceptance to include working with people you love but may never like. It is a decision you make again and again in the seasons of life. Jesus died so that we might discover the freedom of choosing to work for—and bear the great blessings of—unity.

Unity can be very difficult when we have to make hard relationship choices for the sake of unity. Captain Shackleton's hardest decision came as his crew found safe haven on the coast and could entertain the hope that they might actually live through their Antarctic ordeal. They threw together a makeshift cover on a small craft that would take four of them to safety across precarious eighty-foot swells in the Southern Ocean to South Georgia Island. Who would Shackleton take? His choices, for the sake of the whole crew, were the bully, the man who most created discontent among the crew, and another who was less than a team player. He put his own favorites aside, taking with him those most likely to thwart unity among the twenty-four who remained. They made the treacherous trip, and returned for their crew.¹⁷ Unity is a choice. Will you choose it?

These three principles start the “I to We” paradigm shift. Often, in discussion, I will come back to these principles. In training, they lay a foundation proving the ground is level at the foot of the cross. As the body of Christ, when we embrace the Body Life Design Team principles at a heart level, the result is dynamic, healthy, and deepening relationships.

SUMMARY

God has placed relationships at the center of His economy. We are beginning to understand that unity in the body of Christ is at the heart of His purposes for reaching the world. Because of this, God has prepared team builders who have particular spiritual gifts that build and strengthen the body of Christ. They see unity and shared ministry as the heart of

God's strategy. First Corinthians 12 and 13 give one example of how even powerful spiritual gifts lose their value when exercised without love.

God also raised up values keepers to provide biblical guidelines and structure that support this organic system of believers. They help us stay on track and be accountable to live out healthy, life-giving relationships in God's household. We have so many biblical values that give counsel to living out this life together, as seen through the One Set and Body Life Design Team principles.

Lord, we praise You for making each of us significant in Christ and then for designing us just as You want each of us to be. Help us to willfully choose to build unity of body, even as we grow and mature with other believers as the foundation for Kingdom body-building and body-extending.

APPLICATION STEPS

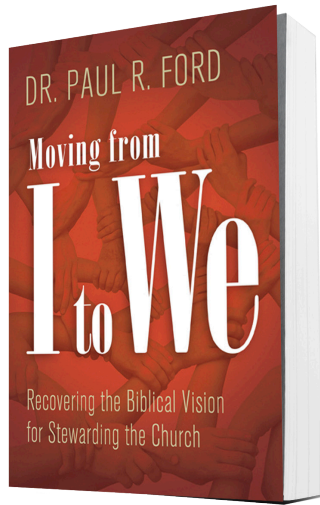
1. Team builders and values keepers have huge value for the fit of individuals in the body of Christ and in the expanding of the body of Christ. Spend time creating a chart of what the outward focus (growth aspects) functions and inward focus (unity/fit aspects) functions are for each.
2. Study the characteristics of each team builder and values keeper. Create a small ministry project, and act out how each may approach the situation uniquely. Debrief the experience, understanding participants' unique contributions.
3. Divide into groups of three or four. Take five minutes and create hand motions or actions for the One Set principles. Share with the group, and decide what you feel are the strongest. If you feel daring, take pictures or record them and then send them to me at paul.ford@crmlleaders.org.
4. Reflect on the Body Life Design Team principles. With appropriate transparency, share with the group which of these is most significant to you and why. Pray for each other.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. “The number one reason people do not want to become Christians is Christians.” Reflecting on the content of this chapter, what does this mean to you?
2. The team builder and values keeper are focused on unity. How do these safeguard unity? What role does love play in unity?
3. Which part of the One Set (One submitted, One among, One who serves) is most natural for you? Which one is most challenging?
4. How do you understand the ideas of body life (significance) and design (unique role) in the body of Christ? Why are they foundational for team unity?

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14. See Ephesians 6:1-4; Colossians 3:20-21.
15. See Ephesians 6:6-9; Colossians 3:22-4:1; 1 Peter 2:18-20.
16. See Colossians 4:18; 1 Peter 3:15.
17. Perkins, 108.



In *Moving from I to We*, Dr. Paul Ford will guide your discovery and understanding of this countercultural paradigm for effective, God-honoring leadership that releases everyone to minister as God has gifted and designed them to, helping you see leadership through the lens of Scripture as never before.

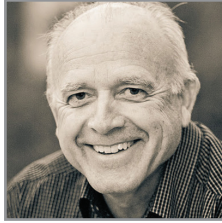
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GROWING KINGDOM CHARACTER

GROWING KINGDOM CHARACTER IS about intentional character development for leadership that lasts. Most leaders fail at the pinnacle of their influence, not because of a lack of leadership skills but rather due to character flaws. It's character—not years of experience—that counts for lasting leadership impact. Drawing from more than thirty years of discipling and mentoring emerging leaders, author Tom Yeakley has written this hands-on tool to equip current leaders, especially young leaders, to intentionally develop positive character traits for sustainable leadership influence. In chapter 9, "Teachability: Becoming a Lifelong Learner," Yeakley emphasizes the positive attitudes and principles for learning, as well as the dangers of becoming a plateaued leader.



TOM YEAKLEY has been involved in coaching and developing leaders for more than thirty years with The Navigators. He and his wife, Dana, are active in mentoring emerging leaders one on one, speaking at conferences, and developing leaders both in the United States and internationally. The Yeakleys have been on staff with The Navigators since 1978. They have three married children.

CHAPTER NINE

Teachability: Becoming a Lifelong Learner

*Personally I am always ready to learn,
although I do not always like being taught.*

WINSTON CHURCHILL

*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle
and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.*

For my yoke is easy and my burden is light.

MATTHEW 11:29-30, NIV

John Wesley averaged three sermons a day for fifty-four years, preaching all told more than 44,000 times. In doing this he traveled by horseback and carriage more than 200,000 miles, or about 5,000 miles a year.

His published works include a four-volume commentary on the whole Bible; a dictionary of the English language; a five-volume work on natural philosophy; a four-volume work on church history; histories of England and Rome; grammars on the Hebrew, Latin, Greek, French, and English languages; three works on medicine; six volumes of church

music; and seven volumes of sermons and controversial papers. He also edited a library of fifty volumes known as *The Christian Library*.

He arose daily at four o'clock in the morning and worked solidly through to ten o'clock at night, allowing brief periods for meals. In the midst of all this work he declared, "I have more hours of private retirement than any man in England."

At age eighty-three, he was piqued to discover that he could not write more than fifteen hours a day without hurting his eyes; at the age of eighty-six he was ashamed to admit that he could not preach more than twice a day. In his eighty-sixth year, he preached to almost every shire in England and Wales and often rode thirty to fifty miles a day.¹

John Wesley was a learner, and his pursuit of Christ, demonstrated in his zeal, overflowed in a lifetime of ministry to others. It was his teachability that enabled him to speak, write, counsel, lead, and influence so many, for as he learned, he passed on to others around him what he discovered. Dr. Howard Hendricks recounted this same type of zeal for learning, telling of a professor who was always up early studying. When asked why he was so zealous in his pursuit of knowledge, he replied, "I would rather have my students drink from a flowing stream than a stagnant pool."²

The Greek New Testament word *mathetes* means "disciple" or, more literally, "a learner." Disciples are those who follow another's teaching. But a Kingdom disciple is more than a pupil; a Kingdom disciple is an adherent. Thus, Kingdom disciples are spoken of as imitators of their Teacher.³ They put into practice what is taught and modeled by their Teacher (mentor).

It is essential that disciples demonstrate teachability and a pursuit of learning all their lives. Leaders in particular must model these qualities for those they are influencing. Knowing that they lead and minister out of an overflow of who they are, leaders must continually be in pursuit of personal growth and learning opportunities from which they will be able to serve others. Leaders are learners!

ATTITUDES OF A LEARNER

There are several essential attitudes to growing in our walk with the Lord and our ability to lead effectively. The key attitude is teachability. It would seem that all who desire to mature would inherently possess this attitude, but the reality is far different. Some want to learn but don't want to be taught. Other stunted learners show a selective teachability to certain sources but not to others. If leaders are to reach their potential, they must demonstrate teachability to all sources of input, help, and correction that the Lord may bring into their life. Selective teachability limits a leader's development.

A second attitude that enables learning is a humble spirit. Humility allows us to acknowledge that we don't know certain things, don't have all the answers and need help from others, or are lacking in certain areas and need to grow. Humility allows emerging leaders to submit themselves to the tutoring and coaching of others. A humble attitude readily admits personal mistakes and seeks to learn from them.

A third key attitude for learners is a willingness to take initiative in the pursuit of learning and personal development. Many emerging leaders sit passively, waiting for others to develop them, but never take the responsibility or initiative to develop themselves. They see it as their organization's responsibility to ensure that they reach their potential, not their own. While it is true that our leaders and organizations should place a priority on leader development, this should never be an excuse for stunted growth. We must all seek opportunities to grow and develop in our leadership, viewing what organizational help we receive as supplementary, not rudimentary. No one is as interested in our personal development as we are!

A willingness to change is also important if leaders are to see growth and maturity. Again, this may seem elementary, but it is surprising how many people become stuck in their leadership development. We can become comfortable with our ways and skills, knowing that we've reached a certain proficiency but in reality being far from what we could be if we maximized

our potential. We know certain things work; we've seen them work, so why change now? But we fail to recognize that our leadership environment is changing all the time. This constant change forces us to regularly reevaluate our systems and methodology or we will rapidly find ourselves marginalized and irrelevant. This growth should force personal evaluation for what type of leadership is currently needed given the changing situation.

PRINCIPLES OF LEARNING

Focusing our learning on principles rather than methods will enable us to better adapt to change. But the emphasis on methodology is prominent in our culture. We Americans are pragmatic and want to see principles in action. All one has to do is visit the local bookstore to see the litany of how-to books directed at the development of skills and the relative few titles that focus on principles. If we direct our learning to methods, we will experience some success and satisfaction. The trouble with all methods, however, is that they work only for a period of time or in particular situations. Once the situation or times change, we find our methods have become obsolete.

Principle-centered learning not only learns the current methods but also seeks to understand the principles behind the methods. This type of learning answers the questions, Why is this method effective? and, What basic or universal principles are demonstrated here? This type of learning is especially helpful for leaders who will be working cross-culturally. Methods that work in our home culture will often not be effective in a new culture, but if we understand the principles behind the methods we can learn the new culture and then devise new methods that will be relevant to the different situation.

Notice what Moses asked God to teach him:

Moses said to the LORD, "You have been telling me, 'Lead these people,' but you have not let me know whom you will send

with me. You have said, ‘I know you by name and you have found favor with me.’ If you are pleased with me, teach me your ways so I may know you and continue to find favor with you. Remember that this nation is your people.” The LORD replied, “My Presence will go with you, and I will give you rest.” (Exodus 33:12-14, NIV)

Moses asked God to teach him the ways of God, being keenly aware that he needed help in leading the nation of Israel. The ways of God are the principles and character of God that determine His actions. God promised to help Moses by being with him as he went about his leadership responsibilities, implying that He would guide and direct Moses in his leadership. As we live out our leadership, we, too, can ask for God’s help and count on Him to go with us, teaching us His ways and helping us in our influence.

Many young leaders are keenly aware of their weaknesses and therefore focus their learning on overcoming these shortcomings, but this is a mistake. While we all need to reach a certain level of competency and proficiency in basic leadership knowledge and skills, it is a great mistake to concentrate only on eliminating our weaknesses. Instead, to expand our influence as leaders, we must direct our development toward maximizing our strengths. If we have an obvious weakness, a “fatal flaw” that will sink our leadership, then we most certainly must give attention to this and seek to improve in this area. But no one can be great in all areas of leadership. No one leader has been given all the gifts necessary to meet all the demands of an organization. That is why leaders need leadership teams composed of individuals with varied strengths. We defer to others on our team in the areas of their strengths, allowing them to influence and lead out of their giftedness. Someone has summarized it this way: “Maximize and operate in your strengths, and staff to your weaknesses.”

The principle of concentration is also a key for learning. Many young leaders are eager to learn everything about everything. Thus they

dilute the impact of their personal development because they spread themselves out rather than concentrate on a few areas at a time. It is helpful to set yearly development goals or identify areas of focused growth and learning and then create plans that can help you accomplish these objectives. Pray for wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and discernment in these areas. Concentrate your reading in these areas, completing several books on a given subject rather than just one. Do extensive Bible study on these topics, memorize Scripture related to the subjects, and look for opportunities to apply what you're learning immediately to life situations.

J. O. Sanders recounted an experience as a young man that marked him for life. The aged Bible scholar Graham Scroggie was visiting his home when Sanders, an adolescent, was in a stage of eager pursuit of learning. After the family meal, Sanders took Scroggie to his room and showed him his growing collection of books on a great variety of subjects. He boasted that he had read all of them cover to cover. After going on for some time, he paused in his boasting and waited for a reply. Scroggie placed his hand on the young man's shoulder and exhorted him, "Don't sacrifice depth for area!"⁴

EXPERIENCE IS NOT THE BEST TEACHER

Some have said that experience is the best teacher. But this is incomplete, for one can simply repeat the past, especially past mistakes, without making any progress or improvement. A better summary is this: "Evaluated experience is the best teacher."⁵ Just because we experience something does not mean we are the better for it. There is no guarantee that we will learn and grow from any experience we've had. We need to reflect on and evaluate our experiences, drawing out principles that can be applied in future situations.

We all learn from life's experiences, but some maximize and accelerate this learning by obtaining feedback and evaluation. It is difficult to

be objective about our own experiences, and we all need wise counselors and mentors, those who love us and want to help us grow, to enable us to see ourselves more objectively. They can speak truth to us in ways that we hear because we trust them and know they love us and want God's best for us. They can even say some hard things, knowing we will listen and apply these lessons to future similar situations, for we want to be all we can be for Christ's sake.

While no one likes to experience failure, it is our failures that often teach us much more than our successes. It is through the crisis of failure that we stop and reflect. We are forced to admit our shortcomings and weaknesses. We have the opportunity to humble ourselves and receive God's grace to try again. Peter reminds us, "All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, 'God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble'" (1 Peter 5:5, NIV). God's grace enables us to profit from our failures. A wise pastor once told me, "Your successes will seldom be a source of help for others. It is your failures that they will most identify with and in them find hope for themselves." He was right!

LEARNING FROM THE EXPERIENCES OF OTHERS

We don't have to limit ourselves to learning from our own experiences; we can also learn from the experiences of others. It was the German chancellor Otto von Bismarck who said, "Only a fool learns from experience: I learn from the experience of others."⁶ We can learn from the successes and the failures of those who have gone before us, thus expediting our own development time.

J. O. Sanders said, "Leaders are readers."⁷ By reading history, biographies, and books from other leaders, inexperienced leaders can avoid many pitfalls. We can't avoid all mistakes, but we can certainly reduce their number by paying attention to what other leaders have already done. Developing the habit of regularly reading good books (not just those that are currently popular) pertaining to the subject of leadership

can serve us well. Several years ago I set a personal goal to read two books a month. I've got a couple of shelves in my office that contain my to-be-read titles, and I'm always on the lookout for additional titles that will help me grow as a leader. Besides the Bible, I've personally been influenced most by the biographies of other leaders—both spiritual and secular.

Teachability can also be developed through conversation with those the Lord brings into our lives. All people have an area of expertise or interest that we don't have. We can always learn something from them that will be beneficial if we seek it. It's our privilege to discover what that strength is and learn from them. Interacting with others who serve the public (for example, repair technicians, restaurant personnel, flight attendants, sales personnel, and so on) and asking them questions about what they have learned about dealing with people can be most enlightening. We simply position ourselves as learners, drawing out from them the wisdom and knowledge they've gained from their own experiences. It's amazing to see people warm to the subject when they sense that we really do want them to teach us what they know!

BOOKS, MORE BOOKS, AND THE BOOK

The writer of Ecclesiastes tells us, “Of making many books there is no end, and much study wearies the body” (12:12, NIV). A casual perusal of any bookstore shows that the topic of leadership is hot and there are a multitude of titles on every conceivable aspect of leadership. These books draw from business, military, political, athletic, and even spiritual models of leadership. They can be helpful for a leader's development (hopefully this book falls in the category), but for Kingdom leaders, there is one book that should supersede all others in our study—the Bible.

Many emerging spiritual leaders are looking to models of leadership (especially business models) for principles other than those found in the Bible. Now, there is nothing wrong with learning from these models, but

we must first have studied the Scriptures on these subjects. Having come to our own conclusions and convictions from personal Bible study, we now have a grid from which to evaluate any principles and methods suggested by other leadership models. Sadly, many do not take the time or make the effort to look to the Bible first. Instead, they readily adopt leadership principles and practices from other disciplines without discerning first if they align with or contradict God's Word. They read the latest popular leadership book and recommend and teach its principles to others without first evaluating it in light of scriptural truth. Most do so out of ignorance rather than intent, but the results can be devastating either way.

For young leaders, it is essential to build a solid biblical understanding of principles related to leadership character and practice. Yes, it can be helpful to read books related to various leadership models, but we need to do so with biblical glasses. That is, we evaluate the author's teaching in light of the truth of the Scriptures, accepting the principles in alignment and rejecting those that disagree.

At times our study of the Scriptures should focus on specific topics or character studies of key biblical leaders, as opposed to studying the books of the Bible. Searching the Scriptures for understanding on a given topic will help build convictions. Certain books, such as Daniel, Nehemiah, or the Gospels, will certainly prove helpful for leaders when studied in their entirety. And character studies, such as the life of Moses, David, or Paul, will include multiple Bible books and prove very profitable. This does not mean that we neglect the study of the entire Bible or avoid certain books; rather the issue is one of concentration.

Instead of trying to master the entire Bible, Dr. Bobby Clinton, leadership professor at Fuller Seminary, has encouraged leaders to develop what he calls a "core set."⁸ This is a collection of Bible books, passages, or topics that help focus our personal study for maximizing growth and ministry contribution. This core set might include whole Bible books, key Bible passages (for example, the Sermon on the Mount), characters (for example, Deborah or David), or topics

(for example, world vision or developing leaders) that leaders can seek to master during their lifetime. We study and reread these areas and build deep life messages from which we minister and influence others.

Someone has said, “You are responsible for the depth of your message, and God is responsible for the breadth of your ministry.” The breadth of our influence determines the number of books or topics in our core set. The more our responsibility and influence grows, the more we need in our core set. Foundational books recommended for all would be a Gospel (how Jesus developed leaders), Romans (the gospel), and Ephesians (the body of Christ). In addition, whatever Bible books, characters, passages, or topics you frequently turn to for personal encouragement, comfort, and challenge should be included in your core set. I have about twenty Bible books, characters, and topics in my personal core set.

We must study the Bible to find answers to the current leadership issues of our day. For example, what does the Bible say about leaders who have a moral failure? Should they be restored to leadership? What does the Bible say about women in leadership roles? What does the Bible say about a leader’s character? We need to learn to seek answers from the Bible to these important questions, with an eye toward application, not just to add to our knowledge. The Bible was given to change our leadership as well as our lives as we apply what we learn to our responsibilities.

LEARNING FROM A MENTOR

As we discussed in an earlier chapter, another wonderful way to demonstrate humble teachability is to seek out a mentor, one who can invest his or her life in us and help develop us as followers of Christ and Kingdom leaders. In our twenties and early thirties most of us need “whole life” mentors. That is, we need help in many areas of life and ministry. Thus, we should look for individuals who are further along in their maturity and life experience and can help us in the areas of personal growth, family, and leadership.

Prayerfully consider who God has placed in your life to help develop you. Take the initiative in asking them for help. Many potential mentors may initially feel embarrassed by your request for help, or they may feel inadequate to teach you. You can overcome this reticence by helping to clarify your expectations, setting a time limit for how long you will meet together, and explaining that it is your intention to draw out what God has taught them. It may prove helpful to create an outline of topics you will discuss so that your mentor will have ample time to prepare something before meeting with you, if they so desire. As your friendship develops, your times together will no doubt expand to a variety of areas beyond what was planned.

As we grow older and more mature in Christ, we will want to become more selective in those we ask for coaching and mentoring help. By our mid- to late-thirties we should begin to clearly understand our God-given design (spiritual gifting, talents) and strengths. Seeking specific help in maximizing these areas now becomes a priority. We'll want to seek out those who have similar strengths and pursue them for help, remembering that we want to maximize our strengths rather than just work on our weaknesses.

As a young staff person with The Navigators, I was taught to seek personal time with other leaders whenever possible. So, when attending meetings, conferences, and seminars or whenever I was exposed to other leaders, I made it a habit to seek them out early and arrange a meal or some individual time with them. I came with questions regarding areas of personal need or pertaining to their strengths, and I always took notes for future reflection. These times have been very influential in my personal development as a man of God and as a leader.

Making special trips to visit other leaders in order to learn from them can also be invaluable in our development. If access to these people is difficult (many of them have very full schedules), ask for help in arranging an introduction. I've asked friends who know busy leaders to help get me an introduction for the purpose of learning from them. They've

been more than happy to accommodate my request, and I've been the beneficiary of many a leader's wise counsel. I've also taken others with me on these special trips, thus doubling the enjoyment!

LEADERS WHO ARE BLOCKED LEARNERS

Early in their leadership careers it seems as if all leaders are about the same regarding knowledge and experience, with little to differentiate them. But as they go on in life, those who continue to pursue personal growth as learners begin to separate themselves from those who don't. Many become plateaued as learners; having pursued development in their twenties, they are now busy with the day-to-day duties of leadership and no longer seek opportunities for growth. They have reached a comfortable level of maturity and leadership competency and now are simply repeating what they've learned. By their forties we can easily differentiate those leaders who have cultivated the habit of learning, for they are constantly leading from an overflow of new ideas and lessons that bless those around them.

Some people are teachable only by select sources. Some men have a difficult time learning from women. Some older people find it challenging to learn from someone who is younger. Some people don't want to learn from leaders in certain organizations. Married individuals can find it difficult to learn from their spouse. The root of this lack of teachability is pride. Pride cancels teachability. A truly teachable person can't be selectively teachable! We must be willing and able to learn from all those whom God places in our lives for our development. People don't enjoy being with someone who exudes a prideful attitude, especially a leader. Emerging leaders will move away from this type of person, looking to others for help and development.

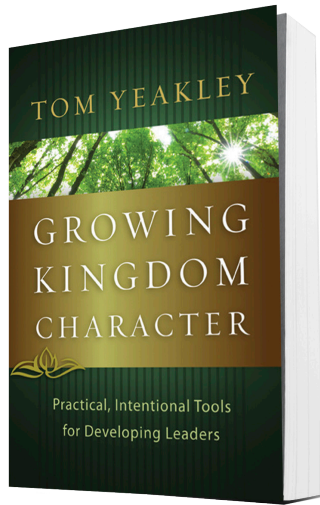
Plateaued leaders do not seek opportunities to learn from others. They like to do most of the talking in conversations, sharing their own "wisdom" but becoming impatient when others are speaking. Often

their minds run ahead to their next comment, rather than focusing on what the other is sharing. They rarely ask a question and when they do, they often answer it themselves. As you might expect they attend conferences or seminars only when they are doing the teaching. They rarely read books or seek out other leaders for counsel and help. Their personal Bible study is usually in preparation for some ministry opportunity rather than for individual growth. They are busy leading, but if they were honest with themselves, they would acknowledge that they are simply repeating leadership patterns they learned many years before.

You see, unteachable leaders are stuck, and we cannot afford to be stuck with them because the stakes in Kingdom leadership are too high. It quickly becomes obvious that leaders are learners who understand, as Solomon did, that being instructed throughout life is critical: “Wisdom is supreme; therefore get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding” (Proverbs 4:7, NIV). The character development plan for this chapter is designed to encourage you in this very important supporting quality.

ENDNOTES

1. Paul Lee Tan, *Encyclopedia of 7700 Illustrations* (Rockville, MD: Assurance Publishers, 1985), 1668.
2. Dr. Howard Hendricks, message heard by author in the late 1970s.
3. W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, vol. 3 (Old Tappan, NJ: Revell, 1966), 316.
4. J. O. Sanders, conversation with author, 1986.
5. Paul Stanley has often reminded the author about the importance of helping leaders evaluate their leadership experience in order to develop them as leaders.
6. Otto von Bismarck, quoted in Tony Geraghty, *Inside the SAS* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), 177.
7. Sanders.
8. Dr. J. Robert Clinton, conversation with author, 1995.



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