

Lethal Leadership

A Presentation to Encourage Leadership Growth

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Suggested Manuscript



The title of today's message is Lethal Leadership. Now I know that title may stump you at first. What does he mean, lethal leadership?



Does he mean deadly leadership? Leadership that kills everyone? Kind of a Jim Jones/David Koresh type of leadership? No, actually lethal leadership means accurate, on target leadership that will blast away all obstacles in order to lead people to their goal.



The church, probably more than any other institution in the world needs leadership. To try to get a group of people to give one tenth of their money, one seventh of their time in order to persuade unchurched people who don't want to listen to join a church they've never heard of--now, that takes leadership!



To make matters even worse, even some of the saints provide resistance to leadership. "We've never ever done it that way before."



And there never seems to be enough money to do what we are called to do. By the time the tithe goes to the conference, the school subsidy goes to the school, the utilities are all paid, there is very little left actually for our primary mission.



And then there are flaky people. Nominating Committee spends countless hours recruiting people to office and then it seems that many of the volunteers enjoy the title of their office but forget that there is actually work involved. When their time for duty comes they are missing in action.



And the final challenge is the unchurched themselves. The population is so large and our church is so small. How are we possibly going to reach everyone with the gospel?



Have you ever asked those questions before? If so, you know in your heart that you are ready for leadership—accurate, on target leadership that will blast away all obstacles in order to lead us to our goal.



Why do people throw the easy life away to jump into this warfare called leadership? I guess it has to do with the possible pay off—if our church does its job it will really make a difference in this world. And you know if our work is successful that many people will come to know Jesus Christ because of our hard labor—people not just that we will personally introduce to the Lord, but for years to come, as long as our church is healthy it will continue to bring new people to the Lord. What a dream! What a legacy. I can't think of any more significant occupation on the face of the earth that would make a bigger contribution to humanity and to the kingdom of God than church leadership. That's the dream. That's what drives us. And as long as we keep that dream in front of our face we will be empowered to wake up in the morning and get back into battle.



So today we're going to talk about leadership. What is leadership? Here's some definitions of leadership that I have come across over the years:

Leadership is not something you do to people. It's something you do with people. (Ken Blanchard)



Leadership is the capacity to bring people together in the accomplishment of common goals.



Leaders must be able to inspire and challenge those whom they serve.



People have tried quantifying leadership, studying the psychology of leadership, personality profile and everything else to see if they could boil it down to some kind of a formula that could be examined, and hopefully recognized early and perhaps even cloned or replicated. Its not that easy.



First, I don't think that there is any one kind of personality type that is necessarily a leader. There are brilliant leaders who are outgoing and others who are introverted. Some leaders are charismatic and others who are frankly quite boring.



There are tall leaders, and there are short leaders; fat leaders and skinny leaders. There are outspoken leaders, quiet leaders.



In the church There are effective leaders who are conservative and those who are liberal. There are leaders who are highly educated and those who are unscholarly.



Those factors haven't really been any real indicators of leadership. In my opinion the real mark of leadership is followership. If people are following, then there is leadership.

A young college student learned the simplicity of this leadership definition when he led a group of campers up Job's peak in the High Sierras of California. The counselor was used to running up peaks by himself. This was the first time he had a group of earliteens with him. As usual this young man charged the mountain. A couple of the campers stayed up with him for about half a mile and then began to fade. He raced on.



Two hours went by and the leader made it to a lookout on the mountain. The view was spectacular.



He stopped to catch his breath and realized that it was dead quiet. He looked back and there was absolutely no one behind him. He had left the campers way back by the cars, and a few tired hikers strewn all over the mountain side.



On that lookout on the side of Job's Peak the young man learned an important lesson in leadership. Climbing a mountain by yourself is not considered leadership. He turned back from the summit deeply disappointed. On the way down he began seeing campers here and there, scattered all over the mountain. It was a quiet trip back to camp. The would be leader was disappointed because he had not made the summit. And the campers were still trying to figure out why their counselor left them to wander about on the side of a mountain for three hours.



The best way to tell if we are a leader is to turn around and see if anyone is following. If we are too far out in front, then we're not leaders we're simply explorers. If we're too far back in the pack we're not a leader we're a babysitter. The tension is trying to pick our pace. We will always leave some people behind. Not everyone will follow. But we need to bring most of our core people with us.



Leaders have five characteristics that are always active in leadership. The word grace should be behind every leader and the letters of the word grace actually serve very well as an acrostic of the five traits of leadership.



G stands for goal. Perhaps the most important quality of a leader is that he and his followers see a vision of where they want to go.



Proverbs 29:18 says that where there is no vision, the people perish.



The singular trait that sets leaders apart is this thing called vision. This vision is so compelling that it drives people to do things that they wouldn't ordinarily do. In fact in the business environment now, motivational gurus are starting to borrow the language of religion to describe their business environment. Warren Bennis describes his ideal business group:

Great Groups think they are on a mission from God. Leaders of Great Groups understand the power of rhetoric. They recruit people for crusades, not jobs.



If the secular business world feels so strongly about mission that they are on a mission from God, what does that say to us who really are on a mission from God? Vision empowers. Vision motivates. Vision overcomes obstacles. Vision gives direction. Do we have vision? Henry Ford, one of the great visionaries of this century said: *If you think you can't, you're right. And if you think you can, you're right.*



Do we have vision? If I were to ask you to write down your vision for our church could you articulate in a compelling way? In your mind's eye can you see into the future? Can you imagine what it is going to be like when your vision is complete?



I'm fascinated by the story of Florence Chadwick who was the first women to swim the English Channel in both directions. Now, at age 34, her goal was to become the first woman to swim from Catalina Island to the California coast.

On that fourth of July morning in 1952, the shark infested sea was like an ice bath and the fog was so dense she could hardly see her support boats. Against the frigid grip of the sea, she struggled on—hour after hour. But all she could see was fog. With only a half mile to go, she asked to be pulled out.

Still thawing her chilled body several hours later, she told a reporter, “Look I’m not excusing myself, but if I could have seen land I might have made it.” It was not fatigue or even the cold water that defeated her. It was the fog. She was unable to see her goal.

Two months later, she tried again. This time, despite the same dense fog, she swam with her faith intact and her goal clearly pictured in her mind. She knew that somewhere behind that fog was land and this time she made it! Florence Chadwick became the first woman to swim the Catalina Channel, eclipsing the men’s record by two hours!



Where there is a genuine vision, people excel and learn, not because they are told to, but because they want to.



History has demonstrated that the most notable winners usually encountered heart breaking obstacles before they triumphed. They won because they refused to become discouraged by their defeats.



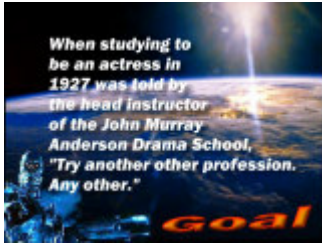
You know as church leaders we are face incredible challenges and obstacles. We hear many voices saying to us that it can't be done—it shouldn't be done. We're not going to make it. Yet history tells us otherwise. Don't assume that those people who followed their dreams had it easy. Most faced almost impossible challenges. Let me look to a few names that you might be acquainted with. I'll give you a hint and see if you can guess who the person was:



Who was it that flunked motion picture production at New York University and the City College of New York. He also failed English at New York University?



Woody Allen—Academy Award-winning writer, producer and director.



Who, when studying to be an actress in 1927 was told by the head instructor of the John Murray Anderson Drama School, “Try another other profession. Any other?”



Lucille Ball.



Who in 1944 did Emmeline Snively, director of the Blue Book Modeling Agency tell that you’d better lean secretarial work or else get married.”



Marilyn Monroe.



Who in 1962 were the four nervous young musicians who played their first record audition for the executives of the Decca Recording Company turned the group down saying “we don’t like their sound. Groups of guitars are on the way out.”



The Beatles of course.



Who was told by president Rutherford Hayes ‘That’s an amazing invention, but who would ever want to use one of the?’



Alexander Graham Bell.



These people all excelled at what they were doing because they didn’t give up. They had their eyes set on their goal and they forged ahead. And yet the goals as grand as they were, pale in comparison to the goal and the vision that God has for us as church leaders.



‘R’ stands for recruit.



Luke 5:27 and 28 says *After this, Jesus went out and saw a tax collector by the name of Levi sitting at his tax booth. "Follow me," Jesus said to him, and Levi got up, left everything and followed him.*



Now why is recruiting so important? In church leadership recruiting is at the core of what is going on. We've got to sell others on our dream and get them to buy in. Why?



In some cases we are starting from scratch. If we are starting a church plant or a new ministry, we may not have anyone already doing that ministry.



There will be people who we recruit who will **move away**. If we are in a highly transient community we may have a high turnover rate. Just about the time we get someone plugged into ministry they move away.



We also need to recruit people to **working in their area of giftedness**. This changes as people change so we need to constantly be recruiting new ministers. And as the church grows we need to recruit more people to operate the expanding ministry.



And we need to recruit to replace the people who **bale out of ministry** for some reason or another. Maybe they got tired of the vision, or maybe they had some sinful preoccupations in their life that were in opposition to ministry—whatever the case, when people step out of ministry and we need to replace them.



As a leader we need to know how to recruit. We need to study up on the subject--learn the skills of being able to develop leaders--learn how to mentor. Study up on spiritual gifts and get good at recognizing people's gifts and plugging them into ministry.

Know what our weak areas are and recruit strong leaders to pick up the empty spots in our ministry. Maybe you're a great sanguine charismatic leader but your organization is non-existent. Recruit someone to be your organizer. Maybe you're not a warm fuzzy people person. Bring other people into high profile positions that exude demonstrative caring. Maybe you can't carry a tune. Don't try. Don't embarrass yourself and everyone else. Recruit a gifted musician to lead your music.



The leaders of Great Groups love talent and know where to find it. Such leaders know how to produce a rich mix out of divergent talents. They know how to network, and how to recruit people better than themselves.

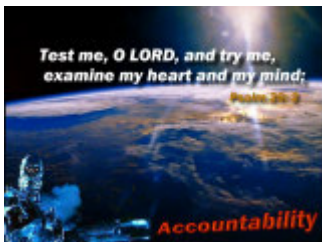


God has some leaders already picked out. You may be one of them. Pray that God will help our team find leaders, and if you are one, pray that God will give you the courage to step up to the plate.

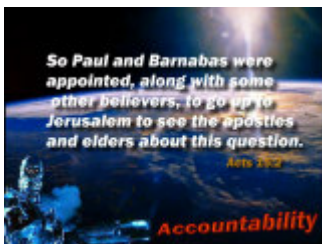


'A' stands for accountability. Accountability is a word that many people find repugnant. No one likes to be under the thumb of someone else. So we try to find niches in life where there is little accountability.

But whether we like it or not, we all need good accountability. I believe that many failures take place in church leadership because a lack of accountability or because of a refusal to be accountable.



Psalm 26: 2 says: *Test me, O LORD, and try me, examine my heart and my mind;*



And Acts 15:2 says: *So Paul and Barnabas were appointed, along with some other believers, to go up to Jerusalem to see the apostles and elders about this question.*



There several ways that we need to be accountable to one another. First, leaders need to find people that they know and trust who will watch over their spiritual journey.

In his book *The Heart Of A Leader*, Ken Blanchard writes *We have to stake out time for solitude, contemplation and introspection*. He cites one top manager who does not allow his people to talk on the phone or meet between 8:30 and 9:30 each morning. Blanchard' s own quiet time is during his very frequent plane flights, a time he used to fill with constant conversation. "I am amazed by my creativity after a long flight," he writes now.



Now Ken is writing to a secular audience here. If a secular person needs that quiet time, how much more do we who claim to be spiritual beings need that time to keep ourselves centered on God and keep our spiritual tanks full.



Part of holding ourselves accountable is to know our addictions and provide a way to keep temptations from sabotaging our ministry. We all have addictions. Let's not fool ourselves.



Some of us are alcoholics or we are addicted to drugs.



Some of us have sexual addictions and are tempted by sexual fantasies, pornography, even child abuse and pornography.



Some of us are seduced by a lust for power.



Some of us, believe it or not, are seduced by a lust for fame...



...and fortune.

May I urge us to be accountable. Find someone or a group of people who are safe that can hold us accountable for our behavior. Many times, just voicing our temptations out loud to a trusted friend is enough to take away the temptation.



Second our leaders need to be held accountable--and the higher profile they are in the congregation, the more they need to be held accountable. Leaders need to be held accountable for their job description and lifestyle issues that are compatible with their job description.

This can be done in many ways—small groups are my favorite. But sometimes it can be as simple as phone calls, notes, conversations in the hallway. Take advantage of these moments to encourage people in the right direction.



‘C’ is for conflict resolution. You may be surprised to see this as one of the essential qualities of leadership. But the truth of the matter is conflict happens. And whenever we have something as new and fresh as building a healthy congregation and we try to pull dozens of people together each with our own vision and baggage we are plutonium reaching a critical mass. Expect conflict. It will happen. So we’ve got to prepare for it and build in mechanisms for resolution.



The Bible says: *Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry,* Ephesians 4:26



The first thing that leaders should do is use clear communication. The vision should be stated so that there is no room for doubt as to what it is.



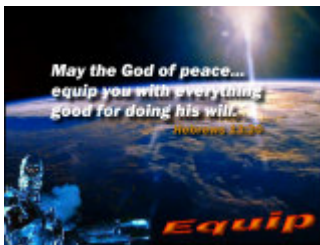
Second, we need to have a little bit of political savvy. I use politics in a good sense—in the sense that politics is the art of being polite. Know who our leaders are in our group and stay close to them.



Learn how to forgive. Model forgiveness. May forgiveness be one of the core values of our healthy church. May grudges not be welcome in our congregation. We are willing to take risks if we know that we will be forgiven if we fall flat on our face.



‘E’ Stands for equip. Church ministry takes special tools. Our leaders need tools to be able to do their ministry. We need to make it a priority. We need to equip them. We need to put in the budget both the finances and the training they need.



The Bible says in Hebrews 13:20 *May the God of peace... equip you with everything good for doing his will.*



So many times in history tragedies have occurred because people were ill-equipped. Even simple operations can go awry without the right equipment.



A British Arctic expedition set sail in 1845 to chart the Northwest Passage around the Canadian Arctic to the Pacific Ocean. Captain Sir John Franklin prepared as if they were embarking on a pleasure cruise rather than a grueling journey through a cold and hostile environments. He brought along his library, musical instruments china dishes but neglected to bring warm clothes for his men.



The voyage was doomed when the ships sailed into frigid waters and became trapped in ice. First ice coated the decks, the spars and the rigging. Then water froze around the rudders and the ships became hopelessly locked in the now-frozen sea.



The sailors who set out to search for help soon succumbed to severe Arctic weather and died of exposure to its harsh winds and sub-freezing temperatures. Out of the 138 men on board none returned.



Even today the frozen remains of that tragic voyage can be seen when the cold weather recedes for a few months in the summer. These are the horrible reminders of what can go wrong when we are ill equipped.

In church life if people go into their ministries ill-prepared and fail at it, its going to be much more difficult for us to recruit them second time around—so why not do it right the first time. Let's give them the tools they need to be successful in their respective ministries.



G R A C E, Goals,



Recruitment,



Accountability,

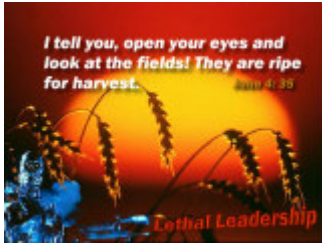


Conflict Resolution,



and Equipping.

Grace. If we have those five arrows in our leadership quiver, we will become lethal leaders—leaders to shoot down the snares of the devil before they trip us up.



John 4: 35 says *I tell you, open your eyes and look at the fields! They are ripe for harvest.* Pray for leaders for the harvest.

