



THE LEADERSHIP MATURITY KEY

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"He who rules his own spirit is mightier than he who takes a city." Proverbs 16:32

We have entered times described by the Bible as when the "nations rage". In the midst of the mounting turmoil those known by His Name must adhere to a higher standard. Likewise, when paving new ground in this setting, much more by way of discernment and wisdom is required. The task of one of employing righteous power in corrupt settings. The issue is one of leadership, mature leadership. The bar has been raised.

Biblical leadership requires a high-level of self-discipline. With it is the ability to grasp and perform well two primary tenets: (1) the accomplishment of the mission, and (2) the welfare of those being led.

In keeping with the military standard used in the opening scripture, a non-Marine combat reporter¹ made an unusual observation after an extended first-hand study of Marines operating in combat. Trained in the teamwork and discipline needed to achieve often impossible tasks, Ricks described those in the junior enlisted ranks as men who in the world would not have been given the responsibility to run a copier. Yet, in instance after instance in life and death situations, they demonstrated the maturity and presence of mind to know what to do in leading others.

"Greater love has no one than this, than a man give up his life for his friend." John 15:13

This standard reflects a culture of discipline that engenders a society of trust. Yet, at a point when the Body should be operating as a society of leaders, it falls short of this standard and too often is embroiled in disorder, discord and diversions.

Some Kingdom leadership issues involve maturity. Some are matters of experience. The bottom line for each is the norm of ruling your own spirit.

Two friends I admire are each Kingdom leaders. One has the unique ability to see God's blueprint in a person and draw it forth. The other equally proficient as a leader has a tendency, when things don't seem to measure up, to see the devil's blueprint and then works to stamp it out. The way of the world is the survival of the fittest. However, Kingdom leadership bears a greater responsibility.

Within the parameters of Truth and good stewardship is the wisdom and balance of a leadership to nurture. It is a key part of what distinguishes us from the world. The way of the Kingdom always offers Life for both the mission and the people involved.

The friend whose mode is to discern God's blueprint is fearless in terms of penetrating enemy territory and of taking risks when convinced God is involved. It is the approach evidenced by Jesus during His earthly ministry.

"The Son can do nothing of Himself, but only what He sees the Father doing. For whatever the Father does, the Son does also." John 5:19

¹ - Thomas Ricks, "Making the Corps", Simon & Schuster, New York, 2007

In contrast, Jesus' scrutiny of the Pharisee's nit-picking approach to leadership indicated that their blindness was impeding the way for others.

"Woe to you Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, for you shut off the Kingdom of God from men. You neither go in yourselves nor do you allow those entering to go in." Matthew 23:13

Beyond the Natural

Jesus' response to the Pharisees punctuates the truth that leadership is not about getting people to conform. Nor is it about judgment. As soon as the judgment factor arises, Jesus urged caution and warned that we would find ourselves in danger of being judged.

"Judge not, that you not be judged. For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured back to you." Matthew 7:1-2

Kingdom leadership contains responsibilities and requirements beyond the best our natural capabilities offer. It takes discipline and the maturity of ruling one's own spirit to wield.

Kingdom leadership incorporates stewardship. It's about wisely managing risk in order to leverage opportunity and increase. It's about nurturing and enabling the gifts operating within one's community. Leadership requires a responsible trustworthiness that simultaneously inspires and guides for the common good. It sets things in order, God's order.

Stewardship. Jesus' parable of the talents depicts leadership as emerging from the application of wise stewardship. Good stewardship embraces responsibility and builds from it. In this parable, the one who minimized their risks and didn't make ANY mistakes, but in so doing also minimized their increase, was deemed a "wicked servant" On the other hand, the one who brought increase was given promotion and more responsibility (Matthew 25:26). So it is that the principles of stewardship are central to Kingdom leadership.

Leveraging Increase. Leadership maps out, builds up and brings increase. In another instance, Jesus told the story about the merchant who discovered a pearl of great value. He risked all that he had in order to leverage opportunity to acquire the pearl of great value (Matthew 13:46). Kingdom leadership adapts and manages the change needed to take and navigate the pathway into significant opportunity.

Enabling Gifts. Paul wrote the Romans of his deep desire to play a role in advancing the will of God in their lives by imparting a spiritual gift to them. Paul understood biblical community with a depth that came from His Jewish heritage. Understanding one's gifts and how that fits into their role in the community is very central to being "the light on a hill" that Jesus indicated we would be to the world around us.

"For I long to see you, that I may impart to you some spiritual gift, so that you may be established." Romans 1:11

Trustworthiness. Understanding the difference between giving people what they "want" versus nurturing their roles, while raising the bar to serve the common good is pivotal to sound leadership. When done consistently, trustworthiness will result. Trustworthy leaders are foundational to the operation of biblical community.

God's Order. Jesus said that you would know them by their fruit. When God's order is operating it bears good fruit. It brings increase. It nurtures the gifts. It draws others because the fruit is evident to all. Isaac sowed in famine and yielded a harvest because God told him to do so. Everyone witnessed God's hand being on Isaac.

Reckless Disregard

However, there is a reckless disregard operating within leadership circles that short-circuits the standard needed for the Body to be properly navigating the snares and hurdles in today's world. It is a myopia that fails to see either the process or the progress.

The story of the young prophet from Judah (1 Kings 13) sent to the King of Israel illustrates a short-sightedness, that misses the forest for the trees, which has become almost as a plague today. In this story the young prophet clearly wielded a prophetic gift and the power of God, but was so blinded by his focus on his own return that he missed the real opportunity with the King of Israel, and due to his personal concerns was entrapped by the very warning the Lord had made so clear to him.

This sad story illustrates the myopic blinding that needs to be guarded against among those deemed most gifted. It represents an irresponsible, reckless disregard for God's priorities due to overriding soulish obsessions. James admonishes the double-minded to purify their hearts.

God's standard for leadership carries an awe necessitating an ongoing poise of the spirit before Him. It cannot emulate the world nor reflect a blended approach. It is a standard that roots out the precepts of men and the cleverness of the clever. It gives no place to deceit or the lust for power. It is the standard that eliminates the need for striving and ambition, because of being immersed in the flow of the Spirit.

This standard applied opens the gates for a safe place where the gifts flow naturally, in unison and harmony to the benefit of all. When this norm is met, it offers the potential described by the Church at Philadelphia in Revelations: keys to open doors that no one can shut and shuts doors that no one can open.

Operating with this standard requires an understanding of what distinguishes the function of leading from the gift of leadership. A lack of understanding and misapplication of the gifts creates confusion and dissatisfaction; with disorder and discord following. The requirements of leadership vary according to the uniqueness of the gifts of its leaders.

Similarly, managing resources and projects is very different from leading people. The Romans 12 leadership gift flows with both influence and authority, without the need of position. On the other hand, the gift of administration in 1 Corinthians 12:28 specializes in the management of resources. Joseph the Patriarch operated in both. Within the function of leading are diversities of applications, again based on the gifts of those serving as the leaders.

The bottom line is the issue between soul and spirit. This is the cause of much confusion within the ranks of believers. Those who try to employ the spirit to nurture their soul-longings are out of God's order. The priorities are upside down. The standard for leadership requires raising the bar.

"The Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28

A Culture of Discipline and Trust

In his riveting *"Trust: Social Virtues and Creation of Prosperity"*, an analysis of social economics, Francis Fukuyama notes that economic life cannot be divorced from cultural life. He contends that in an era when social capital may be as important as physical capital, only those societies with a high degree of social trust will have what is needed to compete in the new global economy. High levels of trust based on cooperative behavior and shared norms are foundational to maximizing the economic potential of a society.

Fukuyama's views make a case for the reason the Jewish people have survived the civilizations that have come and gone over the millennia. As a culture within a culture, their foundation is a model of biblical community and a culture of discipline that engenders a society of trust.

Spiritual Maintenance

Jesus cautioned of days in which the very elect would be subject to being deceived. Peter warned those who indulge in corrupt desires and despise the authority over them. The gravity of the times calls deep to deep and shouts for the need to spiritually overcompensate.

Spiritual maintenance for leaders cannot be confined to devotional readings or corporate devotions. The defilements of the day must be compensated for and refreshed by a regular washing in the Word of Truth and interactive prayer vigils. Proactive personal time with the Lord must be carved out of the busiest schedules. David Wilkerson had a mature local ministry that went viral, when he obeyed the promptings of the Spirit and began spending an extra hour in prayer each night at midnight.

The Apostle Paul frequently in his letters makes a case for the importance of discipline needed as believers. Again and again he uses the analogy of running a race. There's no coasting for those at the forefront of the spiritual drama unfolding in this day. Peter admonishes leaders to clothe themselves with humility. The calling of leadership demands vigilance and diligence. Likewise, the book of Hebrews indicates the need to check our priorities and maintain the attentiveness needed to rule your own spirit in maturity.

"Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us strip off and throw aside every encumbrance (unnecessary weight) and that sin which so readily (deftly and cleverly) clings to and entangles us, and let us run with patient endurance and steady and active persistence the appointed course of the race that is set before us." Hebrews 12:1 AMP

It is a time for true leaders to redirect their attention from issues of soul and position and into the realm of service. It is a time when ruling ones own spirit will yield not only the power to serve as Jesus admonished in Matt 20:28, with the valor and capacity of those willing to give up their lives as a ransom for many; but with it, embracing the joy and contentment of truly being in the flow of His business.

"Then the fool will no longer be called generous, nor the miser said to be bountiful. The schemes of the schemer are evil; devising wicked plans to destroy the poor with lying words, despite the needy speaking justice. The generous man devises generous plans, and by generosity he shall stand." Isaiah 32: 5-8

<http://strategicintercession.org/2013/08/the-leadership-maturity-key>

Morris Ruddick has been a forerunner and spokesman for the call of God in the marketplace. He is author of "The Joseph-Daniel Calling" and "Gods Economy, Israel and the Nations," which address the mobilization of business and governmental leaders called to impact their communities with God's blessings. They are available from Amazon.com, BarnesandNoble.com and other popular outlets.

Mr. Ruddick is also the founder of the Global Equippers Entrepreneurial Program, which imparts hope and equips economic community builders where God's light is dim in both the Western and non-Western world. To schedule a speaking engagement, sponsor a workshop, make a donation or to get more information on how you can help, contact Global Initiatives at 303.741.9000.

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(response@strategic-initiatives.org)

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