

The Heart of a Leader

Take a look at failures in leadership . . . what type of issues grab the headlines? The vast majority are character issues - issues of the heart. Insider trading, inflated salaries, and lack of trust seem to be rampant. The lack of integrity in leadership has caused a corresponding loss of confidence in politics, big business, and yes, even the ministry.

Leadership strategists, James Kouzes and Barry Posner, in Credibility surveyed more than 15,000 people, reviewed 400 case studies, and conducted 40 in-depth interviews. "In virtually every survey we conducted, honesty was selected more often than any other leadership characteristic. Honesty is absolutely essential to leadership. No matter where we have conducted our studies - regardless of country, geographical region, or type of organization - the most important leadership attribute since we began our research in 1981 has always been honesty."¹ Their findings revealed that the most sought after leadership characteristic was honesty; trust is absolutely necessary for effective leadership. The Center for Creative Leadership has found that the number one cause of failure in CEO's are relational problems. The soft side of leadership is often hard, and it cannot be taken for granted.

The Psalmist presents a snapshot of one of Israel's greatest leaders - King David. Psalm 78:72 states,

So he shepherded them according to the integrity of his heart, and guided them with his skillful hands.

David led, or shepherded, his people with two great strengths: a heart of integrity and skillful hands; in the words of Bill Thrall and Bruce McNichol², character and competence. Competence is important and admittedly, many leadership training programs focus on developing leadership skills. Character however, cannot be ignored. The Hebrew word for "integrity" conveys the idea of completeness or perfection. David was that type of man. The Lord said to Samuel, "Do not look at his appearance or at the height of his stature, because I have rejected him; for God sees not as man sees, for man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart" (1 Samuel 16:7).

God is searching the earth "that He may strongly support those whose heart is completely His" (2 Chronicles 16:9). Solomon admonishes us to "Watch over our heart³ with all diligence, for from it flow the springs of life" (Proverbs 4:23). So how is your heart? How can you have a heart after God? Realize that God's commandment is His enablement. You can have a heart after God but it's not automatic. An approach we've taken at Columbia Biblical Seminary is to incorporate the Leadership Catalyst Process. The Leadership Catalyst Process is a systematic approach to forming, protecting, and reproducing high-trust cultures. Dr. Bobby Clinton⁴, Chair of Leadership Development at Fuller Seminary, states, "Leadership Catalyst offers the best development process I know of for dealing with the foundation of leadership."

J. Oswald Sanders in his classic, Spiritual Leadership writes, "Disciples are not manufactured wholesale. They are produced one by one, because someone has taken the pains to discipline, to instruct and enlighten, to nurture and train one that is younger."⁵ Leadership development is an

intentional process deliberately working on both character and competence. At Columbia we realize the necessity of not only developing the ministry skills of our students, but also helping them to develop a heart for God with the Bible as the foundation. All incoming seminary students work through the life-transforming truths of the Leadership Catalyst book Truefaced. Many Christians try to earn God's favor by putting on a mask and hiding their true selves in the process. The authors help us to see that we are to trust God rather than trying to please God by trying to earn His love and blessing. Dr. Bobby Clinton is correct, "Ministry flows from being"⁶.

Our Leadership program is a character-based leadership approach seeking to develop transformational⁷ leaders. Our readings include The Ascent of a Leader and Beyond Your Best. All incoming Doctor of Ministry students experience the Leadership Catalyst Process as they participate in the Leadership Summit in forming the high-trust culture. The summit helps the participants to integrate character and competency in their lives to take their ministry to new heights.

In Good to Great Jim Collins describes the most effective leaders as "a paradoxical blend of personal humility and professional will."⁸ The Leadership Catalyst Process provides the character-based framework to develop that type of leader. Columbia Biblical Seminary is using the Leadership Catalyst Process to partner with God in developing shepherds who have both a heart for God and skillful hands for ministry.

Endnotes

1 - Credibility, p 12.

2 - The Ascent of the Leader, by Thrall, McNichol, and McElrath, describes how our skills and abilities (our capacity or competence) and our character need to be combined to take us where we need to go.

3 - The Hebrew word "leb", "became the richest biblical term for the totality of man's inner or immaterial nature. In biblical literature it is the most frequently used term for man's immaterial personality functions as well as the most inclusive term for them since, in the Bible, virtually every immaterial function of man is attributed to the 'heart'" (Harris, Archer, Waltke. Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament. 1:466).

4 - Dr. Bobby Clinton is recognized as one of the leading evangelical theorists on the topic of leadership. In my doctoral work I studied Leadership Emergence Theory under Dr. Clinton; his writings have marked my life and ministry. I have used his classic text, The Making of a Leader, in my leadership development courses. His endorsement of the Leadership Catalyst Process is extremely significant considering his extensive work in leadership development.

5 - Spiritual Leadership, p. 150.

6 - The Making of a Leader, p. 13.

7 - In leadership vernacular, this is a technical term coined by James MacGregor Burns in Leadership. He distinguishes between a transactional leader and a transformational leader,

describing a transformational leader as one who “looks for potential motives in followers, seeks to satisfy higher needs, and engages the full person of the follower. The result of transforming leadership is a relationship of mutual stimulation and elevation that converts followers into leaders and may convert leaders into moral agents” (Burns, p. 4). This description has significant implications for a disciplemaker.

8 - Collins describes this type of leader as a Level 5 Leader. “Level 5 leaders channel their ego needs away from themselves and into the larger goal of building a great company. It’s not that Level 5 leaders have no ego or self-interest. Indeed, they are incredibly ambitious - but their ambition is first and foremost for the institution, not themselves” (Collins, pp. 20-21).

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