



Leadership Letter

How attractive are you as a leader?

My wife Rite was running a preschool workshop in Mozambique and gave a gift of a small mirror to the participants. Some had never looked at themselves in a mirror before, so you can imagine it was quite the experience for them. Now they knew how they looked to others. So when I looked in the mirror the other day, the first thought that came into my mind was, "It's a shame that what I see on the outside is so much older than what I feel on the inside!" I then asked myself the questions – "What have others seen in this picture over the years?" Do they like what they see? How do they respond to what they see and hear? What do I communicate through who I am?

When I first attended the Christian union at university, I was challenged by how different the students seemed from the Christians that I had known at my home church. They radiated life, joy, vision and had an expectation of God breaking into their daily lives. The more time I spent with them, the more they rubbed off on me. Then I came into contact with a guy who had been out on the mission field in east Africa for a number of years. As he spoke in the C.U one night, I found myself being attracted by his relationship with God and the lifestyle he was talking about. His messages were different. Somehow they engaged me. He was genuine, vulnerable, relational and spiritually impacting. He had a different spirit. I and a friend connected with him and we were invited to spend time on the weekend at his house. He was the first YWAMer I had met and this experience turned out to be part of my journey into missions and a very fulfilling life.

When we talk of attractiveness, we usually think of our outward appearance but of course our looks account for such a small percentage. Our attractiveness is much more to do with the depth of our relationship with God, the fruit of the spirit growing from our lives and how we behave and interact with people.

Isaiah 53:2 *"He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him."* So on the one hand, we read that Jesus didn't have the body of Mr. Universe or the looks necessarily of a movie star, although of course he could have done if he had wished. On the other hand, people flocked to him from all segments of society. The women and children loved him, the poor and sick followed him everywhere, the publicans and sinners enjoyed his company and even the scribes and Pharisees were fascinated by him. Educated men like Nicodemus were attracted, as well as those who didn't make it to grade 12 or even high school like the fishermen of Galilee. King Herod was attracted and so was Pilot. And perhaps the most important of all – Father God looked down from heaven and said, "My son in whom I am well pleased!" So there was something special about Jesus. What was that? I want it too, don't you? Part of his plan is to conform us to his image – so how's his plan going in my life and yours? How can we be developing our attractiveness to others?

Should we as Christians stand out in the crowd? Moses certainly did when he came down the mountain having spent time with God. He had to wear a veil over his face as it was shining so brightly! Should we glow or am I suggesting unrealistic expectations of leaders? Jan Meyers, in her book, 'Listening to Love' suggests that our countenance will develop a glow over the years as we spend time in the presence of the Lord. People could detect something special about the early disciples – that they had 'been with Jesus!' Shouldn't people see something in us too? I remember some years ago inviting Cambell McAlpine, a well known Scottish leader, who taught in YWAM in the early days, to speak in an LDC. He had his eightieth birthday while he was with us. We sat and soaked in his words, many of us in tears as we listened. He glowed. There was such a sense of the presence of God pouring out of every word, smile and gesture he made.

If you take a few moments to write down your expectations of leaders, I am sure you will come up with quite a list. We might expect leaders to:

Maintain a vital relationship with God, be ready to share an in-season word of the Lord, be full of integrity, have a clear vision that is communicated well, able to follow commitments through with good administration, able to team build and be present for team members, delegate well and function with team leadership, not micromanage but develop trust in the team, care for people and be there for them as the needs arise, handle finances well and be in faith to see miracles happen, teach well, have a heart for intercession, be available for prayer ministry and be a great listener....

The list could continue. So do we need all that and more to be attractive as a leader? I don't think so. When God anoints someone with a gift, it is very attractive. When those different gifted people come together in a team, it becomes dynamically attractive. If there is one element that is foundational, it's this - *a leader who loves God and loves others*. That love expresses itself in communicating, serving, praying and living for others. The love we share will be unique to us but if it is genuine, it will be very attractive. I believe Jesus was so attractive because he so loved people. He accepted them as they were without judgment. He valued them, spent time with them, and had a heart of compassion for them. If leaders are attractive, people will follow them. So ask yourself, "What am I doing that will connect me with others and draw them close and encourage them to follow me?"

I was in the midst of a group of people the other day and somehow felt very unattractive in my relating to them. They weren't believers and I found it hard to enter into conversation with them. They made comments about the weather, sports and the problems of their work colleagues but no questions were asked of me and my world. They were on a different track, living in a different world and had no interest in my world. I came away with the question, "What do I need to do, in order to attract them into my world? How should I be living and interacting differently?"

What are some ingredients of attractiveness?

- Spirit - Relationship with God: how you model a spiritual rhythm and become a mentor to others, invest in them from the spiritual resources that you have built. How you allow the gifts of God in you to flow out to others, so they are blessed and supported and encouraged by the overflow of the spirit through you.
- Soul - The inner you: qualities that you have strength in, signature virtues – things you don't have to work at but naturally flow from you. Attitudes to life and challenges and fruit of the spirit that are growing. Hopefully these are being added to year by year.
- Body - The outer you: how you behave positively to others, how you have developed Christ like characteristics and become competent in certain skills and abilities. How you look after yourself and the things that have been entrusted to you. How you pursue your calling and dreams.

Think of some of the attractive leaders you have followed over the years. What was it about them that attracted you? Some leaders are attractive because:

- They are competent in a skill.
- There is chemistry between you and you just connect.
- They have particular character traits that you respect.
- They are committed and you admire their passion and perseverance.

Here are some of things that have attracted me in others over the years:

- Someone who flows in the spirit and touches people's hearts
- Someone who is able to see the positive and bright side of life and encourages in the most difficult circumstances
- Someone who has God inspired ideas of what we can do and where we can go
- Someone who serves willingly, joyfully and competently
- Someone who is genuine, honest and real in their sharing
- Someone who loves unashamedly and you feel it
- ...

Let me share how one particular leader has attracted me. I have been married for nearly 37 years to a very attractive wife. She received many beautiful affirmations on her recent birthday that spoke of the reasons that people have been attracted to her over the years. She is someone who values people greatly, who goes the extra mile, is extravagant with her time, energy and creativity toward others and never tires of blessing, praying, loving and seeking the best, is so positive and affirming and yet recognises her lacks and limitations and is very real. I find that very attractive. Anyone who knows her is aware of her glow.

This is the beauty of the body of Christ. We don't have to all be the same and attract in the same way. We all have a different fragrance, a different look, a different strength that is attractive. Whatever it or they are, let's work on them so that they become the constant in our lives - not something that we turn on and off. It may take some more focus.

Am I as attractive as I would like to be? No but I am trusting for that glow to grow! One of the keys for me is spending more time with Jesus. If you could change one thing to be more attractive what would it be? - smile more, be more positive, bring a fragrance of the Lord, affirm those around you regularly, be more grateful, be a prayerful person, be more people focused, give daily acts of kindness, There are a thousand different ways of being attractive. So what one thing can you add to your relationship with God, your inner life and your outer life to be more attractive?

Until next month,

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P.S. People will forget what you say, and forget what you do but they won't forget how you made them feel.