



Leadership Letter

What leadership lessons have you learned?

You may have read John Maxwell's book the 21 laws of leadership. As I was reading I began to recognise some of the laws or values or lessons that I live by as a leader and things that I desire to pass on to others. Here are 21 of them:

Leadership is influence: If you want to know what influence you have, just watch when you speak - who listens? Watch when you share an opinion - how seriously is it considered? Watch when you share a vision - who's ready to jump in with you? Watch behind you - who and how many are following? Without influence you will never be able to lead others.

Shape environments: The influence of leaders goes beyond people, into the environments in which you work and function. Whether it's an environment for people to connect with one another, to hear from God, to brainstorm and envision or whatever. The leader's role is to help shape the environment for maximum effectiveness.

Create a close circle: Leadership isn't an individual pursuit. For effectiveness you need to function in team. The question is: How close do you want to develop in your relationships together? For trust to develop, it requires joint experience, respect, love, empathy and commitment to the vision and to one another. Intimacy means different things to different people - but if you are going to be close as a team, everyone is going to be sharing their lives and being there for one another.

Implement an IBM agenda: There is a tendency for leaders to function with self-reliance and the stronger the leader, the greater the temptation. That's why as you meet in your leadership teams or circles it is vital you have a value of **Intercession** to have God's heart on the topics you discuss and decide on. Your **Business** agenda goes so much quicker and easier when you listen to God as a team. The great commandment is to love God and love one another and it is also vital to spend time **Ministering** to one another, supporting and encouraging each other. A team that prays together stays together.

Involve diverse gifting and personalities: Leaders have a tendency to recruit people similar to themselves - like begets like. But that isn't helpful if you are wanting to be an effective team. In order to be a high performance team you need leaders with different perspectives, different strengths, different passions and then together you can cover one another's weaknesses. TEAM = Together Everyone Achieves More.

Step off the pedestal: As you take on roles of leadership, there is a tendency for people to put us on a pedestal. There is an expectation for the leader to have all the answers, to establish the vision and basically to be all things to all people. It's your job as leader to step down from that impossible pedestal and declare your humanness. Be real, be honest, be humble – share what you can do and what you can't. Everything doesn't depend on just you!

Step out of your comfort zone: Leaders are not called to stay in a safe place. Leaders are to be out ahead, in new territory, out of the secure environment and in a place where you continually need to put your trust in God. If you feel you can accomplish the vision yourself, it's not big enough. A vision from God always takes you out of your comfort zone. What better place is there to be?

No lone rangers or superstars: We live in a world where personal charisma and talent is admired and desired. Paul on the other hand said all his background, education, status and titles meant absolutely nothing. He continually functioned in team. Who gets the credit in your team? Where there is a team commitment, everyone participates fully, everyone receives honour and everyone wins.

Ownership of vision: Vision doesn't belong to one person – if you try and keep it to yourself it will have a limited life. Vision is to be shared. It is helpful to involve people in the shaping, the developing and the outworking of the vision. Jesus involved the disciples in the sharing of the gospel as he sent them out two by two and in the outworking of miracles like the feeding of the five thousand. As the early church developed the disciples were in unity of mind and purpose and the vision multiplied.

Keep the big picture in view: What is the end in mind? It's easy for leaders to get caught up with a myriad of meetings, fighting fires and sorting details and soon lose the direction of where they are headed and the goals they are hoping to reach. It's your job as a leader to keep that end goal in mind and continually remind your staff of why you are doing what you are doing.

General or specialised vision: Some leaders like juggling a lot of balls in the air, others just one or two. It's important that you know what kind of leader you are otherwise it's possible to be 'promoted to a place of incompetence.' For instance, you may be fruitful in developing one particular ministry in discipleship, evangelism, communication or working with the homeless. However, taking on the overall leadership of a base or a geographic area requires a breadth of focus and this may not be your gifting. If you are in a general leadership role with a specialised anointing, you will bring a specialised bias to every ministry in your influence. If you have a generalised anointing then you will be able to embrace and and make effective a variety of ministries. Are you called to breadth or depth?

Initiative faith: Destiny doesn't just drop in your lap. There are steps to take. Jesus didn't ask Peter to step out of the boat and walk on water, it was Peter's suggestion and initiative. These steps can be risky, out of the box and perhaps sound crazy but they move us towards seeing something new take place. God doesn't usually give a blueprint or a painting by numbers to complete. The steps he expects are ones of initiative faith.

Know your ceiling: God has made you with a certain capacity of leadership where you will be anointed. You may be a fantastic leader in a base situation with a dozen ministries or so but move into the leadership in a nation or area and it just doesn't fit you. Or you may be the right hand person to another leader and work so well in partnership but find yourself all at sea when you try to take on the main leadership role yourself.

Self-leadership foundation: Your leadership stands and falls on the foundation stone of integrity. You are the sum of your character and behaviour. You are the model, the living curriculum that people will read. Your enemy is looking for a crack in that foundation and when he finds one he will use it to topple you. To maintain this foundation it requires your energy and focus.

Heavenly connection: You can't delegate the hearing from God to someone else. As a spiritual leader it is your job to develop a spiritual rhythm to keep growing in your relationship with God. 'His sheep hear his voice' and that includes you. You need a current testimony of your encounters and experience with the Lord to pass on to those who you lead.

Pass it on: Every role has a shelf life. When everything is established and you are experiencing growth, it is usually the time to pass it on. You enter a role with resources to pass on, with giftings to impart and leaders to raise up but after 5, 7 or a maximum 10 years you will probably have done what you can. The process of training others up doesn't start at the end point but when you begin. Talent spot for new leadership as soon as you step into a new situation.

Believe in people: There are a handful of people like 'Eddie the Eagle' (perhaps you have seen the film), the British ski jumper who had such confidence that he would make it to the Olympics even though he had such limited ability and zero encouragement. Most however, are spurred on by the belief of a leader or mentor that gives us the faith and resilience to keep going and see our dream realised.

Release people: No one likes their boss looking over their shoulder while they are working. Neither do they like being micromanaged on an assignment. The opposite extreme of having a leader who is absent or disconnected may be even worse. Like the 'Time release' pills where drugs are released slowly and steadily into the bloodstream, your releasing of people should have a clear

process. People need releasing at the right pace for each individual with authority and responsibility being given until the role is fully delegated.

Face your Goliaths: In every leadership role there will be individuals that you find difficult to lead, dilemmas in decision making, conflicts that you need to deal with and people that you need to confront. It's easy to fall into the trap of avoiding, putting off or trying to make everyone happy. At the end of the day, you have to face these situations and generally it is better to face them earlier than later, always soaked in prayer and the fear of the Lord.

Continually communicate: Information has power and withholding information creates separation. Some leaders are better at verbal communication, others at written communication and so you need to develop the ability to do both. Good communication communicates value, brings clarity and fosters understanding.

Personal growth: As the leader grows so goes the ministry. When leaders have motivation to grow they become lifelong learners. They read, study, are always seeking ways of improving who they are and set goals for development. Leaders who are seeing growth in their own lives also seek it in the ministry. Perhaps you relate with these lessons. Take some time to think of your own lessons as a debrief of this last year and make a goal of passing them on to others.

Merry Christmas and a happy new year to you all
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