

"Spiritual Leadership"
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Notes by Dave Kraft

AN HONORABLE AMBITION

A desire to be great is not necessarily in itself sinful. It is the motivation that determines its character (10). To be seen and approved by men, to be popular. to stand well among one's contemporaries., to exercise control over others. Ambitious men enjoy the power which money or authority brings. (11) Not the number of one's servants, but the number whom one serves, is the heavenly criterion of greatness and the real preparation for leadership. True greatness, true leadership is achieved not by reducing men to one's service but in giving oneself in selfless service to them. The true spiritual leader is concerned infinitely more with the service he can render God and his fellowmen than with the benefits and pleasures he can extract from life. He aims to put more into life than he takes out of it. (13)

THE SEARCH FOR LEADERS

Because people love to be led by one who knows where he is going and who inspires confidence. (16) Spiritual leaders are not made by election or appointment, by men or any combination of men, nor by conferences or synods. Only God can make them. (17) Samuel Logan Brengle was one of the truly great leaders of the Salvation Army. A man of scholarship as well as of singular spiritual power, he outlined the road to spiritual authority and leadership in challenging words. "It is not won by promotion, but by many prayers and tears. It is attained by confessions of sin, and much heart searching and humbling before God; by self-surrender, a courageous sacrifice of every idol, a bold, deathless, uncompromising and uncomplaining embracing of the cross, and by an eternal, unfaltering looking unto Jesus crucified. It is not gained by seeking great things for ourselves, but rather, like Paul, by counting those things that are gain to us as loss for Christ. That is a great price, but it must be unflinchingly paid by him who would be not merely a nominal but a real spiritual leader of men, a leader whose power is recognized and felt in heaven, on earth and in hell." God's conditions must be complied with in secret before He will honor a man in public. (18)

NATURAL AND SPIRITUAL LEADERSHIP

Leadership is influence, the ability of one person to influence others. Lord Montgomery defines it in these terms: "Leadership is the capacity and will to rally men and women to a common purpose, and the character which inspires confidence." Dr. John R. Mott, a world leader in student circles, gave as his definition: "A leader is a man who knows the road, who can keep ahead, and who can pull others after him." (19) Spiritual leadership is a matter of superior spiritual power. We are leaders to the extent that we inspire others to follow us. (20) "It occurs to me that perhaps the best test of whether one is a qualified leader is to find out whether anyone is following him." Mr. D. E. Hoste (21) The man who is ambitious to lead is disqualified as a leader. The true leader will have no desire to lord it over God's heritage, but will be humble, gentle, self-sacrificing and altogether as ready to follow as to lead, when the Spirit makes it clear that a wiser and more gifted man than himself has appeared. (22)

Lord Montgomery enunciated seven ingredients necessary in a leader in war, each of which is appropriate to the spiritual warfare: (1) He should be able to sit back and avoid getting immersed in detail. (2) He must not be petty. (3) He must not be pompous. (4) He must be a good picker of men. (5) He should trust those under him, and let them get on with their job without (23) interference. (6) He must have the power of clear decision. (7) He should inspire confidence. Dr. John R. Mott moved in student circles and his tests covered different territory: (1) Does he do little things well? (2) Has he learned the meaning of priorities? (3) How does he use his leisure? (4) Has he intensity? (5) Has he learned to take advantage of momentum? (6) Has he the power of growth? (7) What is his attitude to discouragements? (8) How does he face impossible situations? (9) What are his weakest points?

Leadership is essentially the power of one man to influence another. (24) Spirituality is not easy to define but its presence or absence can easily be discerned. It has been called the diffused fragrance which has been assimilated in the garden of the Lord. It is the power to change the atmosphere by one's presence, the unconscious influence which makes Christ and spiritual things real to others. Secular men, be they ever so gifted and charming in person, have no place in the leadership of the church, even in temporal matters. (25)

CRITERIA OF LEADERSHIP POTENTIAL

Have you ever broken yourself of a bad habit? To lead others, one must be master of oneself. Do you retain control of yourself when things go wrong? The leader who loses self-control in testing circumstances forfeits respect and loses influence. He must be calm in crisis and resilient in adversity and disappointment. Do you think independently? While using to the full the thought of others, the leader cannot afford to let others do his thinking or make his decisions for him. Can you handle criticism objectively and remain unmoved under it? Do you turn it to good account? The humble man can derive benefit from petty and even malicious criticism. Can you use disappointments creatively? (26)

Do you readily secure the cooperation and win the respect and confidence of others? An important function in leadership is conciliation—the ability to discover common ground between opposing viewpoints and then induce both parties to accept it. Can you accept opposition to your viewpoint or decision without considering it a personal affront and reacting accordingly? Leaders must expect opposition and should not be offended by it. Are you unduly dependent on the praise or approval of others? Can you hold a steady course in the face of disapproval and even temporary loss of confidence? (27)

PAULINE AND PETRINE SIDELIGHTS OF LEADERSHIP

A leader must allow himself no indulgence in secret that would undermine his character or mar his public witness. (31) It is unwise to give key positions too early even to those who manifest promising talent, lest it spoil them. (36) It should be noted that Peter did not write as chief of the apostles, but as "a fellow Elder," one who was bearing similar responsibilities. He spoke to them not from above, but from alongside—a good vantage ground for the exercise of leadership. (39)

Dr. Paul Rees suggests that greed for money is not the only thought contained in the Greek words "shameful gain." The phrase might as appropriately be applied to greed for popularity or fame, an equally insidious temptation. Prestige and power are often coveted more than money. (40) The Christian leader must not be *dictatorial*. "Not as domineering over those in your charge" (5:3a, C. B. Williams).

An ambitious leader can easily degenerate into a petty tyrant with a domineering manner. "Even a little authority is prone to turn the seemly walk into the offensive strut." (41)

QUALITIES ESSENTIAL TO LEADERSHIP I

In each case these men were endowed with gifts which uniquely equipped them for the special tasks to which they were later called. But that which raised them above their fellows was the degree to which they developed these gifts and graces through devotion and self-discipline. Those who rebel against authority and scorn self-discipline seldom qualify for leadership of a high order. (44) The young man of leadership caliber will work while others waste time, study while others sleep, pray while others play. There will be no place for loose or slovenly habits in word or thought; deed or dress. He will observe a soldierly discipline in diet and deportment, so that he might wage a good warfare. He will without reluctance undertake the unpleasant task which others avoid, or the hidden duty which others evade because it evokes no applause or wins no appreciation.

A Spirit-filled leader will not shrink from facing up to difficult situations or persons, or from grasping the nettle when that is necessary. He will kindly and courageously administer rebuke when that is called for; or he will exercise necessary discipline when the interests of the Lord's work demand it. He will not procrastinate in writing the difficult letter. His letter-basket will not conceal the evidences of his failure to grapple with urgent problems. His prayer will be: (45) Basically willing to respond cooperatively to the discipline he expects of them. (48)

A leader must be able to envision the end result of the policies or methods he advocates. Responsible leadership always looks ahead to see how policies proposed will affect not only present, but succeeding generations. Speaking to Douglas Thornton of Egypt, Mr. Baylis his senior missionary remarked: "Thornton, you are different to anyone else I (49) know. You are always looking at the end of things. Most people, myself included, find it better to do the next thing." Thornton's answer was: "I find that the constant inspiration gained by looking at the goal is the chief thing that helps me to persevere." Eyes that look are common. Eyes that see are rare. The Pharisees *looked* at Peter and saw only a poor unlettered fisherman, totally insignificant, not worthy of a second look.

Jesus saw Peter and discovered the prophet and preacher, saint and leader of the unique band of men who turned the world upside down. Vision includes *optimism and hope*. No pessimist ever made a great leader. (50) The man who sees the difficulties so clearly that he does not discern the possibilities will be unable to impart inspiration to his followers. (51) Wisdom is more than knowledge, which is the accumulation of facts. It has a personal connotation and implies sagacity. It is more than human acumen; it is heavenly discernment. It is knowledge with insight into the heart of things, and knows them as they really are. It involves the knowledge of God and of the intricacies of the human heart.

It is much more than knowledge; it is the right application of knowledge in moral and spiritual matters, in meeting baffling situations and in the complexity of human relationships. The place of wisdom in leadership was indicated in the statement of D. E. Hoste: When a man, in virtue of an official position demands obedience of another, irrespective of the latter's reason and conscience, this is the spirit of tyranny. When, on the other hand, by the exercise of tact and sympathy; by prayer, spiritual power and sound wisdom one is able to influence and enlighten (52) another, so that he through the medium of his own reason and conscience is led to alter one course and adopt another, that is true spiritual leadership.

When all the facts are in, swift and clear decision is the mark of the true leader. Once a spiritual leader is sure of the will of God, he will go into immediate action, regardless of consequences. In pursuing his goal, he will have the courage to burn his bridges behind him. He must be willing to accept full responsibility for consequent failure or success, and not place any blame that might accrue on a subordinate. (53) The true leader will resist the temptation to procrastinate in reaching a decision; nor will he vacillate after it has been made. These tendencies are fatal to leadership. Usually, a sincere though mistaken decision is better than no decision at all. In most decisions the difficult part is not in knowing what we ought to do; it is in being willing to pay the price involved. (54)

Courage is "that quality of mind which enables men to encounter danger or difficulty with firmness, or without fear or depression of spirits." (55) The courage of a leader is demonstrated in his being willing to face unpleasant and even devastating facts and conditions with equanimity, and then acting with firmness in the light of them, even though it means incurring personal unpopularity. Human inertia and opposition do not deter him. His courage is not a thing of the moment, but continues until the task is fully done. (56)

The spiritual leader will choose the hidden pathway of sacrificial service and the approval of His Lord rather than the flamboyant assignment and the adulation of the unspiritual crowd. (57)

QUALITIES ESSENTIAL TO LEADERSHIP II

"It is the courageous and triumphant ability to bear things, which enables a man to pass breaking point and not to break, and always to greet the unseen with a cheer."

(63) The man who is impatient with weakness will be defective in his leadership.

(64) Another important ingredient in leadership is the faculty of being able to draw the best out of other people. In achieving this, personal friendliness will accomplish much more than prolonged and even successful argument. It was John R. Mott's counsel to "rule by the heart. When logic and argument and other forms of persuasion fail, fall back on the heart-genuine friendship." (65)

THE INDISPENSABLE REQUIREMENT

Spiritual Leadership can be exercised only by Spirit-filled men. Other qualifications for spiritual leadership are desirable. This is indispensable. However brilliant a man may be intellectually, however capable an administrator, without this essential equipment he is incapable of giving truly spiritual leadership. (70) Reduced to its simplest terms, to be filled with the Spirit means that, through voluntary surrender and in response to appropriating faith, the human personality is filled, mastered, controlled by the Holy Spirit. (73)

THE LEADER AND HIS PRAYING

It is much easier to pray for temporal needs than for situations which involved the intricacies and stubbornness of the human heart. (82)

THE LEADER AND HIS TIME

The manner in which he employs the surplus hours after provision has been made for work, meals and sleep will make him either a mediocrity or a man to be reckoned with. (85) A sentence which will seldom be heard on the lips of a leader is "I don't have the time." Very seldom is it strictly true. It is usually the refuge of the small and inefficient person. The problem is not that of needing more time, but of making better use of the time that we have. (86)

His day should therefore be carefully planned. If it is his ambition to excel, there must be selection and rejection, then concentration on the things of paramount importance. (87) The strength of moral character is derived and conserved by the refusing of the unimportant. (90)

THE LEADER AND HIS READING

The man who desires to grow spiritually and intellectually will be constantly at his books. John Wesley had a passion for reading and most of it was done on horseback. He rode sometimes ninety and often fifty miles in a day. He read deeply on a wide range of subjects. It was his habit to travel with a volume of science or history or medicine propped on the pommel of his saddle, and in that way he got through thousands of volumes. After his Greek New Testament, three great books took complete possession of Wesley's mind and heart during his Oxford days. "It was about this time that he began the earnest study of the *Imitation of Christ*, *Holy Living and Dying* and *The Serious Call*.

These three books became very much his spiritual guides." He told the younger ministers of the Wesleyan societies either to read or get out of the ministry! (95) The determination to spend a minimum of half an hour a day in reading worthwhile books which provide food for the soul and further mental and spiritual development will prove richly rewarding to those who have been inclined to limit their reading to predigested or superficial books. (96) The spiritual leader should read for *spiritual quickening...mental stimulation...cultivation of style...acquiring of information*. He should read, therefore, to keep abreast of his age, and should be reasonably well informed in his own field. (97) We can afford to read only the best, and what will be most helpful to us in the fulfillment of our mission. In other words, our reading should be regulated largely by what we are and what we do or intend to do. (98) A student will find that his mental constitution is more affected by one book thoroughly mastered than by twenty books he has merely skimmed. (101)

THE COST OF LEADERSHIP

The man who has absorbed the spirit of the welfare state is not of the caliber required in a leader. If he is not willing to rise earlier and stay up later than others, to work harder and study more diligently than his contemporaries, he will not greatly impress his generation. (109)

In a letter to a young minister, Fred Mitchell once wrote: "I am glad to know that you are taking any blessing there is about the criticism brought against you by _____, in which case even his bitter attack will yield sweetness. A sentence which has been a great help to Mrs. Mitchell and myself is: 'It does not matter what happens to us, but our reaction to what happens to us is of vital importance.' I think you must expect more and more criticism, for with increasing responsibility this is inevitable. It causes one to walk humbly with God, and to take such action as He desires." (110)

SEARCHING TESTS TO LEADERSHIP

"The frontiers of the kingdom of God were never advanced by men and women of caution," said Mrs. H. W. K. Mowll. (117) "How does he face impossible situations?" was one of John R. Mott's tests for men of leadership caliber: It was his practice to encourage leaders to deal with impossible tasks rather than with easy ones, because that would draw out their powers, teach them their dependence on others, and drive them to God. "I long since ceased to occupy myself with minor things that can be done by others," he said. A true leader is at his best in baffling circumstances. (122) The bracing lesson is that God delights to shut people up to Himself and then, in response to their trust, display His power and grace in doing the impossible. (123)

THE ART OF DELEGATION

One definition of leadership is the ability to recognize the special abilities and limitations of others, combined with the capacity to fit each one into the job where he will do his best. He who is successful in getting things done through others is exercising the highest type of leadership. (127) The man in a place of leadership who fails to delegate is constantly enmeshed in a morass of secondary detail that not only overburdens him but deflects him from his primary responsibilities. He also fails to release the leadership potential of those under him. To insist on doing things oneself because it will be done better is not only a short-sighted policy but may be evidence of an unwarranted conceit. The leader who is meticulous in observing priorities adds immeasurably to his own effectiveness. Once delegation has been effected, he should manifest the utmost confidence in his colleagues.

It was said of Dr. A. B. Simpson, founder of the Christian and Missionary Alliance, that he trusted those in charge of the different institutions, and then left them free to exercise their own gifts. If they did not succeed, then he felt it was a reflection on his own leadership, for it was he who selected them for that position. Subordinates should be utterly sure of their leader's support in any action they feel called upon to take, no matter what the result, so long as they have acted within their terms of reference. This presupposes that areas of responsibility have been clearly defined and committed to writing so that no misunderstanding can occur. Many unhappy situations have arisen through failure to do this. (128)

THE REPLACEMENT AND REPRODUCTION OF LEADERS

The fact is that no man, however gifted and devoted, is indispensable to the work of the kingdom. (133) The most gifted leader has limitations that become apparent only after the complementary gifts of his successor cause the work to develop along lines for which the former leader was unfitted. It is often discovered that one who has been in a subordinate position develops totally unsuspected qualities when the weight of responsibility is thrown upon him. (135)

To tell a man he is called to be a leader is the best way of ensuring his spiritual ruin, since in the Christian world ambition is more deadly than any other sin, and, if yielded to, makes a man unprofitable in the ministry. The need is not so much for leaders as for saints and servants, and unless this fact is held steadily in the foreground, the whole idea of leadership training becomes dangerous. (138) Altogether apart from the merits of his movement, Frank Buchman, founder of Moral Rearmament, displayed a real flair for leadership. It was his claim that if he did not train others to do what he had been doing better than he did it, he would have failed. (139) It remains to be said that the training of leaders cannot be done by employing the techniques of mass production. It will require patient and careful instruction and prayerful and personal guidance of the individual over a considerable period. "Disciples are not (140) 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."

When God wants to drill a man
And thrill a man
And skill a man,
When God wants to mold a man
To play the noblest part;
When He yearns with all His heart
To create so great and bold a man
That all the world shall be amazed,
Watch His methods, watch His ways!
How He ruthlessly perfects
Whom He royally elects!
How He hammers him and hurts him,
And with mighty blows converts him
Into trial shapes of clay which
Only God understands;
While his tortured heart is crying
And he lifts beseeching hands!
How He bends but never breaks
When his good He undertakes;
How He uses whom He chooses
And with every purpose fuses him;
By every act induces him
To try His splendor out—
God knows what He's about! (141)