

Describing Leadership

Posted by Bob Young

Jesus personified leadership. He directed thinking, guided people, aimed them toward truth, and showed the way to love, forgiveness, and eternal life. The best place to start in defining leadership is with Jesus.

J.W. McLean and William Weitzel in their book, *Leadership: Magic, Myth or Method*, break down leadership into understandable parts. Here is a summary of their description: Leadership is--

A person

Involved in a process

Of influencing and developing a group of people

In order to accomplish a purpose

By means of spiritual power.

I like this description because of its simplicity and because I see the example of Christ. Leadership always begins with a person. Howard Hendricks said, "A leader is a person with a magnet in his heart and a compass in his head." Many have the skills to lead, but when one is called to apply those abilities in a leadership setting, one must respond affirmatively to God's call. When leaders understand and honor God's call, themselves, they serve better.

Next, a leader is involved in a process. Spiritual leadership involves a process of spiritual growth and development. The first step is that the leader must be "in process," exhibiting spiritual growth and development. If the followers are not "in process," little leadership is occurring. Leadership is distinct from management. We manage things, we lead people. In the church, management puts programs in process; leadership puts people "in process." Leading people through the process requires time. Leadership is never-ending; the process lasts a lifetime. There are few 'finished products' in the work of leadership. The process of growth and development will have many turns, ruts, detours, and steep inclines.

Third, there is no leadership without people who are being influenced and developed. The first person influenced and developed is the leader. The leader influences by example. The leader does what the followers are being led to do. Effective leadership requires that those served know love, admiration, appreciation, and acceptance. Unless the leader takes time to invest in people, there is no true leadership. Leadership is earned over time, given by followers to whom they trust to involve them in the process of spiritual growth and development. Leadership is not self-perpetuating, it is continually granted by those being led.

Fourth, leadership must focus on a purpose. This is the "why" of leadership. Leadership for what? The purpose should be stated. Understanding and keeping the focus on the purpose of a group requires insight that comes from thoughtful prayer, defining the mission, keeping the goals and plans foremost, effective implementation, monitoring, and evaluating effectiveness. The first step is that the leader is actively involved in accomplishing the purpose. The leader leads by doing what the followers are being called to do to fulfill the purpose.

Fifth, spiritual leadership is spiritually informed and empowered. Spiritual leadership does not depend on the human strength, power, or wisdom of the leader. Leadership means that the leader knows how to follow the Leader. A significant resource for an effective church leader is the spirituality that characterizes daily life and service. Servant leadership is impossible without a life defined by submissive service to God. A leader who does not develop spiritually through the guidance and gifting of the Father will hardly be a capable spiritual leader to bring others to the process of spiritual growth and development.