

MONDAY MANNA

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IS YOUR GOAL AUTHORITY – OR LEADERSHIP?

By Robert J. Tamasy

One time I heard someone wisely observe, “The problem with some people being named president of their company is that suddenly they think they need to start acting presidential.” Have you noticed that? Individuals suddenly feeling that they have to live up to their title by flexing their executive muscle.

Consultant Tim Kight says, “Your organisation can put you in a position of authority, but only you can put yourself in a position of leadership.” Being given a title and the authority that comes with it does not make someone a genuine leader any more than going into a garage makes someone a car. True leadership is earned, not bestowed.

It has been said that the only way to determine if you are a leader is to turn around to see if anyone is following you. So, what are some of the traits of a real leader, someone deserving of being followed? Here are some principles, firmly grounded in the Scriptures, that help to shape effective leadership:

Casting vision. Regardless whether they are in a for-profit company, a non-profit organisation, a church or an athletic team, people like to know where they are going, what their goals are. An effective leader casts vision, shows the way. *“Where there is no vision, the people perish [are unrestrained]”* (Proverbs 29:18).

After three years of leading His disciples, Jesus Christ – the greatest leader of all time – cast a clear, ambitious vision for them before ascending to heaven. He said, *“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations...teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you”* (Matthew 28:19-20).

Serving others. I have worked for bosses who expected me to serve them, and I have worked for bosses who were eager to serve me and everyone else for whom they were responsible. Who do you think were the easiest to serve in return, to give unquestioned loyalty? Again, Jesus demonstrated such leadership, serving others in a variety of ways, including washing their dirty, sandaled feet after a long day of traveling. *“For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:45). If necessary, would you be willing to give your own life for those who follow you? This is exactly what Jesus did. *“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends”* (John 15:13).

Developing people. There is a truism that the greatest test of a leader – his or her enduring legacy – is what happens to the company, organisation or mission after they are gone. Not one of us will live forever, so the wise leader strives to train and develop others so they can continue the work once they have left due to retirement, taking another position, or even death. The apostle Paul understood this well, exhorting his disciple/protégé Timothy, *“And the things you have heard me say in the presence of many witnesses entrust to reliable men who will also be qualified to teach others”* (2 Timothy 2:2).

Sharing the credit. In his classic book on management, *Good to Great*, Jim Collins writes of a leader that, “flat-out refused to take credit for his company’s success, attributing his good fortune to having great colleagues, successors, and predecessors.” Most workers will not hesitate to give their best when they know they will share in the credit for the work. *“Let another praise you, and not your own mouth; someone else, and not your own lips”* (Proverbs 27:2).

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Reflection/Discussion Questions

How would you define "authority"? How would you define "leadership"? Do you agree that there is a difference between the two? Why or why not?

What would you include if compiling a list of the necessary traits for being or becoming an effective leader?

Which of the qualities described in this "Monday Manna" stands out for you personally, seems most important? Explain your answer.

Have you known a leader who was truly inspirational, whose personal and professional qualities were such that the people he or she led would be willing to run through a proverbial wall for them, if asked? If so, what made that person outstanding? How did they exert their authority?

NOTE: If you have a Bible and would like to read more about this subject, consider the following passages:

Proverbs 10:7, 11:30, 11:2, 22:4, 28:2,16

Mark 12:28-31

Philippians 4:9