

LEADING BY GRACE

Rick James

Taking the Strain

Leadership is difficult¹. I know Christian leaders who feel tired, alone, overworked and unable to change their organisation for the better. They feel that they are carrying the full load of organisational responsibilities, while their members, or staff, or even clergy are not really pulling their weight. Others feel isolated and lonely as colleagues have elevated them onto a pedestal and are careful to say only what they think the leader wants to hear. Awe and even fear have replaced past friendships. Paradoxically many of these leaders also feel quite powerless to change how things are in their churches or Christian NGOs. Their efforts to make their organisations more effective are resisted and constrained by institutional systems and cultural expectations that seem to hold back any attempts at change.

Leadership is a divine but daunting calling. While it is a gift from God², it is certainly not a reward for past performance. It almost always involves considerable hardship and sacrifice – the supreme example is Jesus, who as our servant leader even laid down his life for his followers. And yet in contrast Jesus also said, ‘Come to me all of you who are weary and burdened and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light’³. Did Jesus even mean this to apply to leadership? This paper is aimed at encouraging Christian leaders, both men and women, to reflect on their leadership and allow God to transform them into the leaders that God wants them to be - into ‘faithful administrators of God’s grace’⁴, who will extend God’s kingdom in the world today.

*In what ways do you currently feel the strain of leadership?
Did Jesus really mean that the burden of leadership should be light?*

Answered Questions

Although leadership is undoubtedly difficult, we do have principles to guide us. Interestingly, the principles that are being emphasised by secular, academic theories of leadership are increasingly close to biblical truth. From the wealth of different leadership theories, current thinking about leadership is actually highlighting biblical principles to be the core of great leadership. ‘Servant leadership’, for example, is a very influential approach to leadership today (though some management academics mistakenly attribute it to being “originated by Robert Greenleaf in 1977” (Daft and Lengel 2000:192)). An extensive University of Chicago research project into leadership values in over 40 countries and with 17 million respondents concluded: ‘the list seemed too easy, too obvious – almost like sitting down with a zealous Bible student and asking, “What are the virtues the bible teaches us to practice?”’ (Lebow and Simon 1997: xxv). Secular thought is coming nearer to Christian truth,

¹ To paraphrase Scott Peck

² Romans 12 v.8

³ Matt 11 v. 28-30

⁴ 1 Pet 4 v. 10

rather than the other way round. Once again we discover that while ‘of making of many books there is no end’⁵, the ultimate answers to our questions, even about leadership, are found in the Bible.

The Reality of Leadership

As the answers to leadership are found in the Bible, this should give Christian leaders an advantage. We know the truth and it should set us free⁶. But are leaders of Christian organisations really distinctive in their leadership? Sadly the reality is that, despite our access to biblical truth, we do not apply it to our leadership. Some recent research on leadership in Malawi, for example, revealed that the church-based organisations were perceived to be much less servant-leadership oriented than secular ones! Some had boards of “church leaders who are very autocratic” and others with leaders “who believe that whatever they as clergy say is gospel truth” even about organisational issues (James 2003:17). How many of us reading this can honestly say that we really epitomise the servant leadership that Jesus introduced so forcefully?? We are all tempted to be like the religious leaders that Jesus severely reprimanded for doing things for men to see: wearing fine robes or suits, wanting the best seats in churches, enjoying being called by impressive titles⁸. We are hearers of the word⁹, but not always doers of the word with regard to our leadership. How many of us can say we have the understanding, humility, sense of self-worth or courage to apply the biblical principles of leadership in the radical way they are written?

In what ways are you most tempted to be like the Pharisees?

The Power of Leaders to Change Organisations

Yet if we do dare to apply biblical principles of leadership to our lives, we will be transformed as leaders. Although as leaders we may sometimes feel powerless to change our organisations, we are always able change one key element of that organisation, namely ourselves. In fact if leaders are serious about wanting their organisation to change, we have to be prepared to change ourselves. ‘Leadership’ is not about an individual, but a *relationship* between a leader and followers. If a leader changes, then the relationship with followers automatically changes and everything shifts. People look to the leader to set the example. Albert Schweitzer emphasised, ‘example is not the main thing in influencing others, it’s the only thing’ (quoted by Bridges 1995:61). We have to remove the plank from our own eye first. If we as leaders blame other people for problems in our organisations and merely try to persuade or force them to change their behaviour then nothing will change. We can only change ourselves and we can do this only by God’s grace.

“Leaders often have to go through the most major changes... If leadership can’t shift then no organisational process can succeed...If one person or position or perception changes then everything shifts.”

Allan Kaplan

Effective leadership is not simply about skills, qualifications, titles, positions or even responsibilities, it is actually about who we are and how we relate to God and other people. This paper will look at the principles of leadership (both biblical and academic) in two main areas:

- The character of a leader (self-leadership)

⁵ Eccles. 12 v. 12

⁶ John 8 v. 32

⁷ Luke 22 v. 25-27

⁸ Matt. 23

⁹ James 1 v. 22

- The relationship between the leader and the followers (leadership of others)

The exciting thing is that God can change us in both these areas. In fact, only God can change us in both these areas. As Jesus himself said 'Apart from me you can do nothing'¹⁰. But as we are changed and filled with God's Holy Spirit, like Joshua¹¹ and Stephen¹² we can become the leaders that God wants us to be. But before we do that we need to realise that in order to be changed, we first have to be prepared to know ourselves better, to become more self-aware.

Becoming More Self-Aware as Leaders

People obviously often rise to leadership through success, but such outer success can often lead us to ignore our inner lives. "Thus we become dangerous, for our power grows even as our consciousness dims. We become increasingly blind and small and we visit our projections onto the world around us. The very factors that propel us into leadership precipitate our downfall and promote pain and discomfort in those we lead" (Parker Palmer, quoted by Kaplan 2002:195). This tendency is often compounded by followers, who may become increasingly reluctant to give us honest feedback as we rise in leadership. Many leaders no longer hear from anyone how they are really doing, but instead only receive deceptive deference and flattery.

To be an effective leader requires that we look inside ourselves and overcome our fears of seeing ourselves as we really are. For 'if we say we have no sin, then we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us'¹³. This is a very basic biblical truth and yet how easily we let our pride blind us. One leader described to me that a core part of their leadership was regularly praying with the Psalmist, David, 'Search me O God and know my heart and see if there is not an unclean spirit within me'¹⁴. Thomas a Kempis, also reminded us some six hundred years ago, 'the highest and most profitable reading is the true knowledge and consideration of ourselves'¹⁵. This is mirrored in the first sentence of Calvin's Institutes which says, 'Our wisdom... consists almost entirely of two parts: the knowledge of God and of ourselves.' True knowledge of ourselves requires us to spend time with God and let his Holy Spirit shine his light in our 'hearts of darkness'. We need to listen attentively to the convicting work of the Holy Spirit, however painful it is. We know that it is only out of a close relationship with God that we operate effectively both as people and as leaders.

"an unexamined life is not worth living"

Socrates

Secular leadership theory again is approaching biblical truth by emphasising that effective leaders are highly self-aware (Kakabadse 1999, Quinn 2000, Adair 2002). According to Dotlich and Noel "Leaders with self-awareness are more likely to move quickly and confidently and in different directions, without needing to be consistently right and in control" (1999: 187). If we do not really know ourselves, we cannot act decisively and we lack the internal security necessary to make a decision that runs counter to conventional wisdom. Instead our decisions become more like those of Pilate, who because he 'wanted to please the crowd'¹⁶ sent Jesus to be crucified.

When did you last let God thoroughly search your heart and bring to light the dark places?

¹⁰ John 15: 5

¹¹ Deut 34:9

¹² Acts 6:5

¹³ 1 John 1 v.8

¹⁴ Psalm 139 v. 23

¹⁵ The Imitation of Christ :4

¹⁶ Mark 15:15

The Essence of Self-Leadership

To be an effective leader of other people requires first and foremost that we are able to lead ourselves. Biblical example and leadership theory emphasise five important elements of self-leadership, which we shall examine in turn:

1. Having a Vision from God
2. Having the Courage to take Risks
3. Being Open to Learning and Change
4. Humbling Yourself as a Servant
5. Maintaining Integrity

1. Having a Vision from God

The importance of vision is central to most secular texts on leadership. As Daft points out, 'In humans the yearning to pursue a dream is imprinted on our unconscious' (1998:99). In order to inspire other people, leaders first have to have a vision themselves - for 'where there is no vision the people perish'¹⁷, or as some versions better translate, 'where there is no revelation the people cast off restraint'. A vision must be a revelation from God. This was clear throughout the Old Testament with Abraham, Moses, Gideon, and Daniel. In the New Testament too, an authentic vision comes from God. Even Jesus himself said, 'the Son can only do what he sees the Father doing... For the Father loves the Son and shows him all he does'¹⁸. To find our vision requires us to hear from God.

A vision is a picture of the future that produces passion (Hybels 2002:33). This vision is much more than just a personal desire for the church or organisation to grow or for us to be successful. We can limit God's use of us as leaders by our small and sometimes selfish dreams. A vision is finding out what God expects from our life, not what we expect from God - then we need to be obedient to that 'vision from heaven'¹⁹. Leadership requires a calling, finding out what we were born to do.

For some Christian leaders, they may have started with a clear sense of God's vision for their lives, but strangely as they have moved up the leadership ladder, their sense of vision has dimmed. Their passion has cooled. They only have a very general sense of what God expects from them in their leadership, and cannot claim to 'hear a voice behind them saying this is my way, walk in it'²⁰. If as leaders we no longer know enough about God's unique purpose for us, we need to listen to God and find out. By his grace he will reveal his plans for our lives.

What is God's unique purpose for your life?

2. Having the Courage to Act and Take Risks

This vision from God helps leaders be dynamic and action-oriented, prepared to lead and take risks. Effective leaders do not wait for things to happen, they make them happen. But having the vision is not always enough. We see that biblical leaders like Moses and Esther still needed the courage from God to take the risk of leading their people. Peter needed immense courage to leave the boat and step onto the water in the midst of a storm. Courage and boldness are necessary to overcome our natural fears and come from a conviction that we are

"The greatest leaders have been sustained by a belief that they were in some ways instruments of destiny... in harmony with some greater, more universal purpose"

John Adair

¹⁷ Proverbs 29:18

¹⁸ John 5:19-20

¹⁹ Acts 26:19

²⁰ Isaiah 30 v. 21

fulfilling a divine purpose. No wonder it says 'do not fear' 365 times in the Bible.

Last year I worked with a remarkable leader, whose vision enabled God to transform a corrupt and almost dead Evangelical Fellowship in Africa. Desmond (not his real name) had been appointed as the voluntary coordinator the previous year. He was appalled by the shocking condition the 'Fellowship'. There were deep divides in the organisation, and conflict was so bad that members were even burning each other's churches. The Fellowship was seen as merely a political instrument of the State President and two prominent board members were believed to receive regular gifts of cash to keep the evangelical community partisan. Donors, including Tearfund, had long-since disappeared. But Desmond had a dream. He relentlessly pursued that dream, despite the personal risk (the President had imprisoned Desmond some years earlier). But Desmond believed passionately that God wanted to revive the Fellowship and some months later at an 'Organisational Revival' workshop, saw God bring about conviction, repentance and new life to the organisation in a quite amazing way. People confessed to having prostituted the organisation to the President and rather than going back to donors to ask for funding, the workshop participants instead pledged money themselves. Soon after the workshop the Evangelical Fellowship even apologised to the mainstream churches for the way they had behaved in the past.

When was the last time you really 'stepped out of the boat'?

3. Being Able to Learn and Change

Bennis and Thomas's study of highly successful American business leaders this century concluded that 'to the extent that any single quality determines success, that quality is adaptive capacity (the ability to learn from difficult experiences)... History has certainly made it clear that adversity often separates winners from losers' (2003:91). These 'crucible' experiences are places where essential questions are asked, who am I? Who could I be? Who should I be? Extracting wisdom from such

"You can never change society, if you have not changed yourself... If I had not been in prison I would not have been able to achieve the most difficult task in life and that is changing yourself".

Nelson Mandela

very upset and angry, she became convicted that they were right and that in order for the vision of the organisation to be accomplished, she had to apologise, learn and change.

Effective leaders are captivated by learning. They are constantly on the lookout for new ways to enhance their ability to learn. A study of top NGO leaders in South Asia revealed that they 'had a fascination with knowledge and learning. ... What has been striking has been the ability of their founder leaders to change and adapt' (Hailey and James 405). Rather than wait until they are forced to change by circumstance, effective leaders change ahead of time.

All of us, however, find changing ourselves very threatening. It is highly likely that becoming more of the leader that God wants us to be will challenge cultural expectations of how we as leaders are meant to behave. Certainly such changes will be in conflict

difficulties is what distinguishes successful leaders from the rest. The Bible overflows with examples of 'adaptive capacity' of learning and emerging from difficulties, perhaps epitomised by Joseph's life story. It also frequently condemns people for being 'stiff-necked' - unwilling to learn and change. I am reminded of one successful leader in Malawi, who early in her leadership was told by her board that they no longer wanted to work with her, because she gave them no idea of what she was doing. Although initially

"It is always better to take change by the hand and lead it where you want it to go before it takes you by the throat and drags you off in any direction"

John Adair

with our pride and our inherent human fears and insecurities²¹. For leaders to be prepared to change in quite significant ways requires that we really 'die to self' and let God create our character anew in his image.

In what ways have you significantly changed as a leader in the last two years?

4 Humbling Yourself as a Servant

But for us to be able to learn and change requires us to constantly humble ourselves. Humility is the core of Christian leadership. Indeed the model of leadership that Jesus gave us was of humble, servant leadership²². While servant leadership is easy attractive jargon lending itself to powerful sermons, it sometimes seems incredibly difficult and uncomfortable to put into practice. Jesus's teaching and example of washing his followers' feet²³ is as radical and rare today (even in the church) as it was then. He said very bluntly: "The Kings of the Gentiles lord it over them: and those who exercise authority over them call themselves benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead the greatest among you should be like the youngest and the one who rules, like the one who serves... But I am among you as one who serves"²⁴ and at another time, 'whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant'²⁵.

Pride is therefore a very tempting and dangerous sin for leaders. It closes us off from changing by blaming someone or something else for a problem. No wonder 'God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble'²⁶. Roman generals, had an understanding of the power of this temptation, for when they were being carried on chariots in triumphal processions, they had a slave constantly whispering in their ear, "Remember you are only human" (Carr 1998:28). Moses proved to be a great leader largely because he 'was a very humble man, more humble than anyone else on the face of the earth'²⁷.

Humility and brokenness are not one-off events when we become Christians, but an on-going state of being. We are called to 'in humility, consider others better than yourself'²⁸. As Christian leaders we

"I believe that the first test of a truly great man is his humility. I do not mean by humility a doubt in his own power or hesitation in speaking opinions... All great men not only know their business, but usually know that they know it ... but they have a curious sense of powerlessness, feeling that the greatness is not in them, but through them; that they could not do or be anything else than God made them"

John Ruskin

are just as dependent on God's grace and forgiveness as anyone else and often more so. We are not special just because we are in leadership. I recall a persuasive example of this need for humility and brokenness: I was in the office of a Tearfund partner when the Chair of the Board and Director were having a major argument. There was considerable anger and

²¹ The aforementioned research in Malawi revealed that some leaders did not want to change because some were addicted to the pride generated by all the attention, handshakes, congratulations and media coverage they received. Others because they felt change would threaten their public image and still others because to change may make them look under-rated and inferior.

²² Phil. 2: 5-11

²³ John 13

²⁴ Luke 22:25 – 27

²⁵ Matt 20: 20-28

²⁶ 1 Peter 5:5

²⁷ Numbers 12 : 3

²⁸ Phil. 2:3

frustration. There seemed to be no progress until, in the midst of the heated debate, the Director suddenly got down on his knees and asked me to pray for him for forgiveness. As the three of us prayed and tears flowed, they repented of the ways in which they had hurt each other. They forgave each other and were able to let God heal their relationship.

Would people honestly describe you, like Moses, as 'a very humble' person?

5. Maintaining your Integrity

Integrity is an essential element of effective leadership. Living life 'before God' is a great help to integrity. Integrity is about being honest, truthful and consistent. According to Bennis's recent research, 'Effective leaders were the same people on the job and off. Leading was not only what they did, it was who they were' (2002:xv). Alan Fowler suggests that adherence to moral principles and enduring consistent drive is much more important for leaders than a charismatic personality (2000). Again, secular research on leadership is in line with biblical truth.

Consistent studies of what followers look for in their leaders have prioritised 'integrity'. If as leaders "we try and live our lives in separate compartments, one for doing, one for being, why then for part of the time we are living a lie and the truth is not in us"²⁹ (Handy 1991:13). Integrity is about bridging the gap in between who we are and who we would like to be.

"Character is what you are in the dark"

D.L Moody

Yet we know that we are still far from perfect and that 'the heart is deceitful above all things'³⁰. As leaders we are probably open to more temptations particularly in the areas of money, status and power as well as sexual fidelity. While the cases of Christian leaders falling prey to sexual temptation may be more infamous, our love for money and power has also undermined our integrity. Jesus too experienced temptations and set the example of resisting even to sweating drops of blood³¹. Our integrity is a priceless commodity. We must guard it with our lives.

In which areas do you have to carefully guard against temptation?

The Essence of Leadership of Others

Being able to lead oneself is essential to be able to lead others effectively. Leadership does not exist without followers. Leadership is about the *relationship* between leaders and followers. Our leadership is also only successful in so far as our followers are successful. Like Moses, we need to realise that we cannot do everything ourselves. Jethro's words to him apply to many of us today 'What you are doing is not good. You and these people who come to you will only wear yourselves out. The work is too heavy for you alone. You cannot handle it'³². Recent research on the most successful leaders concludes that 'in virtually every case our leaders are successes because of their ability to identify, sustain and inspire other talented people' (Bennis and Thomas 2002:10). To be the leader that God wants us to be, we need to be able to lead others by:

1. Understanding them and believing in their potential
2. Empowering them responsibly and with a vision
3. Mentoring and training them
4. Loving and forgiving them

²⁹ 1 John 1:8

³⁰ Jer. 17 v9

³¹ Luke 22 v. 44

³² Exodus 18:17-18

1. Understand them and Believe in their Potential

In order to lead other people effectively, we have to first understand them. As Jesus said, 'I know my sheep and my sheep know me'³³. We need spiritual discernment to see people with God's eyes. We have to understand people's character and current competence to identify which fit with the organisation's needs; and see how we can support them to reach their potential. This does not mean that we are blind to their limitations and faults. Some problems of leadership in churches can be traced back to poor selection of second-line leadership. Sometimes appointments are made on the basis of sympathy or as a reward for loyalty or long-term service. This is clearly not God's way. God chose Elisha to succeed Elijah³⁴, not one of the long-serving 50 prophets from Bethel. Naively believing in the people without the character or competence will end in disaster. We have to seek to understand who God made them to be and the talents he has given them, in order to enable them to perform the unique purpose that God has given them.

Yet more than simply understanding them, we need to believe in them - enough to trust them with significant responsibility. Staff are sometimes viewed more as a liability than an asset, even in Christian organisations. Some leaders feel they have trusted staff in the past, only to be let down and disappointed. Many are really not sure whether the staff have the capacity and commitment to perform. One Christian leader in a major secular NGO that I know has really struggled to delegate to staff and compromise her self-professed perfectionism. This lack of trust, however, inevitably led to missed deadlines and poor organisational performance, which was synonymous with her poor leadership. She says her faith has enabled her to both trust people more and also to trust Him more for the outcome.

"Treat a man as he is and he will remain as he is. Treat a man as he can and should be and he will become as he can and should be"

Goethe

Although we know that we are just one part of the body³⁵, leaders sometimes imagine they are the most important part. In fact the essential role of a great leader is to draw out the best in their staff. As John Buchan put it "the task of leadership is not to put greatness into humanity, but to elicit it, for the greatness is already there"³⁶ (not surprising as we are created in the image of God). One of the difficult responsibilities is that 'the leader must go first in the game of trust'. Leaders must be discerning enough to believe in people's potential first in order for that potential to be unlocked.

Again Jesus sets us an example. Despite Peter's painful denials when Jesus was arrested, Jesus believed in Peter's potential to become the rock upon which the church was built. People become what others expect them to be, after all Gideon was hardly a mighty man of valour before the angel called him that. Great leadership involves following God's example, 'who gives life to the dead and calls things that are not as though they were'³⁷. We have to believe in people's potential by seeing them through God's eyes.

When was the last time you chose to believe in someone, despite the circumstances, and saw them learn and change as a result?

2. Empower them Responsibly and with a Vision

³³ John 10:14

³⁴ 1 Kings 19 v. 16

³⁵ 1 Cor. 12

³⁶ quoted by Adair 2002: 256

³⁷ Romans 4:17b

If we believe and understand our followers, we will be in a position to empower them responsibly. Jesus modelled an empowering style of leadership towards his disciples. He gave them responsibility, such as trusting his disciples enough to send them out two-by-two without him. Empowerment has been described as how one servant helps another servant to serve well. If staff are empowered then the organisation is likely to be more effective, because more people are pulling their weight.

“Show me a leader who is decisive, fiercely independent, dominant and in control and I’ll show you someone who doesn’t have a clue about how to lead in today’s organisations”

David Dotlich

This empowerment is not, however, without a vision and direction. If we want motivated staff, we have to create meaning for our followers. Such meaning is the difference between one person who feels that their job is ‘building a cathedral for God’, while another feels his identical job is merely ‘carrying bricks’. We need to consistently inspire followers with the vision that God has given us - of the land of milk and honey. Victor Frankl, the eminent psychiatrist, points out that “striving to find a meaning in one’s life is the primary motivational force in man” (1946:121). But more than simply vision, responsible empowerment involves sitting down with staff and specifying desired results, ensuring that any important guidelines and principles are followed and accountabilities are clear. This is about mutually agreeing directions and expectations, not about ensuring control. Many leaders behave as if their main role were to discipline staff. Such leaders inevitably find their organisations stagnating and later dying.

In what ways are you inspiring people to ‘build a cathedral to God’?

3 Mentor and Train them

In order for our staff to reach their potential, it is not simply a question of giving them power. What some leaders do is that when they realise the potential benefits of empowering staff, they suddenly delegate. They are surprised when the staff do not immediately react well to their new authority. Staff will only feel comfortable taking on extra responsibilities if they feel they have the competence to do it. It is a gradual process for staff to take more responsibility, which places time-consuming demands on the leader, who needs to act as mentor and coach.

If leaders understand the capacity of their staff and are anxious to help them reach their potential, they spend considerable time and effort training and developing their followers. John Maxwell describes staff development as ‘the most important lesson of leadership’ (Maxwell 1993:179) Some leaders estimate that over 30% of their time is devoted to this (quoted by Hybels 2002:133). Certainly this ‘disciplining’ was at the very heart of Jesus leadership. We too therefore need to actively mentor our staff. Mentoring is not about telling them how they should behave, but sitting down with them, listening to them, discussing the decisions they want to make, asking questions, certainly challenging them, but leaving them with the responsibility for taking their own decisions.

“The person that influences me most is not he who does great deeds, but he who makes me feel I can do great deeds”

Richard Daft

How much of your time do you spend consciously training and mentoring your followers?

4 Love them and Forgive them

At the heart of leadership of others is loving them and being able to forgive them when they go wrong. Charles Handy relates asking a personnel manager why his development programme was so

successful, “In one word he said, ‘Forgiveness. We give them big jobs. They make mistakes. We correct them, but we forgive them. They learn and grow.’” (1991:124). If leaders want staff to take greater responsibility they need to be ready to accept mistakes and forgive those mistakes. If we try and control the situation tightly in order to avoid any mistakes, we will not have delegated responsibility.

As leaders we may feel that Jesus’s command ‘Do not judge’³⁸ does not really apply to our leadership. After all surely we have to judge them to manage them. But Jesus is quite categorical. The Bible emphasises love and grace, not judgement. Jesus loved Zaccheus unconditionally and believed in him

Men think there are circumstances when they may treat their fellow human beings without love, but no such circumstances exist. If you feel no love for men leave them alone. Occupy yourself with things, with your own self, but not with men”

even though he appeared a corrupt and cruel man. Zacchaeus’s amazing act of repentance was a response to this love. Similarly, Peter was transformed, not by Jesus’ condemning him for his denials, but by his forgiveness. Loving our staff is critical - even leadership academics like John Adair say, “No one can be a really good leader who does not love members of their team or organisation”.

Leo Tolstoy

Loving our staff involves listening to them, trusting them with our honesty and giving them credit where

they deserve it (or wherever we can find it). Keeping people dependent on us is not love; real love is about extending ourselves so that our followers can reach their God-given potential. Jesus’ example of leadership to us was of the good shepherd who lays down his life for his sheep³⁹.

In what practical ways could you love your followers better?

CONCLUSION

Leadership is difficult, but God promises to ‘equip us with everything good for doing his will’⁴⁰. But to do his will requires that we become the leaders that he wants us to be. The qualities of leaders that God requires are deceptively simple. They are the qualities that God has encouraged in his people throughout the Bible. They are qualities, not just for good leadership, but for good living. If we really do find and follow God’s vision for our lives; if we do learn and change; if we have the courage to take risks and act; if we humble ourselves and retain our integrity then we are able to lead ourselves at least. To lead others, we need to believe in them, understand them, empower them, mentor and train them and love and forgive them. Easy words to write or preach, but very difficult to follow in the heat of organisational chaos or crisis. We will all undoubtedly fail as leaders, but as we come back to God in real repentance and spend time in his presence, by God’s grace we will be transformed into the likeness of his Son⁴¹, Jesus Christ – our model of true leadership.

What then will you do differently in your leadership in future?

³⁸ Matt 7:1

³⁹ John 10:10-11

⁴⁰ Hebrews 13:21

⁴¹ 2 Cor. 3:18

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