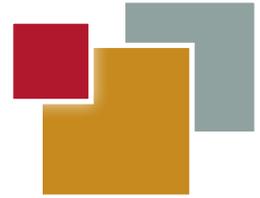




LEADERSHIP

1:: Influence



Warm Up

- > Personal introductions: name, where they work, etc.
- > Name someone who has influenced your life? How did they impact you?

Study

1:: SERIES INTRODUCTION

The purpose of Discussion Groups is to discuss relevant life issues using the Bible as our point of reference. In this four week series on Leadership, our goal is to examine how to grow as people of influence. Our hope is that you will be inspired and informed, and have a good time in the process.

2:: LEADERSHIP DEFINED

In this series, we are defining leadership as “influence.” Kenneth Blanchard, author of *The One Minute Manager*, describes it this way, “The key to successful leadership today is influence, not authority.” John Maxwell is even more to the point, “All leadership is influence.”

As the saying goes, if you are leading and no one is following, you are only out for a walk. This means that leadership is not about a title, position, or training; it is the ability to influence people toward a specific direction.

3:: THE POWER OF INFLUENCE

J.R. Miller states “There have been meetings of only a moment, which have left impressions for life, for eternity. No one can understand that mysterious thing we call influence, yet every one of us continually exerts influence, either to heal, to bless, to leave marks of beauty; or to wound, to hurt, to poison other lives.”¹

It is easy to be casual about our desire for influence, but, as Spiderman’s uncle said, “With great power comes great responsibility.” Therefore, it is not enough to simply want influence — both Mother Theresa and Hitler were influential people, but only one was worth following. Having influence is one thing, leading people in the right direction is quite another.

4:: LEADING WITH THE RIGHT REASON

So how can we tell if we are using our influence positively? It is by clarifying our motives. Perhaps you have had a boss who talks like a team player but you heard he’s trying to get promoted. As a result, you feel used and manipulated by how he treats you. We simply do not trust leadership when their motives are in question.

Blaine Lee, in his book, *The Power Principle*, describes two harmful methods for gaining influence. The first is control — using any means available to get others to do what we want, even if it requires manipulation or force. While we might find ourselves using control at times, we know it is damaging.

The second method is compromise — “I have something you want; you have something I want. Let’s make a deal.” Why would this method also be considered unhealthy? It is because both methods are motivated by selfishness. While compromise might look better, people do not trust those who lack integrity or do not care about others.

The best leadership is motivated by service of others, not power or compromise. Look how Jesus contrasted selfish leadership with servant leadership:

“You know that the rulers in this world lord it over people, and officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But... whoever wants to be a leader among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be the slave of everyone else.” *Mark 10:42-44*

Ultimately, right motives not only increase the *level* of our influence, but also the *quality*. Right motives lead to right actions.

Personal Application

- > Regarding that person you mentioned in the Warm up questions, what do you think his or her motives were? How did that make a difference?
- > Why do selfish motives undermine our level of influence?
- > How do leaders make their selfish motives sound noble?

Prayer

What can we pray for in your life?

¹ J.R. Miller, *The Building of Character* (New York: Thomas Y. Crowell, 1894).



LEADERSHIP

2:: Leadership Ladder



Warm Up

- > What is a lesson about growing in influence that you have learned?
- > How can we tell when we are increasing in our level of influence?

Study

1:: THE LEADERSHIP LADDER

John Maxwell, in *Developing the Leader within You*, outlines five increasing levels of leadership or influence:

#1 Position — based on a role. People follow because they have to. Our leadership is limited to our job description. In this level, we grow in influence by taking responsibility and doing it with consistent excellence.

#2 Permission — based on relationship. People follow because they want to. Here, influence grows by sincerely helping others. It has been said that 15% of our success is product knowledge, and 85% is “people knowledge.”

#3 Production — based on results. People follow out of respect for what we have done for the organization. Influence grows by the ability to successfully organize people and resources toward a clear purpose.

#4 People Development — based on reproduction. People follow because of what we have done for them. Our influence here is in building a leadership team we personally mentor and develop.

#5 Personhood — based on personal respect. Ultimately, the quality of an organization is determined by the quality of the leader. This is supported by Jim Collins, in *Good to Great*. His research concluded that the key qualities in successful leaders are about their character, things like personal humility, unwavering resolve, accepting personal blame, and giving credit to others.

2:: CLIMBING THE LADDER

So how do we climb the leadership ladder? What increases our influence the most, is not new skills, a better team or more resources, but a selfless character. Ironically, the more we focus on self-promotion the more distant it becomes; while the more we focus on others and making them great, the more our influence and therefore personal success, increases.

Notice then, that each rung is really a description of who we are to make great: 1.Our boss » 2.Co-workers » 3.Team » 4.Leaders » 5.Organization. As we make these people great, we widen and deepen our sphere of influence. So how do we grow this kind of character?

3:: THE ONLY WAY UP IS DOWN

Typically, people view the ideal road to success as a steady upward climb. The hope is that we can move from success to success, from mountain peak to mountain peak. What people fail to realize is, that it is actually our ability to travel through life’s valleys that determines our level of success.

Valleys are an opportunity to see and address our character flaws, if we use those experiences properly. If we blame others or justify ourselves, then we are only reinforcing the pride and selfishness that contributed to our problems. However, if we first address the part we played in our problems, then humility and wisdom will rise from the ashes.

Jesus ~ “If you cling to your life, you will lose it, and if you let your life go, you will save it.” **Luke 17:33**

The truth is that we like selfishness and pride (in ourselves that is!). They are only defeated by pursuing something greater than what they can provide, namely, the vision of building something greater than ourselves.

Jesus ~ “I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.” **John 12:24**

Personal Application

- > At what level are you on the leadership ladder at work, at home...?
- > How can life’s valleys move you up the leadership ladder?
- > What character flaw must you address to grow to the next level?

Prayer

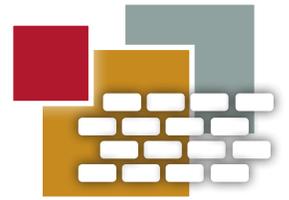
What can we pray for in your life?

¹ Dale Carnegie, *How to Win Friends and Influence People*, Pocket Reissue edition, 1990.



LEADERSHIP

3:: Foundations



Warm Up

- > How does a company increase the productivity of its employees?
- > How do parents motivate their children to behave?

Study

1:: FOUNDATION OPTION #1

We began this series by defining leadership as influence. We then described climbing the ladder of influence in terms of making others great. Today, we will examine the foundation upon which our ladder rests.

There are two foundations for leadership. We are calling the first option Task-based leadership. This is where the leader simply delegates tasks or re-sponsibilities that need to be accomplished.

In this kind of leadership, the basis of our relationship with people is getting them to do what we want. This is not easy, however, because this model produces a low level of 'buy in' or ownership in people. Therefore, we are left with having to micro-manage people and offer incentives or threats to keep their performance at an acceptable level.

2:: FOUNDATION OPTION #2

The second option is called Values-based leadership, where a leader discusses the values that a project is meant to express. In this model, people are empowered because they are responsible to promote a value, not just do a task, and the leaders can trust them to carry out the heart of their responsibilities. Values-based leadership promotes these things:

- **Stability:** change is simply an attempt to better achieve the same values.
- **Ownership:** people can join at a heart versus task level.
- **Creativity:** people can try new things to better achieve the values.
- **Solutions:** we use values to confront problems and achieve unity.

So what are values? They are not goals or tasks; they are the underlying principles that shape them both. They are the reasons for how we make decisions and how we execute them. Values are the "why" behind what we do.

"Values... are the deep-seated, pervasive standards that influence every aspect of our lives.... Values constitute our personal "bottom-line."

"We lead from the essence of who we are as a person."

Values are deeply personal; they are core convictions. Consequently, lasting change in an individual, family or business only occurs when their values change. Without a heart change, people will eventually "boomerang" back to their old ways.

3:: HOW DO WE INSTILL VALUES?

So how do we foster change at a values or heart level? The greatest obstacle is a leader who interacts at a functional level but expects a heart response.

While old leadership models recommend keeping a professional distance, we need to live transparently before others. We need to share our dreams and struggles, invite feedback and treat others as whole people. This kind of leadership enables us to impart our heart and values, and not just delegate tasks.

When Jesus chose those through whom He would build His life work, His first motive was simply for them to "be with Him" (Mark 3:14). When Paul described his relationship with those whom he led, listen to what he said:

"Because we loved you, it was a joy to us to give you not only the gos-pel of God but our very hearts — so dear had you become to us." *1 Thessalonians 2:8.*

When our deepest value is to love those we lead, they will respond in like kind; "buy in" will no longer be an issue. Therefore, the right foundation for leadership is not to just give away responsibilities, but our hearts. It is then that we will do more than accomplish great tasks, we will build great people.

Personal Application

- > What is the difference between task-based and values-based leadership?
- > What makes it difficult for you to lead others at a heart level?

Prayer

What can we pray for in your life?

¹ Kouzes & Posner, *The Leadership Challenge* (New Jersey: Jossey-Bass, 2003), 212.

² Lillas Brown, Business Faculty; University of Saskatchewan.



LEADERSHIP

4:: Purpose



Warm Up

- > What would others say is an important thing you have done in your life?
- > How do you determine the value of your activities?

Study

1:: THE TOP OF THE LADDER

We have said in this series that leadership is influence, and that we grow in influence by making others great and being values versus task driven. But the greatest question remains: "Where are we leading people?" Many climb the ladder of success only to discover it's leaning against the wrong wall.

"I find the greatest thing in this world is not so much where we stand, as it is what direction we are heading." U.S. Supreme Court Justice Oliver W. Holmes 1841-1935

Typically, we focus our life direction on what we like or do well. This is how we choose our professions — it is less about what we can give to the world and more about what we enjoy or can succeed at.

A purpose, though, isn't worthwhile just because we are good at it. There is a saying: "Just because you can, doesn't mean you should." The challenge in life is to not settle for activities that keep us busy, because all they do is dis-tract us from engaging in purposes that truly matter.

2:: FINDING WHAT MATTERS

So what is a truly meaningful life direction? There is only purpose that has eternal value: love.

Matthew 22:37-40 "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the first and greatest com-mandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.'"

Often, "love" is viewed as a feeling or as romance, but in fact love is a motive, where we live for the benefit of others. Love and selfishness, then, are oppo-site motives. Listen to Jesus describe people's activity at church on the basis of their motives:

"...He watched the rich people dropping their gifts in the collection box. Then a poor widow came by and dropped in two small coins. 'I tell you the truth' Jesus said, 'this poor widow has given more than all the rest of them. For they have given a tiny part of their surplus, but she, poor as she is, has given everything she has.'" **Luke 21:1-4**

Jesus is teaching that our value in this life is determined by the quality of our love for God and others. This is a sobering reality, however, for love is a rare commodity. The Bible goes so far as to describe our hearts as "the most de-ceitful of all things, and desperately wicked." So how do we become loving people?

3:: DETERMINING OUR DIRECTION

The answer begins with being a follower. When we do what others need, our focus away from ourselves, which is the first step in love. True success, then, is first about how we follow, and only then about how we lead. Listen to how Jesus, God in the flesh and arguably the most important figure in history, de-scribed his life purpose:

"I don't speak on my own authority. The Father who sent me has com-manded me what to say and how to say it. And I know his commands lead to eternal life; so I say whatever the Father tells me to say." **John 12:49-50**

Jesus was willing to follow before He led. But we also learn another equally important lesson: choose wisely who you follow. We all follow someone or something — the only question is whether who or what is actually worth fol-lowing. Jesus' life purpose was so remarkable because He chose to follow God.

So where should we lead people? From this study, we see that it is a direction that is motivated by love and directed by God. This is the right wall against which to lean our ladder.

Personal Application

- > Why is "following" the beginning of becoming a loving person?
- > Describe the qualities of a leader that is worth following.

Prayer

What can we pray for in your life?