



Leadership Link

Happy New Year



Dear Friend

A while ago I read an article by Brian McLaren called 'Dorothy Leadership' which explored the way in which leadership is evolving to fit the new context we're in. I've adapted and added to his article and used a number of his headings to describe my own convictions on how we need to lead in today's post-Christian, post-modern culture.

Intellectual knowledge needs to be superceded by wisdom. As we move beyond modernity people are less impressed with analysis, knowledge, information, "facts" and belief systems. People don't like experts anymore. Instead, we are attracted to leaders who possess the rare quality of wisdom and whose lives are characterised by depth, balance and emotional authenticity. In short, leaders are people who live life well. Such leaders possess a moral authority more closely linked to character than credentials. Character makes trust possible and trust makes leadership possible, Mark Green has been quoted as saying "wisdom is the new evangelism" and I agree with him. My friends have first been intrigued by watching how I've lived my life, through good times and hard times, before then becoming drawn to the love of God which has fuelled what they've seen.

The confident apologist becomes the leading apologist. Instead of defending old answers, the new kind of leader will be ready to apologise. In modernity, you gained credibility by always being right; in postmodernity, you gain authority by admitting when you're wrong and apologizing humbly. That kind of humility and vulnerability, is one of a leader's most winsome characteristics. I find if I model humility and the ability to apologise, those around me are able to reach that place too.

Once, leaders were removed from those they led; now they have to be intentionally real. Leaders win hearts when they are real, share their heart, self-disclose, and are honest in letting others in. Logical, rational, unemotional leaders may win deals, but don't win people. I will not communicate a message without being honest in how the message affects me and how I have outworked it, or am currently outworking it.

Broadcasters need to be replaced by listeners. In the postmodern world, it's not how loud you shout, it's how deeply you listen that counts. In Gordon Brown's first speech as Prime Minister he said 'my first job is to listen'. Effective leaders listen to the hearts of those they lead. A leader first creates a safe place that attracts people, and then she empowers them by listening and believing in them. Today's leaders need to be intuitive, those who listen with their eyes and who notice the subtle, non-verbal forms of communication. I have realised more and more how intuitive my leadership is and now nearly fifteen years on I am finally allowing my intuition to guide many of my decisions.

Historically, some leaders were driven by success. **Today, leaders that last the long haul, are driven by servanthood.** In modernity, a leader loved their organisational structures but in postmodernity leaders love their teams. Today's leadership is not about the people serving the leader and their goals but leaders helping others become all that they are created to be. Our style of leadership needs to be empowering and ennobling, not patronizing, paternalistic, or creating dependency. We respect people's dignity and treat them as spiritual adults, not children. I personally refuse to make people's choices for them. I will listen, look at options and pray with them but I always ensure the spiritual principle of free choice is not undermined.

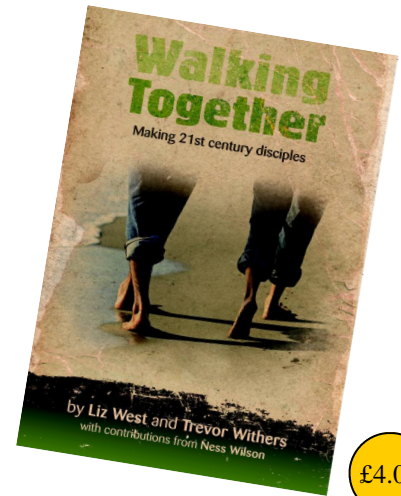
Solo act leaders are replaced by community builders. On this journey of leadership, leaders are glad to be in a team. We value co-operation rather than competition. The most effective leaders today know how to partner with others.

The gift of leadership is a privilege, but also a challenge and we all need help to become the best leaders we can be in today's new world. I guess the final distinctive of today's leader is that of a 'life long learner' and with that attitude in place, we are able to keep changing, growing and adapting our leadership style to stay effective and connected to the culture around us.

Yours in Jesus, Ness Wilson

Open Heaven Church Loughborough

Ness Wilson makes contributions to Walking Together.



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