

# **GOD AND LEADERS**

**God's call to transform leaders**



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Do you know how bamboo grows?<sup>1</sup> It is the fastest growing plant on earth yet also the slowest.<sup>2</sup> Bamboo can take several years before you see any growth. You may wonder, does this bamboo plant have issues or will it survive? In fact, there's a saying among those who grow bamboo "The first year it sleeps. The second year it creeps. The third year it leaps." You see, people who grow bamboo are relaxed when they see no visible signs of growth in those beginning months and years. They understand the growth process and trust the outcome is dependent on more than their own agenda. Once the environmental culture and climate are right, eventually the tipping point comes and growth happens. In fact, when bamboo plants hit their growth season they can grow up to four feet in twenty-four hour period, and reach upwards of 250 feet in some regions.

Likewise, those of us who work and serve in ministry understand the bamboo principle. Growing others in spiritual maturity takes numerous months and years. There is seldom, if any overnight success. However, after time of many people investing in the process to create a culture and climate that is welcoming, warm and developmental, eventually the tipping point comes and growth happens. The process takes hold and these new believers bloom as authentic followers of Jesus. **The bamboo principle of ministry is patience + perseverance = progression.**

Unfortunately, too many churches and ministries distrust the bamboo principle process and find themselves struggling and wandering in their efforts. And as a result, they never experience a true move of God and the profound momentum that builds when a team works together to accomplish a common purpose.

With these things in mind, I would like to share with you some continued leadership principles that can help spur your team toward work together toward effective ministry.

#### EXODUS 18:10-23

God called and used Moses to lead an entire nation out of slavery to the Egyptians. They saw God's power over all the Egyptian false gods through God sending plagues and protecting the Israelites. If numerous displays of God's power were not enough, Israel was also led to a place of prominence and blessing. God promised to give Israel his presence, protection and a place to live and worship. All eyes were on Moses and his leadership abilities. They were dependent on Moses to follow God and lead them in His ways. Yet, Moses was not the greatest example. In fact, Moses' father-in-law Jethro helped Moses see how to become a better leader for the people to live a life of sustaining faith. Through Jethro's advice we can glean insight into some helpful leadership principles for your youth ministry team.

### **1) God calls every person to a role in his kingdom.**

Just as Moses needed able persons to assist with the work, so does ministry require multiple levels of involvement and service. Each person has a different part and each is meaningful to the whole. This includes every age, gender, race, personality type and skill level.

*1 Corinthians 12:7, 12 "Now to each one the manifestation of the Spirit is given for the common good... The body is a unit, though it is made up of many parts; and though all its parts are many, they form one body."*

- What are some common excuses people offer in not serving in God's kingdom? How would you respond to them?
- What role do you have in your ministry? Is it clearly defined with specific tasks and goals?
- Do you take initiative in your ministry role?
- Are you actively recruiting others to be a part of this ministry? See principle #3 if you are not.

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<sup>1</sup> Illustration taken from Sustainable Youth Ministry, Mark DeVries, pp 84.

<sup>2</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bamboo>; <http://www.midatlanticbamboo.com/bamboo-info/bamboo-grow.htm>

## **2) God calls people to view problems as opportunities.**

God used Jethro to speak wisdom into Moses' life which was beneficial to him and the entire nation of Israel. Jethro evaluated the situation and gave a solution to the problem. Notice that he did not focus on the problem but instead shifted to what could be done to fix the problem. This is a major difficulty in team management. Teams need people like Jethro to be problem solvers not problem identifiers.

*Proverbs 27:6 "Wounds from a friend can be trusted, but an enemy multiplies kisses."*

- What are the differences between negative and positive criticism?
- Are your criticisms relational? (compassionate, helpful, face to face, rumorless...)<sup>3</sup>

## **3) God calls people to develop other leaders.**

Moses needed others to help him in his role but he had to understand the art of leadership is both delegating and developing others. This means empowering others to assist in meaningful ways of service. True delegation is not dumping; it's developing and deploying others into the mission.

For leaders to assume they can accomplish their tasks alone is to take on the role of God. Put simply, this is a pride issue. When leaders operate in isolation without meaningfully involving and developing others there is sure to be some hidden issues of pride or arrogance. Leaders must come to grips that they can do more with others than alone. In fact, people are more affirming and respectful of leaders who develop than leaders who remain independent. When leaders are not developing and employing people to serve the vision then people will become dissatisfied and feel devalued. This is why many teams have track records of few volunteers and low participation. Leaders must learn to define, develop and deploy other leaders.

*2 Timothy 2:2 "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."*

- How can your leaders become better delegators & developers? (Remember constructive criticism 😊)
- How can you become better followers to assist your leader in developing you?
- What areas of your ministry feel over burdened and dissatisfied? What can your team do to offer sustainable strength and satisfaction?
- Who would God have you invest in and develop your life into? (Be specific with who, how and when)

## **4) God calls people to fruitfulness not busyness.**

Jethro came to know the LORD is greater than all other gods and he worshiped him with Moses. As the leader of Israel, the people of God, this was Moses primary calling – to lead people to know and worship the true God. After Jethro spent time with Moses he saw that Moses could not sustain his primary leadership calling due to the various public affairs. In short, many smaller tasks crowded out the bigger and more important calling in Moses' life. Indeed, Moses was busy but he was not productive. He needed to heed Jethro's counsel with the art of delegating and developing broader leadership in effort for the primary vision of following God to become accomplished.

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<sup>3</sup> For 20 constructive ways to criticize a YM see, "After You Drop Them Off: A Parent's Guide to Student Ministry" by Jeremy & Jerusha Clark, pp. 155-174.

It is often the case that pastors and leaders have “big picture” thinking without understanding how or what the smaller details are to accomplish such. Since God calls his people to be fruitful and not just busy, pastors and leaders must have the humility and wisdom to realize both big picture and smaller details. This also requires others to understand strengths and weaknesses of all working together to accomplish the mission.

*John 15:8 "This is to my Father's glory, that you bear much fruit, showing yourselves to be my disciples."*

*1 Peter 4:10 "Each one should use whatever gift he has received to serve others, faithfully administering God's grace in its various forms."*

- What areas of your ministry are fruitful? How will you celebrate and reward this in hopes these things will be repeated?
- What areas of your ministry are busy? How will you prune these areas in effort to be of better service to God and others in your ministry?
- How is your ministry balancing “big picture” with smaller details? Spend time as a team identifying each of these.

## RESOURCES

Henry Blackaby, Spiritual Leadership

Patrick Lencioni, The 5 Dysfunctions of a Team

J. Oswald Sanders, Spiritual Leadership

Andy Stanley, Next Generation Leader