

# *Getting the Lead out of Leadership*

by Paul Powell

Summary by Mark R. Elliott\*

## **I. Premise: Not Human Ability but Human Instrumentality**

- The church moves only as it is led. In the church the leadership should be servant leadership. The pastor is not a CEO or a Commander-in-chief; he is a loving shepherd. He leads by influence and his only power is the power of persuasion, and his only authority is that which is given him by the congregation
- Most churches are under-led, not over-led. Most pastors allow their church to drift, to choose its own course, to run itself—a *laissez-faire* (allow them to do it) style of leadership. Announcing is not leadership. Leadership requires vision (seeing what needs to be done), strategy (figuring out how to do it) and motivation (persuading others to join you in the effort). What the church needs is aggressive, dynamic, proactive servant leadership.
- You are capable of becoming a leader.

## **II. Thinking: Where It All Begins**

- “One person with a dream is equal to a force of 99 who have only an interest.” John Stuart Mill. Excellent illustration of professor who asks, “what is the most important part of an ox cart?” The answer is the idea—blue print—for it.
- The entire first flight of the Wright brothers’ airplane—take-off and landing—was no longer than the wingspan of a Boeing 747. But look how far their vision has come in the 20<sup>th</sup> century. He also includes the illustration of the founding of Baylor University and Baylor Medical Center.
- “All the really strong leaders I have known have been highly intelligent, highly disciplined, hard workers, supremely self-confident, driven by a dream, driving others. All have looked beyond the horizon” Richard Nixon
- Thinking is a gift from God. There are animals that can run faster, jump higher, and swim better than man. But there is no animal that can think or dream like man. Ideas are the great moving force of history.
- Someone has said, “Our preachers aren’t dreaming. That’s why the church is such a nightmare.”
- It is the leader’s job to establish the vision and values of the organization. Values have to do with how you treat people, how you do your work, what is important to the organization. [Managers have as their goal to do things right.] Vision has to do with where you are going, the direction of the organization. [Leaders have as their goal to do the right thing.]
- Ask yourself, “What is the right thing for us to be doing? What is our main mission? What do we need to be doing that is not now being done? What is the great work we should be about?” George Bernard Shaw said, “Some men see things as they are and say, ‘Why?’ I dream of things as they never were and say, ‘Why not?’”
- Closes with an illustration of a promising football player who was killed before his freshman year. His tombstone reads “You’re standing on a dream unfulfilled—don’t miss yours.” There’s one thing worse than missing your dream. It’s never to have had one.

### **III. Goals: You Work on Them and They Work on You**

- There are two ways we can take control of our lives. We can make a promise and keep it. Or we can set a goal—and work to achieve it.
- It's a dream until you write it down. Then it's a goal. Writing down goals, continually reshaping them, and thinking about them may sound like work, but when you are tied up with your vision, your dreams, about the things you love to do and want to do, goals easily become part of the path to the dream.
- Goals should be set and accomplished step by step, for inch by inch it's a cinch while, sometimes, yard by yard it is hard.
- Seven marks of a good goal are: challenging, measurable, achievable, having a deadline, written down, flexible, shared.

### **IV. Planning: Get Yourself a Ticket**

- All good planning includes these five elements:
  - Where you are going.
  - How you intend to get there.
  - When you will begin and end.
  - What it will cost.
  - Who is involved?
- Plan your work and work your plan. Steps you can follow are:
  - Remember we are in the people business. Our goal is “to seek and to save” the lost.
  - Programs are the tools we use to get the job done.
  - Personnel are the people who run the programs.
  - Place or space must be provided for the programs.
  - Price is the reality that programs, personnel, and facilities all cost money.
  - Promotion is an absolute necessity.
  - Prayer must permeate everything.

### **V. Courage: The Shepherd Can't Run**

- “Having the world's best idea will do you no good unless you act on it. People who want milk shouldn't sit on a stool in the middle of a field in hopes that a cow will back up to them”  
Curtis Grant
- “Leaders must have three qualities—head, heart, and guts. He must have enough intelligence to know what needs to be done...enough heart to be able to work with people...[and] the determination to go through with his plan, even when it meets opposition.” Richard Nixon
- Leaders exhibit moral courage by being willing to sacrifice money, power, and prestige in order to do what is right. A politician tells people what they want to hear. The statesman tells people what they need to hear.
- A leader with cold feet is no leader. The difference among men is not that some are afraid and others are not. The difference is that some are not mastered by their fears. Fear masquerades in countless forms and under many different names. It poses as a friend. It claims to be prudence, caution, care, diligence, and discretion.
- Winston Churchill said, “Success is never final and failure is never fatal. It is courage that counts.”

- Harry Truman said, “How far would Moses have gone if he had taken a poll in Egypt? What would Jesus Christ have preached if he had taken a poll in the land of Israel? What would have happened to the Reformation if Martin Luther had taken a poll? It isn’t polls or public opinion of the moment that counts. It is right and wrong and leadership.”
- Thomas Jefferson said, “The man who leads the orchestra must turn his back on the crowds.
- It is not what is in front of you that blocks your way, it’s what is inside of you that most often holds you back.

## **VI. Motivating: If No One’s Following, You’re Just Taking a Walk**

- The simplest definition of leadership I know is influence. So, if you’re supposed to be leading and no one is following, you’re just taking a walk.
- All good leaders have two important characteristics: first, they are going somewhere; second, they are able to persuade others to go with them.
- Seven ways to motivate others:
  - Challenge them—It’s a fact of life, you can’t get excited about nothing.
  - Be enthusiastic--it is contagious
  - Use good judgment or common sense will get a response
  - Be a man of integrity it inspires others. If you always tell the truth, if you are up-front with people, if you are worthy of their trust, they are more apt to believe and follow you.
  - Genuinely caring for them—people don’t care how much you know until they know how much you care.
  - Communicate effectively. Good people will do right if they know what is going on. Leave them in the dark and they become suspicious and hesitant. One sharing is seldom enough—tell them what you are going to tell them then tell them, and then tell them what you told them.
  - Participate personally. The best leaders know the way, go the way, and show the way. They must be willing to work harder, concentrate longer, face extra danger, carry an extra burden, and go the extra mile.
- Who motivates the leader? No one! They must be self-motivated. If you can’t ignite yourself, you can’t ignite another. So get the lead out and get some fire in you. You can’t be a leader without it.

## **VII. Deciding: If You Want It, Step on It**

- The person who can’t or won’t make a decision can’t be a leader because deciding is what leadership is all about. You can be aggressive in action without being domineering in your spirit.
- What does it take to make the decisions a leader must make? Good decisions? Right Decisions? It takes three things:
  - Wisdom to discern. The ability to reason logically, weigh alternatives, and make good decisions.
  - Confidence to believe.
  - Boldness to risk is a willingness to take chances, a readiness to experiment, and a soaring optimism that rejects and despises the thought of failure. The greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. The person who risks nothing does nothing, has nothing, is nothing.

### VIII. Determination: Huff and Puff Until You Blow the House Down

- If a determined leader thinks he is right, he may back up, but he won't give up because he never knows what may turn up.
- A successful leader:
  - Doesn't give in to failure. If you are a leader and you haven't failed, you haven't tried very hard. Michael Jordan has said, "I have missed more than 9,000 shots in my career. I have lost almost 300 games. Twenty-six times I have been trusted to take the game winning shot—and missed. I've failed over and over and over again and that is why I succeed."
  - Doesn't give up to opposition. Good people with good intentions and the same facts don't always agree." Thomas Jefferson. When Moses attempted to lead Israel to the Promised Land, he encountered constant opposition. In 40 years he lived in continual conflict and with bitter criticism. Mahatma Ghandi said, "Throughout my life I have gained more from my critic friends than from my admirers, especially when the criticism is made in a courteous and friendly manner." Keep in mind, where there is light there will be bugs. And where there's a will there's a won't. Whenever you try to go forward or change things there will invariably be opposition and criticism.
  - Doesn't give way to despair. Having to stand-alone, being judged unfairly, being misunderstood and disliked is no fun. But a leader is not deterred.

### IX. Relationships: Leadership doesn't come on Credit

- Leadership is earned. It is not voted or demanded or inherited. It is earned by the sheer force of a wise, loving, and discerning personality. It grows out of relationships.
- In the business world as an executive reaches middle management and beyond, the primary criteria for advancement are communication skills with supervisors and motivational skills with subordinates. H. Chandler Hunt surveyed business employees and found only 24% were held back by business skills. The rest were lacking in skills of human relations.
- Three suggestions which can help build better relationships are:
  - Be sensitive to people--have a listening heart. Solomon, given the opportunity to request anything, asked, "Give therefore thy servant an understanding heart to judge thy people, that I may discern between good and bad" (I Kings 3:7-9). The Hebrew word translated "understanding" comes from a root word meaning "to hear" or "to listen." Solomon's prayer was, "Lord give me a listening heart." If a leader is not sensitive to his people, especially the older, wiser ones, he may split the kingdom just like Solomon's son Rehoboam did.
  - Be a servant of people--first servant, not first boss. Life is like tennis—you have to serve well if you are going to win. Leadership does not exist for the benefit of the leader, but for the benefit of the people he leads. The greatest example we have was the life of Jesus. One of his clearest teachings is the enacted parable of washing the feet of his disciples.
  - Be patient with people--don't brush your teeth with gunpowder. If you lead by consensus you must give people time to understand, assimilate, and accept change. Tack is the ability to make your point without making enemies. It is the art of building a fire under people without making their blood boil. It is the knack of stepping on people's toes

without messing up their shoeshine. We ought to make enemies by our position, not by our disposition. Some leaders act like they brush with gunpowder—they go around shooting off their mouth.

- Dame Margot Fonteyn said, “The one important thing I have learned over the years is the difference between taking one’s work seriously and taking oneself seriously. The first is imperative, and the second disastrous.” Those who can’t laugh at themselves leave the job to others.

## **X. Executive Ability: Be a Team Builder, Not an Empire Builder**

- The secret to good leadership is always in getting good people. The best leader is one who has sense enough to pick good people to do what he wants done, and self-restraint enough to keep from meddling with them while they do it.
- Four keys to being a good executive are:
  - Recognize talent--look for hidden abilities. When you put little men in big positions, they bring decisions down to their size every time. Maybe more important than ability is attitude. Herb Kelleher, president of Southwest Airlines, says, “We look for attitude... we train you on whatever it is you have to do, but one thing Southwest cannot change in people is inherent attitudes.”
  - Organize the task. Any leader who tries to do everything himself is in trouble
  - Galvanize the team. The late Paul “Bear” Bryant would comment, “There’re just three things I’d ever say: If anything goes bad, I did it. If anything goes semi-good, then we did it. If anything goes real good, then you did it. That’s all it takes to get people to win football games for you. Six essentials for building team spirit are: value people, communicate with them, listen to them, trust them, involve them, and encourage them.
  - Mobilize the troops. Coach Vince Lombardi said, “Coaches who can draw plays on a blackboard are a dime a dozen. But the coaches who can get the best out of their players are few.” That’s what mobilizing is all about—getting the best out of people. A leader must work at keeping high morale by: challenging others to be their best; telling others exactly what is expected of them; employing a mixture of negative and positive reinforcement; being a good listener; being humble; being kind; being patient; providing opportunities for others to grow; keeping your promises; empowering others to act; placing a premium on cooperation; and taking steps to keep your own motivation high.

## **XI. Hard Work: Carry Your Own Bags**

- Success is a ladder that cannot be climbed with your hands in your pockets. Four work requirements necessary to lead others are:
  - Being energetic. Thomas Buston wrote, “The longer I live, the more deeply I am convinced that what makes the difference between one man and another, the great and the insignificant, is energy. This energetic quality will do anything that is meant by God to be done in the world.” Jerry Archer said, “My formula is: energy, plus talent, and you are a king; energy, and no talent, and you are still a prince; talent, and no energy, and you are a pauper.”
  - Being enthusiastic. Enthusiasm is the yeast that makes your hopes rise to the stars.

- Being optimistic. “There is little difference in people, but that little difference makes a big difference. That little difference is attitude. The big difference is whether it is positive or negative.” Clement Stone
- Having a sense of urgency. The world is full of very competent people who honestly intend to do things tomorrow, or as soon as they can get around to it. Their accomplishments, however, seldom match those of the less talented, who are blessed with a sense of the importance of getting started now. Mark Twain said, “The secret of getting ahead is getting started. The secret of getting started is breaking your complex, overwhelming tasks into small, manageable tasks, and then starting on the first one.”

## **XII. Growing: Don’t Stop Starting**

- The time to be absolutely worried is when you are comfortable—absolutely comfortable.
- When people get in positions of leadership they start to rest on their laurels. At that point, the three “I” sins usually show up: indifference, ignorance, and indecision. Sometimes people settle down so hard they flatten out.
- George Romney said, “There is nothing more vulnerable than entrenched success. You become a prisoner of what you’ve done in the past.”
- Comfort comes as a guest, lingers to become a host, and stays to enslave us. Three areas where leaders can prevent becoming comfortable are:
  - Keeping open to progress. Ogden Nash said, “Progress may have been right once, but it’s gone on far too long.” Change has always been and will always be a part of life. And we make a mistake if we underestimate its place in society and thus the necessity to change ourselves. Those who cannot change their mind will never be able to change anything. Alfred Perlman said, “After you’ve done a thing the same way for two years, you should look at it carefully. After five years, look at it with suspicion. After ten years, throw it away and start over.” There is an old story about a monastery high on a cliff and the only way up was in a basket pulled by a rope. As a man prepared to climb into the basket he saw the rope was frayed in several places. He paused and asked, “How often do you replace the rope?” The monk replied, “Every time it breaks.” The best leaders are those who anticipate and initiate change rather than react to it, and thus they guarantee progress.
  - Keep dreaming of the future. Boards must drive their organizations by spending most of their time looking forward through the windshield, not backward into the rearview mirror. The pilgrims landed on the shores of America in 1620. With great vision and courage they settled in a new land. In the first year they established a town. In the second, they elected the town council. In the third, the government proposed building a road five miles westward into the wilderness. But in the fourth year the people tried to impeach the town council because they thought such a road into the forest was a waste of public funds. Somehow these forward-looking people had lost their vision. Once able to see across oceans, they now could not look five miles into the wilderness.
  - Keep growing in their abilities. Victor Frankl said, “The ‘is’ must never catch up with the ‘ought’.”
- An airport sign outlined the steps to prevent a heart attack: “stop smoking, exercise, cut sodium, lose excess weight, reduce stress. It’s not hard to know what to do...it’s hard to do what you know.”

\*Mark R. Elliott served as a Director of Missions (Associational Mission Strategist) in western Iowa and eastern Nebraska for almost three decades. He is a strong advocate for obedience and Biblically based disciple making. As such, he knows that making healthy disciples requires Christian leaders to be constantly pursuing spiritual maturity—be lifelong learners. Because of the time constraints of ministry, most pastors focus their reading list on resources that assist them in teaching and preaching the Word of God. As such, books focusing on church health, leadership development, and church growth tend to find their way to the bottom of the stack. With that reality in mind, Mark has written discussion summaries on several books that have helped him to personally grow in Christ and that tend to find themselves on the bottom of most pastor's stack. Many pastors have found them helpful as they are able to more quickly process great insights from other pastors and authors.