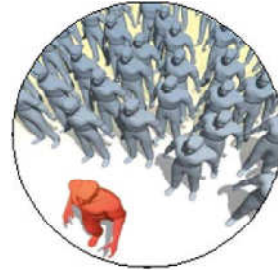


What Kind of Leader Are You?

By Dale V. Salico

- Part 1: Servant Leadership
- Part 2: Leadership Among Equals
- Part 3: Visionary Leadership
- Part 4: Balanced Leadership
- Part 5: Hope-Guided Leadership
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Part 1: Servant Leadership

One of the most common mistakes made by Christian leaders is to believe there is a singular quality or characteristic that is rightly called "leadership," which they must obtain and install on their personal hard drive. The truth is that there are a number of styles of leadership that have a common core, but which vary widely from each other in method.

The core of leadership is influence. John Maxwell is right on target when he says, "Leadership is influence" nothing more, nothing less. . . He who thinks he leads, but has no followers, is only taking a walk." Influence, however, can be exerted in a number of ways, some good and some not. In order for leadership to be effective for the church, it must possess several essential qualities, which we will consider in the next few issues of Harvest Highlights.

The most important words of Jesus related to leadership are found in Matthew 20:26-28: Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must be your slave, just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life as a ransom for many.

By the world's standards "servant leadership" is an oxymoron. Jesus was in the business of turning the world's thinking on its head when He taught Kingdom principles. This, after all, is the same rabbi who said, "Happy are those who mourn" and "Love your enemies." By contrast, the disciples James and John were operating by worldly leadership assumptions, thinking that position or title (sitting on the Lord's right or left hand) was the foundation for leadership, and that control and acclaim were its corollaries. Jesus acknowledged that in the world this was often the case: You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Matthew 10:25

But He emphatically rejected any linkage between leadership and coercive power or celebrity status in His Kingdom: "Not so with you!" (Matthew 10:25) To be a leader, according to Jesus, is to be a servant (diakonos) or a bond slave (doulos)-- one who would even lay down his or her life for others. Two things are true about every slave. First, he or she does not act on his or her own initiative, authority or summons. Second, he or she does not act for his or her own interest or purpose. Leadership in the body of Christ, therefore, is neither "of self" nor "for self," but of Christ and for Christ and His people.

The goal of servant leadership was best expressed by John the Baptist in a statement that would never appear in a leadership manual from today's business sector: "He must become greater, but I must become less." (John 3:30) Leadership in the body of Christ is always christocentric. The goal is not to advance my ministry, but to lift up Jesus so that others may flourish in His love.

The uniqueness of leadership in the church, according to Scripture is based on the primary role given to God's calling and directing as opposed to human choosing and determining. In his Lectures to My Students, C. H. Spurgeon expressed the principle of servant leadership in his own classic style: All are not called to labor in word and doctrine, or to be elders, or to exercise the office of bishop; nor should all aspire to such works, since the gifts necessary are nowhere promised to all; but those should addict themselves to such important engagement who feel like the apostle, that "they have received this ministry." 2 Corinthians 4:1 No man [or woman] should intrude into the sheepfold as an under-shepherd; he must have an eye to the chief shepherd, and wait His beck and command. Or ever a man stands forth as God's ambassador, he must wait for the call from above; and if he does not do so, but rushes into the sacred office, the Lord will say to him and others like him, "I sent them not, neither commanded them; therefore they shall not profit this people at all, saith the Lord." Jeremiah 23:32

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THINK ABOUT IT ...

Take some time to reflect on three questions that can help you assess the servant quality of your leadership.

- 1) How and why did I step into a leadership role in the church?
- 2) How do I feel when I am neither in charge nor recognized; when it really makes no difference whether I am even present?
- 3) What is my inner conversation about the "superstars" in Christian leadership, whose ministries seem to be blessed so much more than mine?

Part 2: Leadership Among Equals

Every leader must decide whether he or she is building a group of people who are dependent him or her as the leader. This is among the first and most important decisions every leader must face because everything else hinges on it. It is relatively easy to inspire dependency. There are always people around who are looking for someone to follow. It is far more challenging to build a team of mature and wise leaders who are seeking to produce mature and wise people.

Jesus aspired to build leaders who would not just survive, but flourish without Him. When in the upper room He revealed that He would be leaving, his disciples felt lost and inadequate.

Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we don't know where you are going, so how can we know the way?" (John 14:5)

They expressed a clear preference for Jesus to remain among them permanently as the teacher from whom they would receive instruction.

Philip said, "Lord, show us the Father and that will be enough for us." (John 14:9)

Jesus, however, saw much greater things in the future for His disciples than merely sitting at His feet as perpetual students.

"I tell you the truth, anyone who has faith in me will do what I have been doing. He will do even greater things than these, because I am going to the Father." (John 14:12)

Jesus' bold prediction was fulfilled within a very short time. Whereas during His own ministry Jesus may have won several hundred true converts, all of whom resided in Palestine, by the close of the Book of Acts (about thirty years later) His disciples had won hundreds of thousands, and extended the faith to the far reaches of the Roman Empire and beyond. This never would have happened had Jesus kept the disciples in a state of childish dependency. That is why He insisted that His departure would be good for them (John 16:7). Jesus described the relationship He would have with His disciples from this point on as "friends," people who knew and were responsible, profitable partners in the master's business, rather than "servants," people who merely did what they were told (John 14:15-17).

In light of the way Jesus transformed His disciples from dependent followers into mature leaders, I am deeply concerned about a directive style of leadership in the church that keeps people in a condition of perpetual dependency. This dependency-producing style of leadership says, "I am the pastor, and therefore the leader. I will tell you God's vision for us and you will carry it out." The maturity-producing style of leadership Jesus envisioned among His people ("leadership among equals") says, "Let's develop a vital and close relationship with God and with each other so that together we can discern and carry out God's vision for us." Leadership among equals is exhibited in the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), during which there was much discussion (verse 7), as each leader in the gathering tried to discern what the Lord was saying through His people. The outcome is expressed in these words:

Then the apostles and elders with the whole church decided. . . . It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us. . . "
(Acts 15:22, 28)

The result of this process is noteworthy, and much to be desired in the church today - it brought joy, encouragement and strength to believers everywhere (Acts 15:32, 41)

The pattern of Jesus' ministry and the early church is to create a team of mature and wise leaders who are seeking to produce mature and wise people. This is echoed powerfully in the words of the Apostle Paul:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers to prepare God's people for works of service, so that the body of Christ may be built up, until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God, and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. Then we will no longer be infants. . . Instead, speaking the truth in love we will in all things grow up. . . (Ephesians 4:11-15)

The issue facing us is clear: will our leadership style produce continual childish dependency in the church, or will it produce mature and responsible disciples, united in faith, impacting the world for Christ?

Years ago I posted a sign in my office that read, "The truth is bigger than my view of it!" Today I would paraphrase that sign, "God's vision for His church is bigger than my view of it!" In order to better grasp God's vision, I as a leader need the insights, wisdom, and discernment of others in the body of Christ. My role is to lead them in such a way that together we grasp the vision. Jim Herrington calls this the role of the vision community, a diverse group in the local church who become "a committed and trusting community in order to discern and implement God's vision for the congregation." (Leading Congregational Change, p. 41) Such a sharing of congregational leadership is far more than pragmatic strategy. It reflects the unique nature of authentic Christian community within the body of Christ; a team of mature and wise leaders who produce mature and wise people; a community in which each person, including the pastor, is built up and completed by all the rest.

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THINK ABOUT IT ...

Take some time to reflect on three questions to help you discern whether you see yourself as a leader among equals.

- 1) When people in your leadership team or congregation question you, do you explain why you are right, or do you look for the truth in what they are saying?
- 2) Are there people on your leadership team whom you trust so much that, like E. F. Hutton, when they speak, you listen?
- 3) Are there people in your congregation who are as important to your maturation and growth in Christ as you are to theirs? Do they know it?

Part 3: Visionary Leadership

The 2000 World Series was like reliving a favorite part of my childhood. Having grown up in upstate New York during the years when the Yankee--Dodger cross city rivalry was regularly celebrated in October, I still believe there is no series like a New York subway series! And like the Yankees of my childhood, the Yankees of the past four years are prime examples of a baseball team in its prime. A baseball team in its prime has one all-consuming vision: winning the World Series - nothing less, nothing more, nothing else.

In the same way, a church in its prime has one all-consuming vision: producing fully committed followers of Christ who impact the world for Christ: nothing less, nothing more, nothing else. No matter how big the church gets, no matter how large its facilities and budgets, no matter how many programs it runs, everything is driven by this vision. People who are active in the church can tell you what the vision is, and they can tell you how every ministry; children, youth, singles, ushers, divorce recovery, women, every ministry helps fulfill the vision.

Vision-driven churches require visionary leadership, men and women who see the vision toward which God is calling them as operative right now, and who so clearly recognize its reality that they move toward it automatically and enthusiastically, bringing others with them.

Much of today's literature focuses on the visionary leader who determines the church's calling and communicates that vision to the church. Paul Ford calls this the "Moses as a CEO" model. "Americans value the Moses-style leader," he writes. "This approach is rooted in the rugged individualism that is so much a part of our culture." (Leadership, Summer 2000, p. 36) Moses received God's vision alone at the burning bush, and courageously stood, first before a resistant Pharaoh and then before an equally uncooperative nation, articulating the vision and, by God's power, accomplishing the impossible. It took a "Moses as CEO" to do the job.

However, while there is much we can learn from Moses, his calling was not to leadership within the body of Christ. Moses led a nation that seemed committed to idolatry and expediency, a nation that journeyed to the promised land against its will, a people who resisted every new revelation of God with all the tenacity of fallen humanity. At no time is Old Testament Israel to be confused with the New Testament community of faith that, filled with the Spirit of God and speaking the truth in love, is growing up to reach the full measure of the stature of Christ, as each part does its own work. (Ephesians 4:15-16; 5:18)

Church leaders who consider Moses as their model confuse prophetic leadership, which is solitary by its very nature, with pastoral leadership, which takes place within a community of faith, bonded together by God's love; the body of the Lord Jesus Christ, in which spiritual interdependence is the norm. (1 Corinthians 12:12-26) In the book of Acts we discover that the leaders of the early church received vision not in solitary places by burning bushes, but together with other believers.

Observe carefully the moments of vision in the book of Acts:

- Acts 1:8 Jesus gave the Great Commission while all the apostles were together.
- Acts 2 The Spirit-empowered proclamation on Pentecost was declared not just by Peter, but by all who had been in the upper room. (Note the plural, "them" in 2:11).
- Acts 6:1-6 The division of labor between proclamation and distribution of food was so much a body decision that no one individual is singled out as key.
- Acts 9:15-16, 26:16-18 Paul's call to preach to the Gentiles was communicated to Ananias, and through him to Paul. Paul's invitation to begin ministry came through Barnabas. (Acts 11:25-26)
- Acts 10 While Peter actually received the vision, it was confirmed and made intelligible by Cornelius and his household. . . Peter saw what God was doing among them. (Note 10:44-47.)
- Acts 13 The vision for mission outreach and the identification of Paul and Barnabas as missionaries came to the prophets and teachers at Antioch.
- Acts 15 The Spirit gave discernment about the place of Jewish law in the developing church to the body gathered in Jerusalem.
- Acts 16:6-10 The "Macedonia call" is as close to solitary envisioning as we find in Acts, but it came in the context of Paul and his companions struggling to discern the Lord's will. The group's ownership of the vision is indicated by Luke's words, "*After Paul had seen the vision, we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them.*" (Vs. 10)

The inescapable conclusion is that vision in the body of Christ is not a solitary, but a corporate experience. This is why, according to the book of Ephesians, unity is foundational for everything for the church, and why Paul commanded Christians to "make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace." (Ephesians 4:3) Without unity there will be no vision from God nor empowerment by His Spirit.

The role of visionary leadership in the church is to unite the entire body of Christ in love and commitment to the Lord so that together the congregation discerns and obeys the vision God sends. When vision leads to division it is clear that the pastor has not brought the congregation to unity in the faith and knowledge of the Son of God. (Ephesians 4:13)

Henry Blackaby describes the pastor's role in the envisioning process this way:

The pastor's job is to bear witness to the church about what he senses God is saying. Other members may also express what they sense God is saying. . . Pastors, other church leaders, and members are to have such a relationship with God and the church body that spiritual guidance is the outcome. . . The leader does not have to try to convince the church that this is God's will. . . [or] ask the congregation to follow him without question. The leader encourages the body to go to Christ and get confirmation from the head (Christ). The Head does the convincing on His timetable. Then the whole body follows Christ; the Head. (Experiencing God, 166-168)

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THINK ABOUT IT ...

Here are some questions to help you discern whether you see yourself as a visionary leader in the New Testament pattern.

1. What role have others had in helping you discern God's vision for your life?
2. Do you believe that progress in the church can only come at the expense of unity, or that unity is the necessary prerequisite for progress?

3. Do you believe that a church matching the description of Acts 2:47-47 could change the world? If so, what are you willing to do to lead such a church?

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Part 4: Balanced Leadership

History is littered with the cast-off remains of fallen leaders. The same can be said for the church. We could all name men and women who, having given their lives to Christ and the ministry of the gospel, appeared to be God's answer to the church's cry for leaders, but who never reached the potential God placed in their lives. In the Bible we read the stories of Samson, King Saul, Solomon and the rich young ruler, and can only imagine what they could have been.

The Godly leaders exhibit a balance of four dynamics in their lives, namely: 1) Vision or calling; 2) Ethics or integrity; 3) Realism; and 4) Courage. Note how all of these are illustrated in God's call to Joshua.

Be strong and courageous, because you will lead these people to inherit the land... Be careful to obey all the law my servant Moses gave you; do not turn from it to the right or the left . . . Do not let this Book of the Law depart from your mouth, meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful. Have I not commanded you: Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified, do not be discouraged, for the Lord your God will be with you wherever you go. Joshua 1:6-9



Vision: Joshua is to lead Israel into the promised land.

Ethics: (integrity): he is to know God's law at the deepest level and obey everything written in it.

Reality: he will face terrors and discouragement.

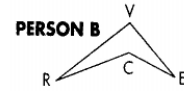
Courage: he will need tons of it, but the Lord will be with him to bring success.

Notice that all four dynamics are God-centered: It is God's vision for Israel, God's law, God's analysis of the real situation and God's presence as the provision for courage. Only the Spirit of God working in the life of a man or woman over a period of time can make him or her into the kind of leader so desperately needed in the body of Christ today. Throughout his amazing career Joshua exhibited these four dynamics, and no one could stand against him and the people he led.

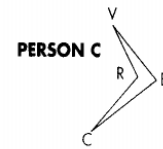


Peter Koestenbaum, in his book, *Leadership: the Inner Side of Greatness* (Jossey-Bass, 1991, pp. 33-35), describes the balance of vision, ethics, reality and courage as the "Leadership Diamond®." The greatness of a leader he says is measured as the space inside the diamond that results from the strength of these four dynamics. A well-balanced leader like Joshua could be illustrated in Person A.

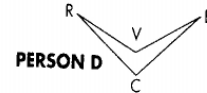
When one or more of the dynamics is weak, the diamond (greatness) collapses. Person B has strong vision, a grasp on reality, and deals lovingly and ethically with people, but when it comes to courage-to initiative and taking action-he or she is on vacation! (Think of Barak in Judges 4:8-9.)



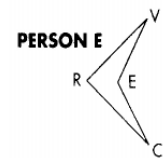
Person C has vision, a commitment to integrity (ethics), and is willing to take action (courage), but since has no sense of reality he could spend the whole budget and have nothing to show for it! (The man who built on the sand in Matthew 7:24-27.)



Person D has courage. Because she is ethical she treats people well. She also has a firm grasp on reality making her unlikely to make impulsive mistakes. But she does not have a clue as to where she is going. (Does this sound a bit like Paul in Acts 16:6-8?)



Person E has great vision, courage, and is ruthlessly pragmatic (realism), but to do what? Without ethics or integrity he could be Adolph Hitler or Jezebel (I Kings 18:4; 19:1-2)



Pity Person F, who knows where she wants to go (vision) and what it takes to get there (reality), but lacks the courage to do anything about it, which is fortunate, because without integrity she would likely do great harm is she ever reached her goals!



Repeatedly, the Word of God speaks of the necessity of God's Vision, God's ethical standards (integrity), a realistic understanding of the world and humanity (based on the biblical doctrine of sin and the fall), and courage based on God's presence if Christian leaders are to be effective in this world. The supreme model for leadership in the church is Jesus Himself.

Therefore since we are surrounded with such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out before us. Let us fix our eyes on Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down on the right hand of the throne of God. (Hebrews 12:1-2)

Here are some questions to help you evaluate your balance as a leader:

1. How would you rank the relative strength of Vision, Ethics, Reality and Courage in your life?
2. Can you think of a situation in which the collapse of one of these dynamics weakened your leadership?
3. How is each of the four dynamics important for you as you face your greatest challenge today?
4. What must you do to strengthen the weakest dynamic?

Part 5: Hope-Guided Leadership

Effective leaders are men and women of hope. We cannot lead others toward a goal we believe we cannot reach, or toward a preferred future that we believe is an illusion. Peter Koestenbaum writes,

A leadership mind is characterized by hope. The world is full of frustrations...[which can lead] to despair... What is needed is hope, the realistic perception that there is a way out, that there is a future, that there is a solution... But hope must be realistic... It cannot be a manic delusion... (Leadership: the Inner Side of Greatness, p. 65.)

How can we know whether our hope is realistic or a manic delusion? The cynic answers, "Wait to see whether or not the thing we hope for takes place. Then you'll know!"

This will not do for two reasons. First, there are times when we must act to bring about a future we will never see. The men who died on the beaches of Normandy never saw the free Europe for which they fought. But this does not mean that their hope was an illusion. Second, hope does not wait passively to be judged by the future; hope creates the future. Churchill's insistence that victory was the only possibility rallied the nation during the Battle of Britain and changed the course of history. Had the British waited to see whether Churchill's hope was an illusion, we could be saluting the swastika today!

Leaders, guided by hope, direct people toward a vision of the future. As guided missiles soar toward selected targets, so in the trajectory from present to future, hope functions as a "guidance system," fixing itself on the target and adjusting all systems to keep momentum pointed toward the mark. For a guidance system to bring the rocket toward the bull's-eye, it must be reliably oriented and it must respond to communication from mission control. As a "guidance system," hope must be reliably oriented on the unchanging, eternal God.

In you I trust, O my God... No one whose hope is in you will ever be put to shame. Blessed is he whose... hope is in the LORD his God, the Maker of heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them--the LORD, who remains faithful forever. (Psalm 25:1-3; Psalm 146:5-6)

Hope must also respond to communication from "mission control," the Spirit of God.

May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit. Those who are guided by the Spirit of God are children of God. (Romans 15:13; Romans 8:14)

In His Word the Lord has made promises about the future to strengthen our hope.

I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it. Matthew 16:18

There are no qualifications or conditions to this promise. Christ will build and the gates of Hell will not prevail. As a Christian leader, I view every challenge as an opportunity God will use to advance toward victory. That does not mean that setbacks never come. It means that in the face of a setback I wonder how the Lord will turn it around, not whether He will turn it around.

Furthermore, God has revealed that history is moving toward His foreordained consummation.

But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who [will] . . . bring everything under his control. . . Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain. (Philippians 3:20-21; I Corinthians 15:58)

New Testament hope is directed toward the return of Jesus Christ, the "blessed hope" of the believer. (Titus 2:13) To lead the church toward the future is to lead the Lord's people toward their Redeemer, their Friend, Who is coming. Seeing Him we shall be like Him (I John 3:2) and share in His victory. (Revelation 3:21)

John Maxwell calls "hope-guided leadership" the "Law of Victory," and comments, "Leaders who practice the Law of Victory believe that anything less than success is unacceptable. They have no Plan B. That is what keeps them fighting." (The 21 Irrefutable Laws of Leadership, p. 164)

In light Who God is and the promises He has given, who needs a Plan B?

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THINK ABOUT IT ...

Take some time to reflect on three questions to evaluate yourself as a "hope-guided leader."

1. Can you identify a time in your life or in the life of your church when "hope created the future?"
2. In writing your church budget, do you spend more time determining what people gave in the past or what God wants your congregation to do in the future?
3. Other than at funerals, how often is the assurance of Christ's return and ultimate victory taught in your church? In what ways do you live differently today because you believe in this assurance?

Part 6: Life-Long Leadership Growth

Leadership is a dynamic quality that either grows or contracts over a lifetime. It is a fallacy to say, "I am a leader. I can't help it. That's the way God made me." The truth is that you can help it. You can also destroy it. The New Testament provides illustrations of both.

John Mark blew his first leadership opportunity when he deserted Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:13). The severity of the harm caused by Mark's desertion is shown by Paul's refusal to give him a second chance, even if that meant breaking Paul's long and close partnership with Barnabas (Acts 15:36-40). It is a surprise, therefore, to read in Paul's letter to the Colossians, written about 11 years later, that Mark was with Paul during his first Roman imprisonment, and that Paul commended Mark to the church (Colossians 4:10). Six years later Paul endorsed Mark even more strongly: "he is very helpful to me for the ministry" (II Timothy 4:11 Amplified). The word Paul used combines eu, good, with chrestos, useful, to give the intensified, "very useful" or "very profitable." Two chapters earlier Paul had used the same word for the disciple who, having discarded everything unworthy from his or her life, is "holy, useful to the Master and prepared to do any good work (II Timothy 2:21)." Mark, who was once a quitter, now was a valued partner in Paul's ministry.

Demas, by contrast, was described as a "fellow worker" of Paul in Philemon (verse 24). Six years later Paul wrote of him, "Demas, because he loved this world, has deserted me. . ." (II Timothy 4:10). Seeing Paul on death row, Demas was not willing to pay what leadership in Christ's service might cost. Both Mark and Demas showed marks of leadership within the early church. The difference between them was revealed in how they responded to conflict and crisis. One rose to leadership. The other fell from it.

In *The Making of a Leader*, J. Robert Clinton observed, "Effective leaders. . .maintain a learning posture throughout life. Effective leaders, who are productive over a lifetime have a dynamic ministry philosophy that evolves

continually from the interplay of three major factors: biblical dynamics, personal gifts, and situational dynamics (p. 180)." Depending on their response to those factors, leaders grow, plateau or decline. During the early years of ministry, God works primarily in the leader. During later years He works primarily through the leader. Those who fail to learn necessary lessons in the early years will not reach their potential in the later ones.

There are three common patterns of leaders in plateau or decline:

- They operate with skills that are comfortable to them, but fail to deliberately and continually seek new skills.
- They coast on experience.
- They refuse to pay the costs necessary to maintain personal integrity and effectiveness.
- They rarely discern God's direct word to them.

The result, in Clinton's words. . .

Drop outs? quite a few.

Plateaued leaders? the majority of leaders.

Disciplined? a few.

Those who continue to grow and finish well? some. (p. 201)

* * *

THINK ABOUT IT...

Which will you be?

As I have reflected on Scripture and on how God has worked in my life, I see three principles for cooperating with God's design for leadership:

- God uses everything about you (past and present) to equip you for the unique ministry to which He has called you.
- Your present and future are built on your past, but you cannot predict where God will lead you based on where you have been.
- Your leadership flows out of your personal love relationship with the Lord. The most important question a Christian leader must ask is, "Am I walking so close to Jesus that I can see and adjust my life to what He is doing?"

Reflect on these questions to evaluate your commitment to life-long leadership growth:

- In what ways has God worked in me and in what ways through me as a leader?
- To what extent are the patterns of plateaued or declining leaders descriptive of me?
- How is God using everything in my past and present to equip me for the unique ministry to which He has called me?
- Am I walking so close to Jesus that I can see and adjust my life to what He is doing?