

Rock Solid Leading From The Inside Out

If your days of youth were anything like mine, it was packed full of times playing “follow the leader”. I especially liked the BIKE version. My friends and I would saddle up on our Schwinn sting-rays (complete with banana seats AND baseball cards clothes-pinned on the spokes!) and take turns leading the way. Launching off curbs. Popping wheelies. Slamming on the brakes to create fishtails. Creating imaginary obstacle courses. During the dog days of summer, we would ride for hours until the street lights came on signaling the close of business.

As I think back on this childhood game, it was essentially an equal-opportunity endeavor. If you wanted to be the leader, all you had to do was clock-in and wait your turn. No interview needed. No qualifications required. No dotted line signed.

But what worked well on the streets of Los Angeles can become a train wreck in other settings. Any serious initiative requires more from its leaders than just showing up and waiting for their number to be called to run the show.

We have all been in situations where we have tasted firsthand both the agony and ecstasy of leadership. We have seen those who have been handed the helm of leadership run the proverbial ship aground in short order; and we have seen those who have risen to the occasion and delivered exceptional leadership.

In thinking about the various types of leaders, I have been helped considerably by the language John Maxwell uses in his book *Becoming a Person of Influence* when describing five levels of leadership. Here’s how he frames the discussion:

- **Level 1 —Position.** People follow because they have to.
- **Level 2 —Permission.** People follow because they want to.
- **Level 3 —Production.** People follow because of what you have done for the organization.
- **Level 4 —Personnel Development.** People follow because of what you have done for them.
- **Level 5 —Personhood.** People follow because of who you are and what you represent.

Following Maxwell’s approach, this description provides a clear snapshot of what it means to lead with your life. It’s inside-out leadership. There is a weight to this leader’s personhood—something of substance. People are drawn to this type of leader, not so much because of what the person does but because of who the person is.

People are drawn to this type of leader, not so much because of what the person does but because of who the person is.

If you thumb through the pages of the Old Testament, you will find that Daniel was this kind of leader. In the middle of the book that bears his name, you find this telling statement: “Daniel began distinguishing himself...because he possessed an extraordinary spirit...” If you chase down the storyline of his life and leadership, you will learn a lot about this game-changing leader who showcased an “extraordinary spirit”. He had character that was uncompromising; convictions that were unwavering; and confidence in his God that was unconditional.

That, my friends, is leading with your life.

So what kind of leader do you want to follow?

And more importantly, what kind of leader are you?