Learn to Ask Questions

The other day I was reviewing some notes from Brad Lomenick's book The Catalyst Leader and came across a section with a heading that snagged my curiosity: *Seven Signs You're Too Big For Your Britches*. Now, who can resist THAT title? Intrigued? Interested?

I was.

Lomenick parses out his provocative title with seven statements—a proverbial punch list for Kingdom leaders. Take a look at his seven declarations:

1. *You feel like you need an entourage everywhere you go.*
2. *You're unreachable, using systems and handlers to shield you from others.*
3. *The only people you make time for are those who can do something for you.*
4. *You speak and offer advice far more than you ask questions and take notes.*
5. *You quit laughing, especially at yourself.*
6. *You feel certain jobs are beneath you and would be offended if someone asked you to perform those tasks.*
7. *You feel no one's work ever meets your approval—except your own.*

While each of these are worthy of a personal inventory, allow me to drill down on statement #4: **You speak and offer advice far more than you ask questions and take notes.**

Have you ever been in a meeting with The Pontificator? It's an avalanche of self-focused (and often self-promoting) declarations. There is little, if any, exchange of ideas. And noticeably MIA in the lopsided conversation is the place and priority of QUESTIONS.

In a word, **questions are the launching pad of invention, the springboard of innovation.** Great leaders have an obsession for great questions. They possess curiosity, humility, and an incurable posture of learning that shouts out that they are determined to expand their understanding of life and leadership from others.

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Albert Einstein said, *If I had an hour to solve a problem and my life depended on it, I would use the first 55 minutes determining the proper questions to ask.*

While some people collect coins, others stamps, I propose that a leader collect questions—questions that kick open the door of discovery. Here's a few of my favorite questions to ask other leaders:

- What spiritual practices have you found that best nourish your soul?

- What do you wish someone would have told you when you were 25?
- What fears do you have to constantly face down?
- What person or author has contributed significantly to your understanding of leadership?
- How do you resist being complacent in your leadership?
- How do you create space to hear from God?
- What voices/messages have you had to amplify (or turn down) in your life to be a better leader?
- What new habit are you presently working on?

Have some fun curating your own list of questions. But most of all, make a commitment that in your upcoming one-on-one conversations you will speak less and ask more. The odds are in your favor that you'll walk away a fuller, richer leader.

Chuck Olson
Founder | Lead With Your Life

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