Leaders Who Last

Title: *Leaders Who Last*

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Book Summary:

If the Christian life is like a race, we must admit that too many Christian leaders stumble, burn out, or veer off the track. Clearly it is not automatic that a leader will finish well.

Based on Dave Kraft's thirty-five years of leading, teaching leadership, and coaching dozens of Christian leaders, Leaders Who Last moves through three stages of leadership: foundations, formation, and fruitfulness. Concise, anecdotal, and packed with wisdom, this book will help you aim your ambitions, refine your character, and position yourself to be an effective leader who endures.

Kraft's brief, down-to-earth guide to Christian leadership will inspire readers to finish the race well—to hit the tape in full stride with an energetic burst of speed and receive their commendation from God.

Book Notes:

"Finishing well" can include (but is not limited to):

- Maintaining a vibrant and rich walk with Jesus.
- Having a solid relational network that includes at least one good friend with whom you can bare your soul.
- Making a lasting and God-honoring contribution in your areas of passion and gifting. Location 154

Why is this topic so close to my heart? So many leaders are not doing well and are ending up shipwrecked. Professor Bobby Clinton at Fuller Seminary in Pasadena, California, is a key spokesperson on the subject of leadership within the body of Christ. His landmark book, The Making of a Leader, is a must-read for those in leadership positions. Clinton has come to the conclusion that only 30 percent of leaders finish well. That is deeply disturbing. Location 161

Before I toss my current working definition of "leader" on the table, allow me to share a deep conviction. The greatest and most pressing need in the body of Christ today is an army of leaders who have a vision of a desired future and are called and anointed by God. These leaders possess a fire burning in their hearts that can't be extinguished. They are motivated and led by God to intentionally, passionately, and effectively influence others. Location 229

Here is how I define "leader" throughout this book: A Christian leader is a humble, God-dependent, team-playing servant of God who is called by God to shepherd, develop, equip, and empower a specific group of

believers to accomplish an agreed-upon vision from God. Location 236

Because leading is a reflection of who you are, you lead from the inside out. The leader must live in five areas (as demonstrated by the center hub and four spokes of the leadership wheel):

- With Jesus Christ in the center as your power
    - With Jesus Christ as you develop a purpose
    - With Jesus Christ as you develop a passion
    - With Jesus Christ as you set priorities
    - With Jesus Christ as you develop pacing for how much you accomplish and how fast you do it. Location 258

Author Dallas Willard observed that "grace is not opposed to effort, but to earning." That means that it is not wrong to expend energy and effort to get to know the Lord, but it is unbiblical to do so with the thought of earning God's love, favor, and acceptance through the effort. Location 356

One of the best books I have found on the subject of formulating your purpose is The Path by Laurie Beth Jones. I once read this fantastic quote by Jones: "A purpose statement is, in essence, a written-down reason for being. Jesus' mission helped him decide how to act, what to do, and even what to say when challenging situations arose. Clarity is power: Once you are clear about what you were put here to do then 'jobs' become only a means toward accomplishing your mission, not an end in themselves." Location 488

What is your God-given purpose? Have you identified it? What has the Lord gifted and called you to do in the body of Christ and among the lost? What is your contribution to the Great Commandment and the Great Commission? It so happens that I am a pastor and the director of Coaching and Leadership Development for the Resurgence Training Center at Mars Hill Church in Seattle. That is my career. But my purpose (in the context of my career) is to discover, develop, and deploy God-hungry leaders. Location 524

Passion is contagious. Passion will have more of an impact than personality. There is something compelling about leaders who love what they do and do what they love. A leader like this has the power to ignite enthusiasm and dedication in scores of others with whom he has contact. Life is too short to be boring or mediocre. I am one who has always respected, admired, and looked up to leaders with contagious and infectious passion. Location 555

Edward G. E. Bulwer-Lytton said, "Nothing is so contagious as enthusiasm. It is the genius of sincerity, and truth accomplishes no victories without it." And I have heard John Maxwell say that passion will enable you to: believe things you never would have believed, feel things you never would have felt, attempt things you never would have attempted, accomplish things you never would have accomplished, meet people you otherwise would not have met, and motivate people you never would have motivated. Location 583

Decide what is truly important in life and what isn't. Then, discipline yourself to focus on what is important. Location 662

If it is true that 20 percent of our effort will produce 80 percent of our results (the famous Pareto Principle), we need to prayerfully and carefully figure out which 20 percent we will focus on. Jim Collins makes this observation: Most of us lead busy, but undisciplined lives. We have ever expanding "to do lists," trying to build momentum by doing, doing, doing—and doing more. And it rarely works. Those who built the good-to-great

companies, however, made as much use of “stop doing” lists as the “to do lists.” They displayed a remarkable discipline to unplug all sorts of extraneous junk. They displayed remarkable courage to channel their resources into only one or a few arenas. Location 671

Management consultant and author Brian Tracy says, “Eighty percent of what you do on a daily basis needs to be intentional as opposed to responsive and should be directly tied to your purpose.” Location 689

I believe that most leaders travel too fast and attempt to do too much. If priorities protect my purpose and passion, then pacing prolongs it. Someone said, “I am running on fumes and don’t know where the next gas station is.” That’s the thought in Psalm 139:3: “You chart the path ahead of me and tell me where to stop and rest. Every moment, you know where I am” (TLB). Location 787

Likewise, leaders need to determine what size their capacity is and how long they can remain in a stretched situation before they need a pause—whether emotional or physical. Prolonged stretching with no rest will eventually bring about serious problems. Pacing is a matter of determining one’s God-given capacity and deciding when to take breaks on the highway of life. Location 802

Let’s put this mysterious but important call in perspective. There are four calls that I can identify:

1. The call to salvation
2. The call to discipleship
3. The call to service
4. The call to leadership Location 905

If you poll people about what sort of things a spiritual leader does, you will get varied responses. The new kind of leaders I am discussing are ones who will reach the finish line. They should carry out at least four functions contained in my working definition of a leader: they should shepherd, develop, equip, and empower those being led. It takes a certain kind of person to perform the above-mentioned functions. Everyone is not designed to be a leader any more than everyone is not designed to be a teacher or an administrator. Location 1000

A man visited a carnival with his daughter. She asked her dad if she could have cotton candy. When the vendor handed it to her, he said, “Are you sure you can eat all of that by yourself, young lady?” The little girl replied, “Sure, ’cause I’m bigger on the inside than I am on the outside.” That is what character is all about: how big you are on the inside. Character can be defined as “who and what you are when no one is looking.” Location 1065

Author Bill Thrall says, “The dysfunctions of many leaders are rooted in a common reality: Their capacities have been extensively trained while their character has been merely presumed.” Thrall also reminds us that the ladder of success is actually composed of two ladders: capacity (which can also be referred to as “competency”) and character. Both must be climbed at the same time. With each step I take on the capacity (competency) ladder, I need to also step on the character ladder. The two ladders need to be integrated. Location 1076

Most leaders focus too much on competence and too little on character. More people plateau, quit, or are relieved of their leadership responsibility over character issues than competency issues. In fact, General Schwarzkopf (of Gulf War fame) said, “Ninety-nine percent of leadership failures are failures of character.” Bill Clinton and Richard Nixon are both cases in point. Location 1083

In his wonderful book, They Call Me Coach, John Wooden tells us his story firsthand. Published in 1972, the book captures the essence of this man. It is full of the wisdom of an athlete who put his faith and character into practice on the court, both as a player and as a coach. The book has great quotes on character issues; let me give you the one I liked best: "Be more concerned with your character than with your reputation, because your character is what you really are while your reputation is merely what others think you are." Location 1103

I conduct a seminar entitled, "Critical Factors for Success." In it, I make the point that the key elements that lead to success are contained in three categories:

1. Character in your person
2. Caring in your relationships
3. Competence in your endeavors. Location 1110

In a study I did on leadership comparing the lives of David and Saul, the issue of character in relation to a leader was quite revealing. David is often regarded as a leadership success and Saul a leadership failure. Buried in one of the psalms is one of David's secrets: "With upright heart he shepherded them and guided them with his skillful hand" (Ps. 78:72). Here we see the combination of competence and character. David led his people with a heart of integrity (character) and skillful hands (competence). These qualities should always go hand in hand in the life of a leader. Location 1155

What will it take to finish well? What will it take to get to the end of your road and realize that you are where you want to be, you are who you want to be, and you have done what God wants you to do? This is the question that is at the heart of this book. Bobby Clinton, whom I mentioned earlier, concluded that those he studied in the Bible, as well as other leaders he has observed, shared five characteristics that enabled them to finish well.

1. They maintained a vibrant, personal relationship with God right up to the end.
2. They maintained a learning posture and learned from various sources.
3. They lived by identifiable goals and were characterized by a good degree of self-control in their mind, will, and emotions.
4. They saw the need for meaningful, supportive personal relationships. They devoted time to developing a network of such intentional relationships, starting with their marriage and family.
5. They had a clear vision, strong biblical convictions, a great sense of perspective, and a lifelong commitment to pleasing and honoring the Lord through a daily, deliberate surrender to the lordship of Christ in all things. Location 1195

A vision is a clear, challenging picture of the future of ministry as it can be and must be—can be because God has given it, and must be because he has placed the dream and the burden of this vision on the heart of a leader. Today, people are looking for a cause, a mountain to climb, and a leader to follow into new and exciting territory. Location 1362

A vision is usually birthed in isolation, but it is most effectively communicated and implemented in community. Location 1437

Howard Hendricks of Dallas Theological Seminary said, "You can impress people at a distance, but you can impact them only up close." Life-on-life coaching, building close relationships, and genuinely caring for key people is the way to have lasting impact. This will enable you to influence many others. Those who have had the biggest influence on my life have been more than teachers or bosses. They have taken the next step to be my friend, coach, and cheerleader. Location 1489

Prioritizing certain kinds of people to invest in is critical to leading well. Many church leaders, especially lead pastors, are reactive in deciding who gets their time, rather than proactive and strategic. This has to change! We need to think in terms of five different groups of people with whom we spend our time:

1. Resourceful people
2. Important people
3. Trainable people
4. Nice people
5. Draining people Location 1502

I wrote an article entitled "Seven Habits of Highly Ineffective Leaders," a satire based on Stephen Covey's book, *The Seven Habits of Highly Effective People*. Here's the list:

1. They spend too much time managing and not enough time leading.
2. They spend too much time counseling the hurting people and not enough time developing the people with potential.
3. They spend too much time putting out fires and not enough time lighting fires.
4. They spend too much time doing and not enough time planning.
5. They spend too much time teaching the crowd and not enough time training the core.
6. They spend too much time doing it themselves and not enough time doing it through others.
7. They make too many decisions based on organizational politics and too few decisions based on biblical principles. Location 1523

The fact is that many people in leadership roles gravitate toward hurting, draining, time-consuming people because they have a need to be needed. They want to help people, to be there for people. If a leader has strong mercy gifts, leading becomes more difficult. Simply put, if you need people, you can't lead people. There is an inability or lack of desire to make the tough calls, speak the truth, or do the hard things. Motivated by a fear of disappointing people, this inability will seriously hamper and work against your ability to lead. Location 1538

I have come to the conclusion that the average leaders will allocate their time in the following five areas: 1. teaching and communicating, 2. counseling, 3. administering, 4. equipping and training others, and 5. vision casting. As I have had opportunity to observe and invest in leaders over forty years, I have concluded that Christian leaders spend most of their time teaching, counseling, and administering. The two areas that are woefully shortchanged are vision casting and equipping/training. Location 1543

I strongly encourage you to be intentional, prayerful, careful, and strategic regarding those with whom you spend your time. Be especially careful of using up all your "people hours" in counseling. Some pastors and leaders have gotten out of the counseling business altogether. If you are not careful, counseling can suck the life out of you. There will be nothing left for your spouse, family, and trainable or resourceful people. Location 1575

The life of a leader is like a race. We have been discussing this throughout the book. If you are to be among the leaders who last, it will take time and effort both to get ready and to run the race. It takes adequate preparation, constant attention, and steady pacing to finish well. It's not a matter of running an individual race. Rather, it's more like a relay race, a team effort. You want to finish well, but not by yourself. The successful leader is a humble, God-dependent, team-playing servant of God with the vision, calling, gifts, and abilities to bring others into the race. Location 1710

Note: should you wish to find any quote in its original context, the Kindle "location" is provided after each entry.