Leadership Next

Title: ***Leadership Next: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture***

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Book Summary:

Our culture is constantly changing, often faster than we can adapt to it. Christian leaders struggle not only to acquire new skills and insights but also to unlearn what they already know. As both the church and the world change, so too must Christian leaders and their very notions of leadership. Veteran church growth expert Eddie Gibbs maps out how Christian leadership must change in light of new global realities. Styles of leadership are changing, from hierarchies to networks and from compartmentalization to connectivity. Gibbs assesses the dynamics of leadership teams, identifies healthy leadership traits, and looks to how new leaders are identified and developed.

Book Quotes:

Once leaders begin to tire or stall, they are in danger of becoming obstacles or diversionaries. (9)

But now these leaders have emerged only to discover that the conditions under which they must operate are significantly different from those they have previously worked under…Consequently, the major challenge for leaders is not only the acquisition of new insights and skills but also unlearning what they already know. (9-10)

As Gary Hemel asks in relation to the business world, “Are we learning as fast as the world is changing?” (13)

Leadership is a relationship—a relationship in which one person seeks to influence the thoughts, behaviors, beliefs or values of another person.” (27)

Though it can be defined in general terms, leadership is profoundly influenced by the context and the personality of the individual. (30)

Yesterday’s styles of leadership will not be adequate for the opening decades of the twenty-first century. (34)

The primary task of the leader is to reconnect ecclesiology and missiology in order that the church be defined first and foremost by its God-given mission. (38)

Because of this, leaders need to be trained to think in a lateral rather than a linear mode. They must learn to work across disciplines for the simple reason that real-life challenges may cover a broad range of issues. (43)

The task of leadership is further complicated by the fact that many congregations comprise as many as four

generations, each of which has its own distinctive cultural characteristics. (52)

This is an era of rapid response, alternative scenarios and just-in-time planning. (54)

Today's leaders must be students of cultural movements. (55)

The church must constantly engage culture, seeking to contextualize its message without losing its unique message and distinctive lifestyle. (55)

Given all of this, tomorrow's leaders must be prepared to live with not only humility but also ambiguity and contradiction. (61)

In every area of human inquiry, we find that we have to live with the inexplicable and the irreconcilable. (61)

Dominic Crossan captures the postmodern predicament with the following lines:

There is no lighthouse keeper.
There is no lighthouse.
There is no dry land.
There is only people living on rafts made from their own imaginations.
And there is the sea. (62)

The leader does not control but cultivates. (62)

Cleveland provides a list of eight attitudes that he believes are indispensable to the management of complexity. They apply equally well to leadership among the people of God.

- A lively intellectual curiosity; an interest in everything—because everything really is related to everything else and therefore to what we are trying to do, whatever it is.
- A genuine interest in what other people think and why they think that way—which means you have to be at peace with yourself for a start.
- A feeling of special responsibility for envisioning a future that's different from a straight-line projection of the present. Trends are not destiny.
- A hunch that most risks are there not to be avoided but to be taken.
- A mindset that crises are normal, tensions can be promising and complexity is fun.
- A realization that paranoia and self-pity are reserved for people who don't want to be leaders.
- A sense of personal responsibility for the general outcome of your efforts.
- A quality I call "unwarranted optimism"—the conviction that there must be some more upbeat outcome than would result from adding up all the available expert advice. (65-66)

Warren Bennis says people want direction, trust and hope from leaders. Even in postmodernity, there can be no leadership without an appropriate exercise of authority. Such authority does not arise from a leader's position or title but originates in the trust built up on the basis of character, competence, respect and consistency. (66)

The contemporary church has to face its failure to turn decisions for Christ into disciples of Christ. We have to recognize that the term disciple is not restricted to super-Christians but is the way to describe ordinary

believers. (77)

The chaotic nature of postmodernity requires movement away from compartmentalization to the acceptance of a world of complexity and interaction. (92)
The street is no longer the public forum; the Web has provided the new marketplace for the exchange of ideas. (102)

The new realities of postmodernity mean the future structure of the church must be fluid, flexible and capable of adjusting to diversity. (103)

One younger leader, Wayne Cordiero, has provided us with an impressive model. On the Hawaiian island of Oahu, Cordiero built his church using reproducible units of 5 individuals or couples. Each unit functions as a team, and each team has a leader who has demonstrated a vision for ministry and has recruited others on the basis of that vision. Each team is united by its shared purpose and mutual concern for its members. Cordiero is concerned that every member of the church finds their fit so that they can become integrated and functioning members of the church. He achieves this by means of a training and interviewing process based on the acronym DESIGN:

- Desire – What we would like to do if given the chance
- Experience – What we have done that has built our expertise and confidence
- Spiritual gift – What the Spirit has given us in order to participate effectively in a ministry of the ascended Christ
- Individual style – Our personality and temperament
- Growth phase – Where we are in our spiritual journey
- Natural abilities – Aptitudes we were born with and which develop early in life (104)

Max De Pree identifies six early warning signs of the degeneration of a movement, which are applicable to the church. Teams fail to provide direction and maintain momentum within a movement when they begin to:

- Make trade-offs
- Prefer comfort to ambiguity
- Look for control rather than challenge
- Trust job assignments rather than respecting individual gifts
- Allow rules to dominate decision making
- Become unable or unwilling to hold the group accountable (115-116)

Leith Anderson has his own criteria for an effective mission statement. He asks, “Can the statement be memorized in three minutes or less? If it takes longer than three minutes to memorize it, it probably won’t be remembered. If it’s not remembered, it probably won’t make any difference. If it doesn’t make any difference, it probably doesn’t matter.” (122)

Jim Collins identified four basic practices for culture creation: lead with questions, not answers; engage in dialogue, not coercion; conduct autopsies without blame; and build red-flag mechanisms that turn information into information that cannot be ignored. (123)

Trustworthy leaders keep the promises they make, and instead of operating out of pretense they admit what they do not know or understand. (125)
People will forgive leaders who get it wrong, but they will not forgive denial or abdication. (125)

As Robert Murray McCheyne, the great nineteenth-century Scottish pastor and Bible teacher, is reputed to have declared, “My personal holiness is my people’s greatest need.” (129)

Cloke and Goldsmith identify the following elements in active listening:

- Encouraging: “Please tell me more.”
- Soliciting: Seek advice and clarification.
- Normalizing: “Many people feel the way you do.”
- Acknowledging and empathizing: “I can appreciate why you feel the way you do.”
- Mirroring: Reflect back the emotions and body language.
- Reframing: Reframe “You” statements into “I” statements.
- Summarizing: Rephrase to test understanding.
- Validating: I appreciate your willingness…” (144-145)

Max De Pree reminds us that “trust grows when people see leaders translate their personal integrity into organizational fidelity.” Trust cannot be built in a day; it must be constructed on a foundation of truth telling and honored promises. (146)

Whereas mission identifies what we are doing or should be attempting, vision is concerned with what we should become in order for that vision to be realized in our particular context. (150)

Enthusiasm needs to be distinguished from inspiration. Enthusiasm is often limited to a single individual, and therefore it fails to ignite passion in other people. People may respond to an enthusiast with cynicism or a mad dash to safer ground. Inspiration, on the other hand, is contagious. (156-157)

Leadership is often more about scars than stars. (180)

Appreciative inquiry is a church consultation approach that encourages members of the church to tell their own stories, relating what drew them to the church in the first place and what it is they value and celebrate about the congregation as they look back over the years they have been members. (183)

Saintly leaders are transparent because they know they are nothing apart from the grace of God, consequently, they have nothing to hide. (186)

Leith Anderson counsels us to do the following on a regular basis.

- Look at the kingdom, not just your corner.
- See beyond our circumstances to the presence of Christ with us.
- Focus on successes, not problems.
- Beware of exaggerating problems and empowering failures.
- Keep a list of blessings and successes.
- Look at reality with all of its imperfections, not just exceptions.
- Reconfirm your call rather than be swayed by complaints. (194)

The most significant test of leadership is not present performance but the legacy that the leaders leave behind them. (215)