Relational Leadership

Title: *Relational Leadership: A Biblical Model for Leadership Service*

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Book Description:

For over thirty years Walter Wright, President of Regents College, Vancouver, has been paying close attention to the nature of leadership. He has thought, taught, prayed, conversed and read widely and deeply both inside and outside of the Bible on the whole realm of leadership. Relational Leadership is the result of his dedication.

[note: presently, Walter Wright is the Executive Director of the Max De Pree Center for Leadership at Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, CA]

Drawing on leadership theory, his own experience and the biblical books of Jude, Philemon and Colossians, Walter Wright has written a book that will be valuable to anyone in a position of leadership. Leadership is not an assigned role, but a way of living that suffuses everything we do and are.

The goal of this book is to empower others to contribute to achieving the mission of the organizations with which they are involved. Wright no only presents an ideal, but offers practical suggestions for handling such thorny issues as the management of volunteers and performance reviews.

Relational Leadership will stimulate your thinking about leadership and management and enable you to invest yourself in the people for whose success you are responsible.

Book Quotes:

Leadership is a relationship- - a relationship in which one person seeks to influence the thoughts, behaviors, beliefs or values of another person. (2)

Leadership is for lovers of people, peacemakers and keepers of commitment. (12)

Leadership is about influence and service. (13)

Personally, leadership is a relationship of influence. Organizationally, it is a relationship of influence with purpose: maintaining the community and achieving the shared mission. (14)

Leadership is a relationship of trust. We listen to people we trust. We accept the influence of a person whose character we respect. (15)

Warren Bennis, the distinguished professor of leadership at the University of Southern California, says that the three things people want from leaders are direction, trust and hope. (15)

Power is at the heart of leadership, but power exists only when someone sees in you a reason to accept your influence. (16)

Leadership is about people. It is about relationship. Leadership is a relationship of influence with a purpose; the achievement of the shared mission and the nurture of the community. (17)

It is a position of responsibility and service, not status and power. The sheep do not exist for the shepherd. The shepherd was hired because of the sheep. (24)

Leadership is a relationship of service- - a relationship in which influence and leadership flow from service, not from position or status. (28)

James Kouzes and Barry Posner in their excellent book Credibility argue that trust is the foundation of leadership. (53)

As Emilie Griffin writes in The Reflective Executive, leaders hold something very fragile in their hands- - the hopes and dreams and ideas and contributions of their people. These must be held gently with respect, not crushed in the fist of power. (59)

Leaders are inclusive, looking for ways to promote diversity and create space for people to develop their unique contribution. (67)

I am responsible for articulating the vision, reinforcing the values, empowering the people and saying thanks. (69)

I like to define strategic planning as a process initiated by the top leadership of an organization to review and monitor the purpose, the mission, the values or culture, and the strategies of the organization. (71)

Strategic planning, then, is a process initiated by the leadership that clarifies the organization's mission, within its basic purpose; that identifies the values that will govern the way the organization or church lives out its mission; that translates the mission and values into vision statements or scenarios for the future; and develops strategies to turn those scenarios into reality, including goals, objectives, actions and budgets. Mission- - values- - strategies: these are the key components of strategic planning, the vital issues that leaders must constantly keep before their organizations in times of change. (73)

The planning model that shapes my thinking is a simple list of ten questions, which if wrestled with and owned by an organization will create both a vision and a plan for the implementation of that vision. The ten steps to the vision are: 1. Who are we? 2. What is important to us? 3. Where in the world are we? 4. Where do we want to be? 5. What can we do? 6. How should we do it? 7. When will we do it? 8. Who will do it? 9. How are we doing? 10. Was God pleased? (83)

Leaders who place their hope in God will be people who respect commitments, who keep promises, who encourage trust. (104- 105)

Leaders hold followers accountable to the shared vision, mission and values of the organization, not to the vision, values or opinions of the leader. (111)

Confrontation and accountability, I believe, are values deeply embedded in the concept of community and must be embraced by leaders. (113)

When it comes to building character, none of these are substitutes for spending time with God, but they are helpful reminders about important components of the leadership relationship: • Discover yourself. • Appreciate your constituents. • Affirm shared values. • Develop capacity. • Serve a purpose. • Sustain hope. (114- 115)

Participation is the best form of motivation. (135)

Leadership is powerful, but it is power attached to purpose. Leadership exists to serve the mission and to serve the people. It is a relationship of power to serve. (147)

Leadership is a relationship of service to the people that continually renews them and re- engages them in the life of the organization. (153)

In the leadership relationship, I prefer to ask 'for whose success are you responsible?' rather than the traditional 'who reports to you?' (169)

The questions reveal the direction of this performance review conversation: 1. How do you evaluate your contribution to Regent College this past year? 2. How do you evaluate Regent's relationship to you? Has the college lived up to your expectations? 3. How have the members of your team grown under your leadership? 4. What do you see as your primary objectives for this coming year? 5. What elements make you excited about your work next year? 6. What could you not do next year without harming our ability to achieve our mission? 7. What kind of training or continuing education program have you planned for next year? (174- 176)

We own our organizations a larger life. Leaders need vital and nurturing relationships outside of the organization to enrich their thinking and broaden their perspective on life. (192)