Spiritual Leadership, Blackaby

Title: ***Spiritual Leadership: Moving People on to God's Agenda***

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Book Summary:

Drawing upon their own extensive leadership experience as well as their ministry to leaders in all walks of life, Henry and Richard Blackaby offer insightful counsel into the ways God develops, guides, and empowers spiritual leaders. Clear guidance is given on how leaders can make a positive impact on the people and organizations they are currently leading.

Book Notes:

This book will distinguish between general leadership principles and spiritual leadership principles. (x)

Spiritual leadership is not an occupation: it is a calling. (xi)

People will follow spiritual leaders who understand God's agenda and who know how to move them on to it. (xi)

Gordon Sullivan and Michael Harper have suggested that the defining characteristic of the Information Age is not speed, but the "compression of time." It is not so much that the events are necessarily moving faster but that there is less time for leaders to respond to events than there used to be. (5)

People are warily looking for leaders they can trust. (5)

Christian leaders who know God and who know how to lead in a Christian manner will be phenomenally more effective in their world than even the most skilled and qualified leaders who lead without God. (14)

To be a spiritual leader is just as essential in the marketplace as in the church. (17)

At times, embracing the status quo is the greatest enemy to advancing in Christian maturity, and it is the leader's task to keep people from becoming complacent. (18)

There are a number of helpful definitions of leadership available, but we believe true spiritual leadership can be defined in one concise statement: Spiritual leadership is moving people on to God's agenda. (20)

1. *The spiritual leader's task is to move people from where they are to where God wants them to be.*
2. *Spiritual leaders depend on the Holy Spirit.*

3. *Spiritual leaders are accountable to God.*
4. *Spiritual leaders can influence all people, not just God's people.*
5. *Spiritual leaders work from God's agenda. (20-23)*

Spiritual leaders seek God's will, whether it is for their church or for their corporation, and then they marshal their people to pursue God's plan. (23)

Jesus did not develop a plan nor did he cast a vision. He sought his Father's will. (24)

The key to Jesus' leadership was the relationship he had with his Father. (24)

God does not ask leaders to dream big dreams for him or to solve the problems that confront them. He asks leaders to walk with him so intimately that, when he reveals what is on his agenda, they will immediately adjust their lives to his will and the results will bring glory to God. (29)

The greatness of an organization will be directly proportional to the greatness of its leader. (31)

As leaders grow personally, they increase their capacity to lead. As they increase their capacity to lead, they enlarge the capacity of their organization to grow. Therefore, the best thing leaders can do for their organization is to grow personally. (31)

One of the greatest limitations for today's spiritual leaders is their inability to understand and acknowledge how their past cripples their current effectiveness. (38)

The key to leadership development lies not in the experiences, whether good or bad, but in peoples' responses to those experiences. (41)

God can use adversity to build certain qualities deep within one's character that could not be fully developed in any other way. (42)

The six stages of leadership development in Clinton's model are:

- Phase One: Sovereign Foundations
- Phase Two: Inner Life Growth
- Phase Three: Ministry Maturing
- Phase Four: Life Maturing
- Phase Five: Convergence
- Phase Six: Afterglow or Celebration (43)

The *Life Maturing* period is when spiritual leaders begin to focus on their strengths and to find leadership opportunities in which they can be most effective. Whereas until this time, God was working primarily in the leader, now God begins to work increasingly *through* the leader. (44)

During the *Convergence* phase, people's ministry experiences and their life experiences converge into a

specific job or responsibility wherein they draw on all they have learned in order to enjoy maximum effectiveness. This will be the job or role for which leaders are best known and in which they experience their greatest success. (44)

The greatest area of concern for spiritual leaders is their heart. (46)

Most of the time, the problem with Christian leaders is not that they don't know what God wants them to do. The problem is that they know only too well, but they are unwilling to do it. (52)

Abraham was far from perfect. He made many mistakes. Yet his heart was open before God, and God chose to develop him into a man of faith. God didn't choose Abraham because of his leadership ability. He chose Abraham because of his heart. (53)

Therefore, the first truth in leadership development is this: God's assignments are always based on character—the greater the character, the greater the assignment (Luke 16:10). Before God will give leaders larger assignments, he will build in them greater characters. (53)

Those willing to submit themselves to the leadership development track of the Lord have the potential of growing into the leaders God wants them to become. (54)

Wise leaders do not allow the availability of resources to determine the direction of their organization. (64)

As a general rule, resources should follow vision, not determine it. (64)

Every time leaders choose to develop their own vision for their people instead of seeking God's will, they are giving their people their best thinking instead of God's. That is a poor exchange indeed. (68)

There is a significant difference between revelation and vision. Vision is something people produce; revelation is something people receive. (69)

The leader's job is to communicate God's promise to the people, not to create the vision and then strive to enlist people to buy in to it. (72)

Vision must be clear, compelling, and common to all the people. (74)

Spiritual leaders don't sell vision; they share what God has revealed to them and trust that the Holy Spirit will confirm that same vision in the hearts of their people. (75)

What *is* the spiritual leader's role? It is to bear witness to what God says. Spiritual leaders must bring followers into a face-to-face encounter with God so they hear from God directly, not indirectly through their leader. Jesus shared the Father's revelation with his disciples corporately (John 15:15). (75)

The world functions by vision; God's people live by revelation. Vision is something people produce; revelation is something people receive. (84)

For some people, the greatest challenge is becoming the kind of person that others want to follow. (87)

The issue of influence is critical, especially in Christian leadership. In people's attempts to enlist a following, some have resorted to developing the appearance of a leader rather than developing the character of a leader. (87)

There are several ways leaders can exert influence on others through their life, but none is as powerful as when

God chooses to affirm leaders before the eyes of their people. The first and most important test of legitimacy for spiritual leaders is God's authentication. (93)

There is no greater source of influence for spiritual leaders than the manifest presence of God in their lives. (96)

It is imperative for spiritual leaders to evaluate their lives to determine whether God is confirming their leadership. There should be ample evidence of God's affirmation. For one thing, God will fulfill his promises to the leader and the leader's organization. (99)

Second, when God affirms a leader, God will vindicate that person's reputation over time. (99)

A third sign of God's presence in a leader is changed lives. (99)

A fourth characteristic of God-inspired leadership is that others recognize God as the driving force behind the leader's agenda. (99)

Finally, the unmistakable mark of leaders who are authenticated by God is that they are like Christ. (100)

A person is truly a spiritual leader when others are moved to be more like Christ. (100)

Spiritual leadership flows out of a person's vibrant intimate relationship with God. You cannot be a spiritual leader if you are not meeting God in profound, life-changing ways. (100)

Leadership is ultimately based on trust. Since people choose to follow leaders they trust, their confidence must have a foundation. The foundation is honesty. (104)

Leaders cannot demand respect. They can only earn it. (107)

Leaders do not have to prove God is guiding them. God's presence will be unmistakable. (118)

The great leaders of Scripture never had to insist on the people's respect. God saw to that. (118)

Max Depree, former chairman of the board of Herman Miller, Inc., suggests that leadership is a "posture of indebtedness." Leaders are morally obligated to provide certain things for those who work for them. Depree claims that followers have a right to ask the following questions of their leaders:

- What may I expect from you?
- Can I achieve my own goals by following you?
- Will I reach my potential by working with you?
- Can I trust my future to you?
- Have you bothered to prepare yourself for leadership?
- Are you ready to be ruthlessly honest? Do you have the self-confidence and trust to let me do my job?
- What do you believe? (121-122)

The primary purpose of spiritual leaders is not to achieve their goals but to accomplish God's will. (122)

Spiritual leaders have a God-given responsibility to do all they can to lead their people on to God's agenda.

(122)

There are at least three legitimate goals spiritual leaders ought to have for their people regardless of whether they are leading a committee, a church, or a corporation. (127)

1. **Leading to Spiritual Maturity**

   It is to take their people from where they are to where God wants them to be. God's primary concern for all people is not results, but relationship. People's call to be in a right relationship with God takes precedence over their occupation.

   One of the issues regarding spiritual leadership is whether spiritual leaders can take people to places they themselves have never been. That depends on one's definition of spiritual leadership. If spiritual leadership is understood as taking people to a location or completing a task, then leaders can lead people to places they have never been. But if the goal of leadership is a relationship, then leaders will never move their people beyond where they have gone themselves. (128)

   Once people in an organization know how to recognize God's voice and once are able to determine his leading, the organization will have enormous potential for serving God. (130)

2. **Leading Others to Lead**

   Leaders lead followers. Great leaders lead leaders. (134)

3. **Bringing Glory to God**

   True spiritual leaders value glorifying God more than they do personal or organizational success. (127-142)

God has a specific agenda for every person and every organization. Leaders can only discover God's will as he reveals it to them through their personal relationship with him. (145)

The single most important thing leaders should do is pray. (148)

Biblical praying can be the most challenging, exhausting, laborious, and yet rewarding thing leaders ever do. (149)

If leaders spend adequate time communing with God, the people they encounter that day will notice the difference. (151)

A leadership position does not provide immunity from sacrifice; rather, it often provides occasions for an even greater effort. (154)

The bottom line is this: *Leadership is hard work.* (158)

First, servant leadership flows from the love leaders have for their people. (165)

If leaders cannot manage their own attitudes, they cannot be entrusted with the morale of others. (169)

Spiritual leaders understand the importance of a positive attitude as an effective leadership tool, but they remain optimistic not because doing so is a vital leadership practiced but because they are in touch with God. (170)

Great leaders don't make excuses. They make things better. They are not unrealistic or blind to the difficulties they face. They simply are not discouraged by them. They never lose confidence that the problems can be solved. They maintain a positive attitude. Great leaders don't blame their people for not being where they ought to be; they take their people from where they are to where they need to be. Great leaders never lose faith that this is possible. (174)

Influence is a powerful thing. With influence comes a tremendous responsibility. (175)

Leaders are symbols of their organizations. They are the repositories of their people's trust. (175)

One of the first things new leaders should do, preferably even before arriving on the field, is to study the history of the organization. (186)

Spiritual leaders make every decision with the awareness that one day they will give an account to God. (190)

Leaders should restrict themselves to making only the most important decisions for their organization. (196)

Waiting on God is not a passive activity. It is one of the most strenuous, agonizing, faith-stretching times in a leader's life. (196)

Spiritual leaders also understand that God has granted them enough time to accomplish any assignment he gives them. The key to successful leadership is not creating more time in one's life or packing more activities into one's day, but staying on God's agenda. (200)

Kouzes and Posner observed that the harried nature of the modern office means the average executive has only nine minutes of uninterrupted time to devote to any one item. (201)

Peter Drucker offers many helpful suggestions for leaders and their time in his book *The Effective Executive*. He notes, "Effective executives, in my observation, do not start with their tasks. They start with their time."

God has a plan for each person that is uniquely suited to that individual. Unlike people, God never piles on more than someone can handle. God never overbooks people. God never drives his servants to the point of breakdown. God never burns people out. God never gives people tasks that are beyond the strength or ability he provides. (202)

The key for overworked leaders is to examine each of their current responsibilities to determine whether they have inadvertently assumed ownership for things God has not intended them to carry. (203)

Better for leaders to identify the crucial tasks of their role then to schedule those activities into their calendars than to submit themselves by default to the whims of the people around them. The latter is crisis management; the former is self-management. (207)

The quantity of work leaders can accomplish is in direct proportion to their ability to delegate work to others. (209)

Peter Drucker warns against dividing a leader's time into small segments. Drucker suggests that most leadership tasks that can be done within fifteen minutes are tasks that could often be delegated to someone else. (210)
One of the key differences between leaders and managers is that managers are responsible for how something is done; leaders must also consider why it is being done, and continually communicate this to their followers. (211)

Drucker concludes: “if there is any ‘secret’ of effectiveness, it is concentration. Effective executives do first things first and they do one thing at a time.” (212)

Everything spiritual leaders do should flow out of their relationship with God. (212)
The primary role of spiritual leaders is not to merely accomplish tasks, but to take people from where they are to where God wants them to be. (220)

Kouzes and Posner claim the most common reason for employees leaving their companies is that their leaders gave limited praise and recognition for their efforts. (231)

Spiritual leaders must understand that they are no more immune to moral failure than those they are leading. (238)

Leaders who surrender their positive attitudes have resigned themselves to be mediocre leaders at best. (241)

Leaders are not only readers; they are thinkers. (244)

People who cannot handle criticism need not apply for leadership positions. Being criticized, second-guessed, and having one’s motives questioned are unpleasant but inevitable aspects of leadership. (247)

Criticism has its most devastating effect upon the immature and the unsure. (249)

Leaders must become adept in two areas, or their organizations will collapse from within: conflict resolution and communication. (254)

Spiritual leaders do not practice “conflict management.” True spiritual leaders seek conflict resolution. (255)

The problem for some leaders is that they gradually come to see their identity as intrinsically linked to their position. (257)

Leaders who invest in people will know the deep satisfaction of seeing these people fulfill God’s purposes for their lives. There is no greater experience for leaders than rejoicing with those who have matured in their faith as a result of their leader’s faithfulness. (276)