

Traits of an Effective Leader

Leadership is an ability that is desired by most people on some level in their life. Some wives wish their husbands were leaders in the home. Church members desire leadership from their pastor. And pastors often lament the fact that it is difficult to raise up leaders from their congregation to share in the leadership load at the church. Leadership is essential for the health and growth of any organization or group.

But what does leadership look like? Are there certain identifiable characteristics? In this brief Ministry Methods article we will take a look at the attitudes and actions of pastoral and lay church leaders who are motivating and leading their churches effectively in the early 21st century. There are undoubtedly other significant traits of a leader, but this article will focus on six of them.

Biblical Life Integrity

The word integrity literally refers to "holding it all together" and having obvious consistency. The effective leader today is recognized as having a consistent life that reflects living by Biblical values. What you hear or see is what you get. The man of God who desires to be an effective leader for God will be characterized by qualities found in Scripture such as 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, and Galatians 5:22, 23. Integrity is the foundation of leadership.

Builds and Values Relationships

A church leader (or pastor) who is effective today in leadership is one who knows how to develop deep and lasting positive relationships with people. This is an absolute necessity if he is going to carry out the instruction of II Timothy 2:2 "And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who shall be able to teach others also." Effective leadership involves a continual series of relationships that multiply the attitudes, knowledge, skills, or behaviors of the leader into the lives of others who also multiply them. The Apostle Paul was a master of this trait as indicated in Colossians 4:7-18 where he listed many whom he had built serving and leading relationships with.

Goal Oriented

Leaders in the 21st century must know clearly what they are trying to accomplish and then mobilize others to pursue those same objectives. Goals need to be behavioral, measurable, and visionary. Specific goals help a leader accomplish more himself, as well as enable followers or potential multipliers to understand more clearly the purpose of their task. Goals also help define "success" and bring satisfaction when achieved. The ninth chapter of the letter to the Corinthians church is an example of a leader laying out his goal orientation so that others may join him in the blessing of achieving the goals.

Stay Focused

A leader will usually be tugged in many directions by people who want or need his time and attention. If he is not careful, his time, energy, and thinking will be diluted into many opportunities and his unique purpose, vision, or goals will not be achieved. A successful leader knows what God has placed him in his position to accomplish. And he stays focused on getting that done. He recruits others to care for the other opportunities and stays focused on his unique task. The apostle Paul speaks of this need in I Corinthians 9:24-27. A leader must keep his focus if he is to be successful.

Communicates Clearly and Continuously

The current age of technology has made it very necessary for a leader to keep all teammates, staff, and supporters/prayers continually informed. Social networking, Facebook, blogs, visual, audio, and text messages are expected to be available instantly. Consequently, the effective leader must be thinking continuously about how to mobilize, mentor, and reward teammates and followers. Clear and continuous communication builds strong, loyal, and productive teams.

Shows Appreciation

Without being thankful for what others do in the cause of Christ and showing them you appreciate them, leadership can quickly become a "one man band." A pastor, who is not willing or able to show appreciation for the efforts of others, quickly becomes isolated and finds that his congregation is no longer listening to what he says. Followers can become detached and busy with their own concerns. There are many ways a leader can show appreciation. In the New

Testament it is instructive that Paul spent so much time and space commending other people at the beginning or end of his epistles to the churches.

This brief treatment of the "Traits of an Effective Leader" is designed to help us focus on our style of leadership and evaluate where we may need to seek to grow and develop. It is also helpful to keep these six traits in mind as we look for people to appoint or elect to leadership roles in our church.

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