

4 QUESTIONS ON LEADERSHIP

favorites

Books: *Grace-Based Parenting*, Dr. Tim Kimmel; *Dilbert 2.0: 20 Years of Dilbert*, Scott Adams

Music: *The King Is Dead*, The Decemberists; *These Friends of Mine*, Rosie Thomas; *Low Country Blues*, Gregg Allman

Film: *The King's Speech*



Rick Lawrence

has been editor of GROUP for 23 years, and he'll be leading an 8-hour track called "Jesus-Centered Ministry" at our Simply Youth Ministry Conference in Chicago, March 4-7—youthministry.com/conference.



I don't remember asking you to do that on my blog...I wondered where your stuff came from.

A couple of weeks ago my friend and partner-in-crime Doug Fields asked me to answer a few questions about leadership for a regular weekly feature he's doing on his new blog (at dougfields.com). So I took a hard swing at each question...

1 What's your definition of leadership?

You'd think an editor would have no problem coming up with a definition—*any definition for anything*. But all I've got to offer are a few disconnected phrases that seem true to me:

- **Leaders create followers.** Followers are people who say and do things they wouldn't have said and done if not for their exposure to the "radiation" a leader is giving off.
- **Leaders give what they have to give.** By this, I mean that true leaders, or leaders of truth, are giving from the "good treasure" God has entrusted to them (see The Parable of the Talents). They're not afraid of that treasure—in fact, they love giving to others because they know they're wired to give.
- **Leaders take risks.** Again, just as in the Parable of the Talents, leaders would feel suffocated if they weren't taking risks on behalf of the Kingdom of God, and on behalf of those they are leading.
- **Leaders are always pointing to something higher than themselves.** They know they are conduits to something, not an end in themselves. Another way of saying this is that they serve a higher Love than self-love.
- **Leaders, in a very real sense, share in Jesus' passion to "set the captives free."** No matter what "captivity" looks like for a "prisoner," a leader is driven to bash open the cell doors.

2 What's an important tip you have to share about leading others?

If you are not, as C.S. Lewis used to say, "under the Obedience," then you're operating like a grenade with its pin pulled. Sooner or later you're going to blow somebody up. True leadership flows out of the life that comes from embracing our true nature as "branches" intimately grafted into the Vine, who is Jesus. All of my mistakes in leadership have come when I have operated outside of my Obedience—whether from ignorance, laziness, arrogance, or insecurity. The other thing, related to this, is that all of the leaders who have changed my life have had three magnetic characteristics:

- **They are sifted**—I just spent more than a year writing a book about my experience, and the experience of others, in embracing the power of a process Jesus called "sifted like wheat" (Luke 22). In *Sifted: God's Scandalous Response to Satan's Outrageous Demand* (out in August), I describe sifting as a God-ordained momentum that brings freedom, represented by this rhythm: beaten, separated, and revealed. Sifted people are broken people whose true identities have been surfaced by what they have endured, and now they're dangerous-for-God.
- **They are curious**—By this, I mean they are always hungry to learn from others and never assume they already know everything they need to know. They're thirst for truth is insatiable.
- **They are bold**—I mean, they are not polite people in the same way Jesus was not a polite person. They are people who carry a kind of weight with their life—they are not afraid to move into the intimate places of my life, and they are not afraid to throw their soul's heft around.



3 What's your biggest failure/weakness as a leader?

One word: passivity. Whether at home, work, or church, my biggest regrets are almost exclusively tied to my obvious or subtle choices to remain passive when leadership is needed. I wince just thinking about the times I've felt tired or put-upon or resentful of stepping in to a hard situation, so I let someone else take the bullet.

4 What do you do to keep growing as a leader?

I once agreed to co-write a book called *The Family Friendly Church* just so I could hang out and spend a lot of time with Ben Freudenburg, a pioneering family ministry leader who dreamed of writing a book but needed help. I knew, *just knew*, that if I had an excuse to spend a lot of time with Ben that it would help me to grow—and I was right. So the best way to grow as a leader is to find excuses to spend time with leaders who have the three characteristics I've shared above. I have never been disappointed when I have pursued, and even stalked, those who "radiate" the spirit of Christ. Leaders help other leaders grow. ■