

LEADING CHANGE **BRAD POWELL**

What **Good Leadership** Looks Like

Q From your experiences, good and bad, what does it take to become a genuinely effective leader in the local church?

A First, I'm glad that you included both my "good" and "bad" experiences in your question. After all, there is no effective leadership without "bad" experiences. Though a simple truth, I admit that in my early leadership days I was surprised by, tried to avoid and even thought there was something wrong when I found myself in a "bad" experience. I have since learned that these experiences are an inescapable part of effective leadership. It doesn't mean that I like them, but it does mean that I make better use of them. Some of my most significant personal lessons, transformative moments and positive seasons of ministry have resulted from the "bad" experiences.

Second, I also appreciate that you use the words "genuinely effective." As much as I love pastors and churches, it's essential to face the reality that many are not all that effective these days. This isn't a new phenomenon. The Old and New Testaments paint the tragic masterpiece of genuinely ineffective leaders. Everything does rise and fall on leadership.

Now, to your question. While there are a ton of answers I could give you, I want to focus on three specific issues that I've discovered to be essential in becoming a genuinely effective church leader.

"When leaders do their job, ... God's people begin to excel. His glory spills out everywhere."

It takes being the right leader for the church you're in at the time you're in it. Like it or not, much of what will and won't happen in your church will stem from your leadership. So, obviously, for the right things to

happen you must be the right leader. Though you'll want to study and develop them further for yourself, I believe these are the essential characteristics:

Calling. To the core of your being, you have to believe that God has brought you to this position and church for such a time as this. If you don't, it's impossible for you to be the "right leader."

Character. Pursue authenticity, and be rightly motivated and a person of integrity (Mark 10:42-45). People don't follow someone they don't respect, and respect requires character.

Competence. You must have the right gifts, and you need to do everything in your power to develop those gifts for leading the church more effectively. In my view, the two most important gifts are communication and leadership.

Confidence. You have to believe you're the right person, at the right time, doing the right thing. People don't follow hesitant, insecure leaders into the unknown. And, by the way, it's OK for a believer to have confidence (2 Cor. 3:4-6).

Courage. Be willing and able to stand alone. It would be a worthless exercise to try and find an effective biblical leader that didn't have courage. What was true for Moses, David, Paul and Jesus will also be true for us. Effectively moving people against the prevailing currents of their lives and culture demands courage. To do this, you must be able to love people without needing them. The reason is simple. If you need people too much, you will never be able to courageously lead them for fear of losing them. The right kind of courage always results from playing to the right audience—the audience of One.

Commitment. You must be "all in" for the long haul. The local church needs leaders who stick with it.

Continuous growth. Find ways to keep growing personally and spiritually. A church will never go any farther than its leader.

Genuine effectiveness as a leader takes investing in other leaders and building teams. While

it's true that everything rises and falls on leadership, it's not true that a leader (in any environment, especially the church) can do it alone. You can't be effective alone. However, a leader can be and must be the catalyst for moving the local church toward missional effectiveness.

Through one of my very "bad experiences" in ministry, I learned this important lesson. You don't do leadership

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to people. You lead them. And the best way to lead them is to get all of the best leaders and people on all of your teams. The right leaders and teams don't just happen. So a genuinely effective leader has to intentionally focus on this issue.

To be effective, you have to consistently be aware of what needs to change, and then share those insights with the church. Sadly, the vast majority of churches are not effectively fulfilling the Great Commission. It's not that they don't want to. But they don't know how or what it takes to carry it out in their world today. It's the leader's job to tell them. The book of Nehemiah offers a strong example of a leader who guided people. When leaders don't do their job, God's people settle for mediocrity and His glory is hidden. Conversely, when leaders do their job, as Nehemiah did, God's people begin to excel. His glory spills out everywhere.

Though I realize that effective leadership isn't as simple as three points and a poem (I generously spared you the poem), the issues I dealt with here are an essential part of what brings leadership to life. I believe and pray that focusing on them will help you become more effective. And, as we all know, this is what our churches and our world desperately needs.

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