

L MESSAGE

Sharpen your Edge

REFLECTION

I think too often we take responsibilities in God's Kingdom too lightly, some take them too seriously, and it becomes an ego-centric expression of leadership, but many of us take our responsibility too lightly. Some years ago Paula Abdul featured in a commercial for Pepsi that featured her dancing with an animated big pink cat. That commercial cost PepsiCo \$8 million to create. What does that say about the importance they have for their product! Translated into Kingdom terms: How much time do you spend on fulfilling your responsibilities with excellence? How much do you seek God's heart on decisions that need to be made? And today's question: How much time do you put into your own personal growth and development?

It seems that our own personal growth is our last priority and is the first thing sacrificed on the altar of getting ministry done. God wants us to be excellent in the way we minister. He wants our very best and he wants us to operate at our very best! To be effective leaders we need to commit to sharpening our leadership edge. There are many things we can do, and should do, but to name a few:

You should read. Read books on leadership, books on leaders, books about management strategy, books about the future of the church, books on preaching (if you're a preacher), books on evangelizing, books on discipleship. Read more books. Your response to this might be, 'but I don't have enough time!' You know as well as I do that's just not true. What you mean to say is, 'fine-tuning the gifts God has given me is not a priority.'

Get in the orbit of someone you know who does and can lead well. That may mean reading about them, watching them, listening to them, etc. Get in their orbit. Mentally be around them, think how they think, and examine how they live. If you're thinking, 'but I don't know anyone like that', then read about them, get some tapes, ask others who they look up to follow.

We mentioned this in the very first episode of L-Message, Lead something! You cannot develop as a leader if you are not leading something! Listening to Steve Stroope recently he gave a compelling definition of leadership: "A Leader is someone who leads!"

In point A. above I mentioned the need to read books. Emphasizing this I want to say we need to grow in our general leadership capabilities and we also need to grow in our specified field. So if you are working to make a difference to the poverty situation, you need to be informed about that situation and read up on ways to address the problem, but if you are leading others in addressing these issues, then you equally have to sharpen your leadership edge and expose yourself to material that specifically does that.

As leaders, there is one person, and one person only, responsible for your leadership development, that person is you! And if you're leading God's kingdom you better take it more seriously than PepsiCo take their soft-drink!

CHALLENGE

What leader are you learning from? What books are you reading to sharpen your specific and general leadership edge? What is your most recent lesson you've learnt whilst 'on the job'? How do you plan to grow as a leader?

Jigoro Kano was the founder of the martial art of Judo. Kano sought out the nearly defunct art of Jujitsu, and modified it to contain modern Sports principles, which created the art of Judo. It became the defense system of the Japanese police and was the first Eastern Martial Art to be accepted into the International Olympic Competition. Kano was so focused on learning improved techniques in all walks of life that he found new and better ways for the island nation of Japan to educate its youth. He became known as the father of modern Japanese education. Kano was well respected in athletic, social and political circles world wide. Just before he died the world-renowned martial arts expert called his students together. As they congregated around him he announced. "When you bury me, do not bury me in a black belt! Be sure to bury me in a white belt!" The white belt was the belt of a beginner who had much to learn.

Is this your attitude?