

L MESSAGE

Still Sharpening

Why stay you on the earth except to grow? —Robert Browning

REFLECTION

Let's do a little test together. Since reading the last L-Message, three weeks ago what book have you finished reading? What purchase or investment have you made to your personal growth? What speaker have you listened to? What material have you watched on DVD? You now know how committed you are to sharpening your edge.

I believe there are four factors that need to be present within us that result in us wanting to sharpen our leadership edge.

1. **Humility.** Pride will always stop us from learning and growing because we think we know it all. Or we think we know enough! If we lack humility we lack the ability to ask others questions and then listen in order to learn from them. We lack the desire to search for that book that may inform or even challenge our thinking and practice. We lack the wisdom to avail ourselves to material that may present thinking opposed to ours and therefore cause us to evaluate our beliefs (and motives) and the reasons for them.

2. **Realised Insufficiencies.** We will only put the energy into our growth if we believe the outcome will benefit some part of our lives. Growth occurs when we realise that there are areas in our lives, whether it be character issues, leadership ability, specific skills, etc, that need attention and expansion.

3. **Character.** Part of accepting a leadership position says I will be and do my best for God, for this Church, for this ministry, for this person. Leadership carries with it an enormous responsibility as we have previously touched on. If we take on a leadership position but are not working at offering our best, and reaching our potential (which means growth) then we are not being authentic to the expectations God has for us. At the root of this is a character issue. Are we doing what we signed up to do.

4. **Effort.** This is probably the largest obstacle on the road to growth. It takes effort to read a book or listen to a CD. It means that our energy and time is not being used in a way that at first appears to be tangible with the results required. It's easier to turn on the TV than pick up some material that will stretch your thinking. It's easier to do ministry (not really – but bare with me) than it is to learn about how to do it better and then implement those changes! Effort comes from a desire to do better, to be better and improve that which God has given you to work with.

Learning and being stretched in your thinking is a very important and exciting aspect of leadership! Don't miss out on it, because your lacking one of these four (or maybe others) ingredients, instead stop, have a look at yourself and address what might not be going right!

The other night I was watching a documentary on The Rolling Stones. I'm not a huge fan but Keith Richards said something that really fascinated me! He was asked if he "ever got bored playing the same songs night after night for so many years". His response was to say, "No! I'm still practicing those songs! Songs like Satisfaction, I really feel I can play them better."

That says a lot about Keith's approach to learning doesn't it? As I was thinking about this and more about "Sharpening Our Leadership Edge" I felt there was more to say. Learning, getting better, improving, stretching ourselves, expanding our knowledge and skill base is essential in any field we are in if we hope to achieve anything. Yet I've observed that in Christian ministry circles the same stance is not taken. We do not treat our role in Kingdom issues with the same responsibility or respect as we might in the work place.

