

L MESSAGE

Ability, Practice & Position

A good leader inspires other people with confidence in the leader; a great leader inspires them with confidence in themselves.

So often we mentally align a) the ability to lead with b) the practice of leadership with c) the position of leadership. In doing this we tend to conclude that a leader needs to be someone who fits into all of the above categories, and thus we have a picture of what leadership is. This however is not always the case...

It is possible to have the ability to lead yet not be practicing leadership. Some of my most frustrating seasons of leadership have been spent trying, wanting and hoping to inspire, enthuse and equip those who have obvious leadership ability and potential to get into the game, to start leading something, but to no avail. Paul when he writes to the Romans (12:8) urges those gifted by God to lead to do so with diligence (attentiveness, carefulness, thoroughness, conscientiousness). When someone has the giftings and ability to lead but refuses to lead the Kingdom of God suffers a huge loss, as does the person in question. This is because of the wonder of heaven that is available to someone who first realises and then embraces the gift God has given them, with the desire to serve those who will benefit from such a gift. I am also aware that there are other factors such as fear, confidence, self esteem, specific circumstances, etc. that make an offering of leadership difficult but please never sit on the gifts God has given you, take the risk, step out and start to use them.

It is possible to be in a position of leadership and not have the ability to lead. We all know people like this, usually the phrase *abuse of power* comes to mind, because people in positions of leadership but with no ability to lead will abuse the power that the position gives them. This is because they don't know what to do with the power they have been given or they want that power for themselves and not for the benefit of those they are leading. This situation always ends in disaster, with good and valuable people getting hurt and sometimes leaving altogether. This situation however is very hard to change, especially if we're talking about the top leadership position, so my advice: Be very careful on the front end when filling those leadership positions, look for true leaders, not people who want the position, as filling a leadership position does not equal leadership ability.

It is possible to practice leadership whilst not being in a position of leadership. Often we think that leadership can only occur when given a position to lead from. I'm not convinced this is the case, although position is certainly helpful and beneficial to a leader. Leading is more about seizing an opportunity, rather than fulfilling a position. This means that you are able to exercise your leadership potential today in very ordinary situations. You are able to lead your friends or you family. You are able to lead your business or a movement in the community or your school. You are able to lead someone out of a difficult place or lead someone to Christ. Leadership is not dependant on whether you are named in a position or not. Leadership comes out of the essence of a leaders being.

I recently went to Lakes Entrance on holidays for a few days. Whilst there I went fishing on a charter boat with a12 other people. At one point after fishing for a while we were ready to move but the anchor was stuck, under the boat, in the sand bank we were resting on. Heather (the Captain's wife) was in charge of pulling up the anchor but it was stuck and seemingly out of sight. As we waited to see what would happen a guy stood up and walked right to the back of the boat and noticed that the anchor was lodged against the prop. He informed Heather who handed him the pole and he was able to drag the anchor out of the sand and dislodge the boat from where it had been stuck. Reflecting on that I realised that the bloke had no position of leadership, yet he had the ability to take leadership in an appropriate way when it was needed and did so by offering his leadership as a gift of service to the captain, his wife and everyone else on the boat. What a picture of how each of us should exercise our leadership, regardless of position, ability or situation.