

6 Surprising Things about Leadership

I sometimes hear myself say, “Nothing surprises me. I’ve seen it all. The good, the bad and the slightly unattractive.” But that’s not exactly true. I am constantly surprised.

I’ve seen sucker punches on the church parking lot, midnight hospital runs, camel poop stains on church carpets which incited business meetings, witches getting saved, and also *lots and lots* of things I can only explain by saying “Well, you just had to be there.”

In fact, *leadership* surprises me. I came into the ministry with certain preconceived notions about how everything worked and more than a dozen times, I’ve left a conundrum scratching my head because I learned that I had it all wrong. Just the opposite of my clinical understanding was true. Here are six simple truths that surprise me.

Leadership is NOT getting everyone to agree on everything.

Unity is primary to the church. Paul used lots of ink communicating the power of unity and the tragedy of schisms within the church. But if you ever get to the point where you feel you’ve got to get unanimous votes, you’ll set yourself up for failure, disappointment, and unnecessary obsessing. There is power in uniting what your deacons, staff, and leaders **do** agree on while also respecting those whose opinions vary even in the nuances of a ministry strategy. The most successful

leadership teams I've seen are the ones that can disagree but choose to galvanize the mission by presenting a united front to the church after a decision is made.

In the words of one older deacon, *"I don't like the drums up there. I'm not comfortable with it. But if that's what our strategy is going to reach my grandkids, let's do it. I've got plenty of Happy Goodman Family CDs in my car. I'm all good."*

That is leadership and, yes, it is surprising, crazy-talk leadership.

Leadership requires fear and hate.

When I think of leadership, I think of the word *courageous*. But inherent in every leader, there must also be fear and hate.

We must fear many things! We must fear leading alone. We need each other. The warmest words a pastor will ever hear during conflict is, "I've got your back." We must fear complacency, sin, temptation, impurity, and missing God in the mission.

We must also hate a few things. We must hate gossip, lies, shadow missions, and a score of other things that jeopardize our mission and the church. Leaders must hate with great skill the things we ***should*** hate.

Think about it. We serve a God who hates. In Proverbs, the Bible tells us of this Holy God who hates seven things:

Haughty Eyes

A Lying Tongue

Hands That Kill The Innocent

A Heart That Plots Evil
Feet That Race To Do Wrong
A False Witness Who Pours Out Lies
A Person Who Sows Discord In A Family

Be a godly leader and hate the right stuff.

Leadership is as much about the journey as it is about getting from Point A to Point B.

Jesus was a traveling leader who had a busy three-year tour of the Middle East on foot, boats and donkey. But if you read the gospels, the destinations usually took a back seat to what happened along the way. Demons, storms, dead guys, Romans, tax collectors, roadside meals, wave walking... Wow! There was a lot to see along the journey.

As Forrest Gump said: *"Now, it used to be, I ran to get where I was goin'. I never thought it would take me anywhere."*

Our greatest moments in leadership often occur along the way and not simply at the destination.

Leadership is not about knowing what should be done.

There are lots of people who know what should be done, but churches are often hamstrung because nobody is DOING what should be done. Mental gymnastics and philosophical leadership

should be left to the Pharisees. We are called to be disciples. The very word connotes action.

Leadership is about failing often.

Yes, this seems very ironic. But if your team is counting on home runs every time they try to lead people, then frustration will soon follow. In the same breath, we must do everything we can to achieve our goals. It's true: God doesn't ask us to be successful; He asks us to be faithful. Results are a God thing, not an "us" thing. And sometimes the only way we get it right is by getting it wrong and correcting course.

Leadership is not a personality type

Leaders come in all styles, colors, shapes and shoe-sizes. Some of the greatest leaders I know are introverts. They are listeners and when they speak, people listen. Do you know what kind of leaders you need on the team? Quiet leaders who listen and contemplate. Loud leaders who aren't afraid of a microphone. Skilled leaders who know how to fix a septic tank or a computer. Funny leaders who provide joy and excitement. (I think you know where I'm going with this.)

We need writers, huggers, finger-in-your-chest leaders, poets, carpenters, negotiators, and truth tellers.

There is a place at the leadership table for them all.

So there you have it- 6 things that surprise me about leadership. What surprises you?