



The Small Group Leader's Toolkit
Ten Power Tools For Personal Leadership Development
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Introduction - The Determining Factor

“Everything rises and falls on leadership.” - Lee Roberson

Several years ago I was dissatisfied with my church, my small group, my marriage, and my children. So, viewing myself as a spiritual giant, I asked God to change *them*.

God's response was swift and clear. He said and did absolutely nothing.

So I again asked the Lord to change them. Again He said and did nothing.

So I asked a third time for the Lord to change them. This time His response was unmistakable. “The one who needs to change is you.”

He was right. I have learned that when I am unhappy with my situation, I need to start by looking in the mirror. I have little or no control over others. The only person I have the power to change is myself. I spent the next several years studying everything I could get my hands on that related to leadership and worked hard to become a better leader. Robertson's take on leadership is spot-on. As I became a better leader everything got better.

My small group started growing and multiplying.

My church began to multiply leaders and set attendance records.

My marriage improved.

My children stepped up to reach their potential.

In this book, I want to give you the basic leadership principles and tools needed to become a better leader. You can apply them to your small group as well as any other ministry in which you are involved or to your business or family. They are simple, practical powerful tools that will help you become a better leader.

Before we dive into the tools of leadership, let's discuss seven reasons why developing your leadership skills is vitally important.

Your leadership ability is the determining factor.

The single greatest hindrance to ministry growth is a lack of true leadership.

The greatest *strength* any ministry faces is not money, space, evangelism, or resources strength ... it is leadership. The greatest *problem* any ministry faces is not a money, space, evangelism, absentee, or resource problem ... it is leadership! All other factors being equal, leadership ability will determine the size of your ministry, the quality of people in your ministry, the number of leaders within the ministry, the morale of your ministry, the potential growth of your ministry, and the long-term impact of your ministry.

Leadership ability will determine the size of your ministry. Read the parables ... God gives more to those who have shown the ability to be trusted with more. Do you seriously think the wise and benevolent God will trust you with more people in your ministry if you are not doing a good job with the ones He has already given you? Of course not!

Leadership ability determines the quality of people in your ministry.

I have a friend who is a quality leader. Currently, she is serving in an inner-city ministry under a man who is not as skilled in the area of leadership. She works hard and her ministry has doubled in the last two months. The number of leaders serving under her has grown from zero to four. Despite his lack of leadership skills, she remains supportive.

But she is also very frustrated. She is careful to not be critical. Yet, every week she says things like, “Dave, I just don’t understand. Why can’t he see this?” “Why doesn’t he do that?” and “I don’t want his job, but I can’t understand why he won’t do it.” She is wrestling with the decision quality leaders always face when they serve under less developed leaders: “do I just focus on my ministry and let the rest of this ministry suffer or do I talk to his superior or do I find another ministry?”

If he does not step up and do a better job of leading, he will eventually lose her. Quality leaders are repelled when serving under lesser quality leaders and attracted by serving those who are more developed.

Leadership ability will determine the number of leaders in your ministry.

As we have said, leaders attract leaders. Small group leaders—those who continuously multiply their group—are *constantly* attracting and developing new leaders. If you struggle to find anyone to train so you can multiply your small group, it could be you have yet to attract any leaders to your group!

Leadership ability will determine the morale of your ministry.

You have seen it. A ministry struggles under a cloud of poor morale and a new leader arrives on the scene. He or she has more than the title “leader.” The person has the tools of a leader. Soon, the obstacles defeating the ministry are taken on as challenges. Everyone pulls together. Gripping fades. The ship is turned.

I currently serve at a seminary that struggled to attract students. A few years ago, the school appointed a new leader with the tools and temperament needed to thrive in this setting. Over the course of the last 36 months, morale among the faculty and staff has been restored. As a result, student enrollment has increased dramatically.

Leadership ability will determine the long-term impact of the ministry.

Let me give you an example from church history. Two men named George and John were contemporaries who had great results preaching the gospel. Their spiritual messages shook two continents for Christ.

Everyone agreed that Whitefield was the better preacher, yet he was not much of a leader. Wesley was seen as an adequate preacher, but was an exceptional leader.

Few people outside of a seminary recognize the name of George Whitefield. Yet John Wesley's ministry lives on and is widely known by most everyone. Today there are 70 million Methodists who trace their roots back to Wesley's leadership!

***Your leadership ability will eventually allow your ministry to multiply.
Never underestimate the power of multiplication!***

Some time ago there was a display at the Museum of Science and Industry in Chicago. It featured a checkerboard with 1 grain of wheat on the first square. 2 grains appeared on the second, 4 on the third, then 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, on subsequent squares. Somewhere down the board, there were so many grains of wheat on a single square that some were spilling over into neighboring squares ... and there the demonstration stopped.

Above the checkerboard display was a question, "At this rate of doubling every square, how much grain would be on the checkerboards by the 64th square?"

To find the answer to this riddle, you punched a button on the console in front of you, and the answer flashed on a little screen above the board: "Enough to cover the entire subcontinent of India 50 feet deep."

The seemingly slow process of raising up multiplying leaders is the fastest way to fulfill the Great Commission. In fact it is, it's the *only* way. Today, the world is growing by multiplication and the church is growing through addition. In order to catch up with and keep pace with the multiplying population of the world, we must multiply multipliers.

It takes a leader to make a leader. Before you can begin to multiply leaders from your small group or your church, you must become a leader yourself.

***Your leadership ability will enhance your ability
to handle changing and challenging times.***

We live in changing and challenging times. In fact, no generations in history have had to navigate the levels and speed of change we now face.

Change can be good. There is not growth with out change and if a ministry hopes to grow, it must be prepared to change. Only leaders navigate change successfully.

Yet, change is also very difficult. All over North America, churches are discovering that the they must change or die. Yet, change is hard. Churches must be led to change. Many well meaning church leaders have crashed on the rocks of under-led change.

You must develop as a leader in order to lead your small group through change effectively. If you don't, needless fear and frustration, pain and problems will result.

God is looking for leaders! (1 Samuel 13:14; Ezekiel 22:30)

In His infinite wisdom, God has chosen to limit His ministry on earth to us. He does not have to use us, but that is the path He has selected. This means that God is always on the lookout for leaders. His desire is to find them and get fully behind them, as He told King Asa:

For the eyes of the LORD range throughout the earth to strengthen those whose hearts are fully committed to him. (2 Chronicles 16:9)

When they refuse to allow God to lead them, he removed His blessing. Read the blood-curdling words He gave King Saul:

But now your kingdom will not endure; the LORD has sought out a man after his own heart and appointed him leader of his people, because you have not kept the LORD's command. (1 Samuel 13:14)

Read what God said to Ezekiel:

I looked for a man among them who would build up the wall and stand before me in the gap on behalf of the land so I would not have to destroy it, but I found none. (Ezekiel 22:30)

I think this last verse from Ezekiel is one of the saddest in the Bible. Because of a lack of leadership, a nation was destroyed. But it is also one of the most encouraging statements ever made as well. If there had been a leader, a nation would have survived. One leader can make a big difference.

Kingdom business is the most important business.

One of my friends is a pilot for United Airlines. Twice a year, he leaves for two solid weeks for intense training. That's four weeks a year or 160 hours of training. Why? Untrained pilots are bad for business. As a pilot he is entrusted with the lives of people each day.

Let me ask you a question. If a pilot is required to receive extensive training to hone his skills because he holds physical lives, how much more should you receive training to develop your skills? When you lead a small group, you hold eternal souls in your hands! Kingdom business is the most important business on earth.

It is more difficult to lead unpaid volunteers than paid employees.

Church leadership is in many ways harder than secular leadership. With a business leader, one can motivate him or her with a pay raise or a reduction in pay. Churches are filled with an all-volunteer crowd. Church leaders not only need to be as good as secular leaders, they need to be better!

Leadership can be learned and developed.

An elderly man was once asked if any great leaders were born in his hometown. He replied, "No, just babies!"

Leaders are made, not born. While it is true that a few men and women have the natural abilities, intelligence, background, or training to become at ten on the leadership scale, everyone has room for improvement. You may not jump from a two to a ten by simply reading this book, but you could go from a two to a five or from a five to a seven.

Remember, as a spiritual leader every step up we take increases our impact for God.

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