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Leadership Prayers

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INTRODUCTION

Leadership Prayers is a book for those people who care enough about great leading and following to think rigorously about it and to open their spirits to do something about it. If you are now leading, want to lead, feel called to lead, are obliged to lead, or are responsible for choosing or guiding leaders, you will find this book valuable.

Leaders do not pray to inform God of what is happening. He already knows. And they do not pray to get him to do what they want. He already wants what is best for everyone involved.

Leaders pray to maintain the right relationship with God. From that relationship between the human spirit and the Spirit of God comes the divine perspective, insight, direction, and courage the leader must have to serve well. To keep from blundering into either hubris or despair requires a special sense of vision and balance that comes in a unique way from the Spirit of God through prayer. Ultimately, prayer determines the leader's effectiveness in what matters most—the eternal matters of the human spirit, including the leader's own spirit.

Jesus taught us to lead creatively and wisely, but he refused to tell us exactly how to do it. He just said that the Word of God must be our Truth, and that he would leave his Spirit to guide ours. He also told us to pray.

When we answer the call to lead, we commit ourselves to enable others to see their dream more clearly and somehow make it happen. That is spiritual business, and it cannot be done well without effective communication with the Spirit of God through prayer. When we lead well, exceptional achievement is possible. That is why we answer the call to lead. It is also why we follow great leaders. And it is why leaders pray so fervently.

By their nature, these prayers live only when they are internalized; they have power only when they are applied to real-life challenges. Skimming over them to get the main ideas will mean little because this is not a nifty new management technique. These are thoughts and prayers about leading people—not by the hand or by the nose or even by the intellect, but through the spirit.

Do not let the simplicity of these prayers fool you. If leadership were easy, everyone would be a great leader. Great leadership is from the spirit. The life of the spirit may be simple, even obvious, but it is never easy.

These are meant to be real prayers for individual leaders or for leadership groups, from the Board to an ad hoc task force. They evolved over many years of hard use while God was teaching me lessons I was not always sure I wanted to learn. They have been tested and confirmed by other leaders and have produced good results in me and the people I care about. I offer them to you as a pragmatic idealist trying to influence a chaotic and threatening world toward the values of the kingdom of God.

IDENTITY

*It's not really me, God.
It's just what I do.*

I lead as an expression of who I am, yet I must always be more than the leadership role I play. People may see me in terms of the visible leadership role which God has entrusted to me, but God knows who I really am. My integrity as a person—and as a leader—depends on seeing myself and what I do as God sees them.

Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.

1 Samuel 16:7, NIV

GOD, this leadership role that I play from time to time, this character I assume, is a gift from you. You know I am not essentially the head of all this. I am merely your child, trying to become like you and do what you want.

Playing “leader” for a while is a great role in this real-life drama of *The Good King vs. The Evil Prince*. But unless you work a miracle, I will not play the role well, and the people I care about so much will suffer.

I know how the story goes: The Evil Prince tries to deceive, disrupt, and destroy anything good I might do. I know that in the long run truth wins, and at the very end good triumphs. I even know which ideas and values are supposed to control each character, including mine. But I also know that I have to write the script as I go and help other people play their parts. And I have to coordinate our script with all the other scripts in other parts of your kingdom. It is beyond me, but if you will whisper the cues, I will improvise.

Unless your Spirit informs and encourages me, I will not know how to play my part. I will stand foolishly silent on the stage, not knowing what I can do or even what I truly like to do. Worst of all, I will not know what I cannot do. Unless you intervene, I will blow my lines and miss my cues



and confuse all the others. Help me sense my spiritual gifts so I will attempt only what you especially enable me to do and lead only where you are at work.

Do not let this leadership role consume me. Do not let me think that I have become my character. Remind my spirit who I really am so that when I go home I will not keep acting like the CEO. Guide me to do what is best for my family and for my own health.

Please help me keep it all straight. Leadership is extremely important, and I want intensely to do it right, but sometimes I forget where the role



IF YOU WILL
WHISPER THE
CUES, I WILL
IMPROVISE.

ends and I start. So I want your Spirit to remind me, however and whenever you have to . . .

It's not really me, God. It's just what I do.



REFLECTIONS

The mother and daughter seated across the desk from me were very angry. Both felt that they had been misled about university housing and financial aid. The daughter seemed willing to state her case, hope for some concessions, and get back to her studies. But the mother contended with righteous intensity that it was the principle of the thing.

How could I, the president, allow such a thing to happen at a Christian university? It would be unacceptable even in a secular institution. She was mad, and she held me responsible.

I listened, acknowledged their pain and frustration, made sure they had appealed to the right staff people, apologized for any misunderstandings, asked what they specifically wanted me to do, and promised to look into it and get back to them.

My empathy for them was sincere, my inner spirit at peace. Why? Because I was able to separate my basic identity from my leadership role. I knew that these women did not hate me personally. They were simply enraged at whoever happened to be the president.

Whenever I base my identity or worth as a person on my role as a leader, I betray myself and miss God's best for me. I am not inherently the leader. I am God's child whom he dearly loves whether people are pleased or angry with my decisions, whether I succeed or fail.

My next appointment that day was with a couple who were thrilled with their child's experience at the university. I accepted their praise—but as the president, not personally. It works both ways.



OWNERSHIP

It's yours, God. It's not mine.

*Do not be afraid! . . . For the
battle is not yours, but God's.
2 Chronicles 20:15*

Leaders are stewards
of God's purposes
and resources in
human lives and
history. Too easily
we act as if we were
the owners. Too
easily we try to play
God. We do not
work miracles for
God. He does them
for us.

THIS is my one incessant prayer to you, hour by hour, day upon day: It's yours. I am not fighting this battle for you, God. It's your battle, and you are fighting for me. It is all yours, and I want whatever you have for me in this situation.

It is not my organization, it is yours, so I depend on your Spirit to show me what to do. These are not my people. I chose them and organized their efforts, but they do not belong to me. You entrusted them to my leadership, and they agreed to follow me. They deserve more and sometimes expect more of me than I can give them. What they really need is enormous. If I take their needs and hopes and fears on myself personally, I will be crushed instantly. They are yours.

So much depends on me, yet all I have for this task is whatever health and energy you give me—my eyes, ears, back, heart, lungs, knees, hands, feet, voice. I eat carefully, rest, exercise, and think positive thoughts, and still this wretched lump of clay fails me. You have creator's rights on my body. You formed every miraculous part. What you take away is your business. I will do what I can with whatever physical capability you give me. It's yours.

Yours is the kingdom, but we never seem to



have enough resources! We are always lacking something, our dreams always mocking our reality, our vision always dancing around our poverty. You own everything, so what we need must seem small to you. Show me where to look for it, how to know it when I see it, how to get it, how to use it best, and especially how to be content with it. It is all yours.

Time crawls relentlessly, mercilessly onward. The days end as the years end, with never enough time for all the good that could be done, only just enough for your priorities, if I get them right. You created time, and it does not limit you. But



I CHOOSE AND
ORGANIZE
PEOPLE, BUT
THEY DO NOT
BELONG TO ME.

I do not have a
thousand years today,
God. I have only now.

So this day is
yours; I am yours;
these people are
yours; the resources
are yours. The chal-
lenges we face are
yours, as is anything
we hope to accom-
plish.

It's yours, God.
It's not mine.



REFLECTIONS

A university colleague once explained what he thought was the key to the dramatic success we were witnessing. His view was that I had made the university *mine*, that I had taken personal responsibility for its destiny.

In one sense I understood his meaning and could agree with him. But the experience of freedom and creativity I enjoyed as president was possible precisely because the university belonged—humanly and legally—to the board of trustees and the church, not to me.

I had the privilege of proposing things, knowing that it was the board's job to stop me whenever they saw that I was about to dive into a pool with no water. I had the liberty to try things, knowing that if I failed, the board could choose to hire somebody else in my place. That freedom made me a better leader.

I could practice my stewardship of university leadership with a light, creative spirit because I did not have to bear the ultimate burden of ownership. It was not my job to make everything work out. Like leaders everywhere, my job was simply to follow the owner's desires and lead, helping to build great people by attempting something difficult and significant together.

In a spiritual sense, for both the trustees and me, every event, relationship, or decision ultimately belongs to God. Constantly practicing God's ownership liberates us for creative leadership. We just lead. All the rest is the Owner's business.





ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dr. Richard Kriegbaum is a speaker, seminar leader, and consultant in addition to his primary role as president of United Way of Fresno County, a comprehensive community-building organization.

For twelve years Kriegbaum was president of Fresno Pacific University, a Christian university in central California with 2,000 students in bachelor's and master's degree programs and 12,000 part-time students in professional development courses. Prior to his tenure at Fresno Pacific, he was a faculty member and administrator at Wheaton College (Illinois), and a teacher and coach at Grace College (Indiana). He has served on a variety of governing boards, including the Council for Christian Colleges and Universities, NAIA, Scripture Press, One by One Leadership, Saint Agnes Medical Center, and the California Alliance of Information and Referral Services.

Kriegbaum completed a Ph.D. in higher education from the State University of New York at Buffalo, a master's degree in Spanish from Ball State University, and a bachelor's degree with high honors from Wheaton College.

He has two married children and four grandchildren. With his wife, Peggi, he shares one step-daughter, one dog, one cat, a few household duties, lots of love, music, and laughter, together with prayer, one faith, and one blessed hope.