



DO SOMETHING!

By Al Ells, M.C.

A placard with this simple and direct motto, “Do Something!” adorned my wife’s grandmother’s wall for years. Even into her nineties, she lived out this credo every day. She was 100 when she passed away, leaving an astonishing legacy of accomplishment. She was the matriarch of a pioneering Arizona family, one that brought leadership throughout the entire state.

The word leadership means different things to different people. As technology turns even laypeople into experts and growth can skyrocket and plummet at the click of a mouse, true leadership is becoming increasingly important. Political scientists, sociologists and church observers agree that lack of moral leadership in our country, communities and churches is one of the most serious problems of our time. Sue’s grandmother was a leader. She was a God-fearing woman with a can-do attitude, who inspired others to accomplish great things. Through her ability seize opportunities and took responsibility. She accomplished things that others only dreamed of doing.

Few leaders in the body of Christ feel confident in providing the leadership we so desperately need. Church researcher George Barna reports that only one in seven pastors rate themselves highly in their ability to provide leadership for their church.

Some say that leaders are born, not made. However, research indicates that people can develop and improve leadership abilities. Consider the following characteristics of leaders who make a difference. Utilize them as target goals to improve your leadership.

NINE CHARACTERISTICS OF TRUE LEADERS

They want to change their world.

Proverbs 29:18 says, “Where there is no vision, the people will perish.” Leaders who make a difference are motivated by an inspired vision of how God wants to change the world for the better. This passionate desire to accomplish something worthwhile inspires others to action. Without authentic, visionary leadership, people easily become lethargic and aimless.

They are proactive, not passive or reactive.

There is a saying that goes something like this, “Leaders make things happen while others watch what is happening.” I Corinthians 16:13 instructs men to be alert, steadfast, proactive and strong. That is because passive leaders do not take full responsibility for their actions. They are unwilling to do whatever is required to fulfill God’s vision. Passive leaders place their comfort above God’s calling, and reactive leaders are too impulsive and self-centered. They do not think through their actions or pray about how to respond to others, usually causing offense and disruption.

They understand their cultural relevance.

Jesus chastised the Jews for not recognizing the spiritual significance of the times in which they were living (Luke 12:56). Leaders who make a difference are able to sense or perceive the spirit of the age. They have an ability to see beyond the mundane and understand what the enemy is doing as well as what God desires. They prayerfully look for windows of opportunity for carrying out God's purposes in their community. They sense what the Spirit of God is doing and follow suit.

They invest in others while accomplishing their work.

Good leaders are not only task driven, they are people centered. Jesus came to fulfill the mission his Father gave him, and he mentored the disciples as He did so. He personally challenged, taught and nurtured them. He prepared them to continue the work He had begun (Matthew 28:19-20). Good leaders bring out the best in others, equipping them with the skills needed to assume a leadership role in the future.

They communicate powerfully.

A leader's ability to communicate his vision to others can make or break his or her mission. Effective leaders have learned ways to communicate to others verbally and in writing. Jesus was the greatest communicator of all time. He motivated and inspired others through simple, yet profound words. A prime example of this is the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew chapters 5-7.

They do what they say. (Matthew 23:3, James 5:12)

One of the biggest challenges of leadership is maintaining integrity by demonstrating biblical character. Being a person of your word instills trust in others to follow the vision you are proclaiming. George Barna's research indicates that people expect Christian leaders to live more exemplary lives than they do. Living a godly lifestyle and modeling biblical behavior speaks volumes to those who follow you. Living without integrity erodes trust, causes disappointment and cynicism in the congregation.

They inspire others to do good. (Hebrews 10:24)

One of the most important qualities of a leader is the ability to stimulate followers to love and reach out to others. A true measure of one's life is how well you expressed love to others through deeds of kindness, care and concern. Jesus stirs all of us to be kinder, more tenderhearted, loving and forgiving (Ephesians 4:32). A good leader does likewise.

They never stop sacrificing. (John 10:11)

Scripture says, "The good shepherd gives his life for the sheep." In all occupations and circumstances of life, we admire those who lead by sacrifice and example instead of domination and self-centeredness. Sacrificial leaders do not ask others to do what they themselves are not willing to do. Jesus led the way by giving up his entire life for us, asking that we also become living sacrifices (Romans 12:1). Successful leaders imitate Jesus by modeling the way of the cross.

They lead by serving. (Matthew 23:11)

The greater the task, the greater the need for humility. Jesus was the servant-leader. He led by humbling himself, even to death on the cross. Great leaders are more committed to listening to others than sharing their own thoughts, more interested in others' well being than their own and more desirous of meeting others' needs than of having theirs met. Great leaders are great servants.