

Leading with Confidence



What it takes to stretch beyond your comfort zone and go where God is calling.

2 INTRODUCTION **Pursuing a New Call**

How do I keep fear and lack of confidence at bay?
by Caryn Rivadeneira

13 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE **A Brave New Worldview**

Trusting God in the twists and turns of life make us live confidently.
by Ruth E. Van Reken

4 GIFTED WOMEN **Following a Tough Call**

When God stokes a passion that rocks your world.
by Kirsten Strand

17 PRACTICALLY SPEAKING **When Personal Growth Hurts**

How pain pays off in leadership.
by Clark Cothorn

7 GIFTED WOMEN **Hidden Treasure**

What secret gifts and dreams has God tucked in your heart?
by Liz Curtis Higgs

19 PRACTICALLY SPEAKING **Need a Confidence Boost?**

Discover these secrets to believing in your gifts.
by Verla Gillmor

10 BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE **The “Eighth Deadly Sin” Revisited**

Why leaders need to understand the sin of Fear.
by Marshall Shelley

24 LEADERSHIP TOOLS **Spying New Leaders**

They may not step forward. Here’s how to find the leaders you need.
by Angela Yee

31 Resources

Find more places for more help.





Pursuing a New Call



How do I keep fear and lack of confidence at bay?

by Caryn Rivadeneira

As leaders, we spend a lot of time thinking about our individual gifts and how God calls us to use them. Yet as we see throughout Scripture (think Moses, David, Esther, Mary) and throughout our own lives, God often calls us to do things that at the very least stretch our gifts or at the most force us to step out on faith in unknown territory, depending on God alone to equip us with what's needed for the tasks.

In my life, God has called me to stretch beyond my comfort zone in areas from my career to motherhood to ministry. Many times I've willingly accepted the challenge; other times, I've resisted—out of fear of failure or out of doubt that God would really show up.

Recently, God has laid something on my heart that gets it pumping with excitement but requires time I just don't have and gifts I'm not quite confident in. To embrace this calling requires me to trust God on a whole new level. And while I'm aware of the payoff for following God's lead—as well as the effect of ignoring it (those big fish come in many forms!)—the Enemy works overtime in feeding me reasons I should ignore God's leading. And he's pretty convincing. But as I raise these reasons up to God, he leads me still and asks me to get over my fears, gain some confidence, and trust him.

Introduction



Leading with Confidence

Pursuing a New Call

3

Hardly by coincidence, my three big issues—fear, lack of confidence, and trust—are among the issues covered in this downloadable resource. In fact, everything you'll read in these pages is intended to help you grow in your giftedness as well as in your willingness to respond to God's challenges.

Whether you feel God calling you simply to stretch or to leap, I hope the wisdom presented here not only helps you become a better leader but also equips you to discover the wonder of following even the most difficult call.

Blessings,

Caryn Rivandeneira
Managing Editor, GiftedforLeadership.com
Christianity Today International

Introduction



GIFTED WOMEN

Following a Tough Call

When God stokes a passion that rocks your world.

by Kirsten Strand

Do you have a passion that burns deep in your core? A drive like a pile of red, hot, fiery coals that you just can't contain? I don't mean a strong desire to go shopping or an intense craving for chocolate. I'm talking about a passion to make a difference, to change the world, to impact a life, to fight for a cause. Do you feel that kind of drive?

If so, what are you doing to set it free? Do you feel you have waited too long—stifling your passion to raise kids or climb a career ladder?

Intense passion is both a gift and a message from God. Through passion he whispers or yells to us, "I have created you for a purpose. I have a mission for you." If you can resonate with these feelings, then you probably have discovered God's calling on your life. Once God has revealed that calling to you, you have two options: to be obedient to the call or to ignore it.

I have learned that ignoring a calling can lead to depression, anger, frustration, and a deep dissatisfaction with life. And I have learned that following a calling can also lead to moments of depression, anger, frustration, and loneliness. Yet underneath those feelings will be a profound sense of peace and satisfaction.



Leading with Confidence

Following a Tough Call

5

God first exposed my passion through a book, *Rich Christians in an Age of Hunger* by Ron Sider. Once I discovered that I had a passion for helping the poor, I had to ask, *What am I going to do to help alleviate the poverty that plagues our world?* Asking that question raised a lot of anxiety. As a new mom with a very comfortable life, thinking about the poor made me feel embarrassed and guilty and helpless. So instead of taking action, I directed my passion at criticizing the *church* for not working harder to eliminate poverty.

God continued to stoke my passion, and I continued to rationalize all the reasons why I could not respond to his call. But I became increasingly angry and bitter and deeply disappointed with life. Finally, after a hospitalization for severe depression, I realized I could not continue to ignore the passion God had given me.

Thankfully, God blessed me with a husband who deeply believed a calling on my life was a calling for our entire family. So we pursued the call, making significant changes and sacrifices. We battled doubts and fears and family and friends who thought we were crazy. In the end, though, God placed me on staff at a large church, directing a ministry to open the eyes of “rich” Christians to the plight of the poor.

I would not be honest if I said that my life is complete bliss now that I am living my passion. But I do have a peace that I had never known before. I am at last doing what God created me to do. And I have learned, and hope to help my children and others learn, that when God gives us passion and a calling, he will be faithful to help us fulfill it. But we have to be willing to give him the chance. Is it time for you to give him the chance?

Kirsten Strand is director of Community 4:12 at Community Christian Church in Naperville, Illinois. This article first appeared at GIFTEDFORLEADERSHIP.COM.

Features



Leading with Confidence

Following a Tough Call

6

Thought Provokers

- *Do you have a passion that “burns deep in your core”? If so, what are you doing about it?*
- *Kirsten ends her article by asking if you’re willing to give God the chance to prove he is faithful. What keeps you from giving God that chance?*

Features



GIFTED WOMEN

Hidden Treasure

What secret gifts and dreams has God tucked in your heart?

by Liz Curtis Higgs

Did you have a secret wish as a child, something you longed to do “someday” when you grew up? Me, too. I wanted to write a novel.

When you make such a bold confession at age 10, people hide their smiles. “Is that so? Good luck, honey,” they comment. (For the record, they say the same thing when you’re 20, 30, 40, or 50.)

At 10, I only heard the “good luck” part.

I bought a ruled notebook with a fake marble cover and began my first novel, *The Mountain Cabin Mystery*. Hand-written with a Ticonderoga pencil, it was page after page of perfectly awful prose.

Three months later, I proudly displayed the finished product on my bookshelf, bought a second notebook, and started *The Secret of Lakeview Manor*, followed by *The Ghost of Pine Lane*, *The Mystery at Snow Castle*, *A Clue by Candlelight* ... you get the idea.

Nancy Drew: Take Two, with deepest apologies to Carolyn Keene.

Ten juvenile mysteries poured from my pencil before I went off to college, storing my fiction hopes in a cardboard box in my parents’ attic. Those notebooks quietly gathered dust while I pursued a



Leading with Confidence

Hidden Treasure

8

broadcasting career, then marriage, motherhood, and public speaking, my dream of writing a novel all but forgotten.

But God didn't forget, not for one patient minute.

He nudged me year after year—just as he may be tugging at your heart right now—whispering, “What are you waiting for, child? Open it. Open your gift.” Since “every good and perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of the heavenly lights” (James 1:17), then you can be sure whatever gifts were tucked in your young heart came from the hand of God.

Often we display our gifts proudly as children, then hide them in adulthood, hoping no one will ask us, “Do you draw? Can you play the piano? Do you know how to sew?”

“Not really,” we murmur, fearing risk, dreading failure, convinced those things we loved to do as kids were nothing but child's play, when in truth they were a gift from God, placed in our small hands with big expectations.

Last summer, my husband came strolling into my office, a grin stretched across his face. “Your brother called. Says he found something of yours in the attic.”

When the crate from Pennsylvania arrived, I paged through *The Mountain Cabin Mystery*, teary-eyed and overwhelmed. I'd forgotten the story, but I remembered well the girl who wrote it—curled up on her bedroom chair, pouring her heart out on those lined pages, dreaming of the day she might write a real novel.

The Lord knew, long before I knew him, that I would become a storyteller someday. Just as I'd hidden that box in the attic for safekeeping, God had stored that dream deep inside a corner of my heart and waited for me to find it again.

“Someday” took a long while. From my first pretend novel to my first published one took—gulp!—35 years. By our measure, a lifetime. By God's reckoning, right on time.

Features



Leading with Confidence

Hidden Treasure

9

My kids looked over my shoulder, wide-eyed, as I paged through my notebooks. “Wow, Mom. If you were an author when you were ten, why’d you wait so long to start writing stories again?”

You and I know the truth: The question isn’t “Why did I wait so long?” The question is “Why wait another minute?”

Open your gift, beloved. It’s never too late for a child’s dream to see the light of day.

*Liz Curtis Higgs, author of 19 books, released her latest novel, **Grace in Thine Eyes** (Random House), in 2006. This article first appeared in the November/December 2002 issue of TODAY’S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

Thought Provokers

- *What gifts lie within your heart right now that you feel God nudging you to use?*
- *What keeps you from using those gifts? What would get you to use those gifts?*

Features



BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

The “Eighth Deadly Sin” Revisited

Why leaders need to understand the sin of Fear.

by Marshall Shelley

The Eighth Deadly Sin, at least from where I sit, is Fear. I never considered fear a sin until I started noticing how often in the Bible we’re commanded NOT to fear. Consider Joshua 1:9: “Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous. Do not be terrified; do not be discouraged, for the LORD your God will be with you wherever you go.”

Of course, the Bible commands us TO FEAR in certain specific ways. To fear God. “Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the One who can destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28). Anyone else isn’t worthy of our fear.

Did you know there are more than 100 such specific instances where God in the Old Testament, Jesus in the New, or one of the prophets or apostles specifically says, “Do not fear” or “Be not



Leading with Confidence

The “Eighth Deadly Sin” Revisited

11

afraid”? As such, fear is addressed a lot more frequently than, say, lust or pride. Apparently overcoming our fears is a large part of spiritual maturity.

At the recent National Pastors Convention that *Leadership* helped to sponsor, John Ortberg preached about Peter overcoming his fears to accept Jesus’ invitation to come to him as he walked on the water. In Ortberg’s words, “If you want to walk on water, you’ve got to get out of the boat.”

Ortberg told a memorable story about a pastor who needed to confront an individual who was causing conflict in the church. But the pastor confided to his wife that he was afraid to speak to the troublemaker because “every time I think about this person, I get sweaty palms, and every time I have to confront someone, my mouth goes dry.”

His wife’s pithy response: “Why don’t you lick your palms?”

Fear may make frequent appearances in your life and mine. But given more than 100 commands in Scripture not to give in to it, and given the wisdom of the pastor’s wife in Ortberg’s story, the next time you’re tempted to avoid following God’s direction because you’re scared, determine to live by faith and not by fear.

Even if you have to lick your palms.

Marshall Shelley is editor of Leadership journal. This article first appeared in the March 28, 2001, issue of the CHURCH LEADER’S NEWSLETTER.

Features



Leading with Confidence

The “Eighth Deadly Sin” Revisited

12

Thought Provokers

- *What does it mean to you that fear is addressed more frequently in Scripture than lust or pride, as Marshall writes?*
- *How might “licking your palms” help you overcome some leadership fears?*

Features



BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVE

A Brave New Worldview

Trusting God in the twists and turns of life
make us live confidently.

by Ruth E. Van Reken

Even though I grew up with the well-deserved nickname “Worrywart Ruthie,” I have come to believe there is a way to live with confidence—but it’s not a confidence based on the worldly arrogance that somehow I can control my own destiny. Rather, it’s a Christ-centered confidence, the kind the Bible calls “an anchor for our souls” (Hebrews 6:19, NAS).

The apostle Paul wrote from prison to his dear but struggling friends at Philippi: “Being confident of this very thing, that *he* who hath begun a good work in *you* will *complete it* until the day of Christ Jesus” (Philippians 1:6, AV, emphasis added).

In that passage, Paul revealed three reasons why he could live with absolute confidence. They’re the same reasons we can be confident, too—no matter what our personal, national, or global circumstances.

1. We can live confidently because we know who God is. Paul’s entire reason for confidence is rooted in the character of God himself—not what Paul did or didn’t see going on around him. He’s absolutely certain of one thing: God is in control. Period.



Leading with Confidence

A Brave New Worldview

14

This, of course, is a great mystery to us. How does God take into account Satan's fierce, evil opposition, along with the free will he gave humans, and still promise he can work everything together for good?

I have no idea. God never promises I'll understand him, but he does ask me to trust him. Believing that God is sovereign is vital for confident living. We know from all his writings that Paul trusted not only that God is sovereign, but also that his character is faithful and good (1 Thessalonians 5:24). It's critical for Christians to believe this, too. Why?

Because without these additional attributes, we could view an absolutely sovereign God as a potential big bully. If I can't trust that God is always good and faithful, then God goes on trial with each particular circumstance of my life. I become the doubter who's like the waves of the sea, always being tossed about (James 1:6).

Of course, it's easy to say I'm confident that God's faithful when I've escaped a negative situation, but is he still faithful when the friend I've lifted up in prayer for more than 30 years has never returned to faith in Jesus? Or when I was diagnosed with breast cancer two years ago and had to face chemotherapy? The truth is, either God is faithful and good in all these situations, or he's faithful and good in none. How we decide between these opposite choices determines whether we live with confidence (and peace) or anxiety.

2. We can live confidently because God knows us personally.

Sometimes it's easier to trust in God's sovereignty when we consider the mega-events of life rather than the small but challenging moments we experience every day. Is he in those as well?

A comforting, confidence-building truth is that the same creator God who controls the flow of history also knows how many hairs I have on my head (Matthew 10:30). When God says I'm his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for the good works that he's already planned for me to do (Ephesians 2:10), that means every event of my life is part of his plan to shape me for the role he's designed for me to fill—even those events or situations I don't understand.

Features



Leading with Confidence

A Brave New Worldview

15

All my life, I planned to be a nurse. In fact, I became one. Yet, through a series of events, many of which confused me at the time, I've ended up spending most of my time helping internationally mobile families deal with issues they face while raising children cross-culturally. I couldn't have prepared for this because I didn't even know it was a topic!

Yet through the circumstances of my life—growing up as a missionary kid, then becoming a missionary myself as an adult and raising my children abroad—God prepared me perfectly for this one tiny niche in his kingdom.

This is why I can be confident for others I love as well. All the unlikely twists and turns of their particular journeys are part of God's shaping and directing of them. I know he'll work with them until the day of Christ's return, just as he has and does with me. That confidence allows me to walk with others through difficulties because I know God's at work, even when I have no idea how a particular situation may turn out.

3. We can live confidently because we know the end of the story. Paul had no doubt about the end of the story. Whatever God allowed to happen to the New Testament church or allows to happen to us—persecutions, false teachers in the church, adverse political situations, conflict between fellow Christians, or personal tragedies—his work never will be left undone in or through us. If we never understand the circumstances of our lives before then, things will make sense at last when we see Jesus face to face.

Because there's no question about the grand finale of our lives or even history itself, Paul gives his final, practical instructions for how we are to live God's way—even in a world that feels out of control: "Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice! ... Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God" (Philippians 4:4-7, NAS).

The result of living this way? "The peace of God, which surpasses all comprehension, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus" (Philippians 4:8, NAS).

*Ruth E. Van Reken is a speaker and coauthor of *Third Culture Kids: The Experience of Growing Up Among Worlds* (Nicholas Brealey/Intercultural Press). Adapted from an article that first appeared in the July/August 2003 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.*

Features



Leading with Confidence

A Brave New Worldview

16

Thought Provokers

- *In which areas of your life do you have trouble living confidently? What might help you overcome that?*
- *Ruth writes that “we know the end of the story.” How does that affect your willingness to step out in faith to where God may be calling you?*

Features



PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

When Personal Growth Hurts

How pain pays off in leadership.

by Clark Cothorn

My dad had a saying: “It’s gonna feel so good when it stops hurting.”

When I was in fifth grade, after the doctor cast my broken arm, Dad used that phrase. He explained that God made our bones so that after a break a special reinforcement is formed around the area, making it stronger than before. He was right. After the cast was cut off I was back playing flag football and running track. The weeks of painful growth paid off.

As a high school freshman, when I failed to make the varsity band, my band director explained that those who made the JV Band would “wood shed” the fundamentals of rhythm and sight-reading, rendering us stronger musicians than before. He was right. The next year I made the varsity band, challenging my way to first chair in the trombone section. The two semesters of painful growth paid off.

When I was grieving over a breakup with a high school girlfriend, my mom explained that God made our hearts in such a way that he would reinforce them with his own love. She was right. I graduated, went on to college, grew through a couple more breakups, and finally discovered that God had shaped my character, preparing me for the girl who would later become my wife. The years of painful personal growth paid off.



Leading with Confidence

When Personal Growth Hurts

18

A few months ago I received a letter that cut me to the quick. It revealed that I had become timid in expressing my faith. My first response was to say, “What does that guy know about me anyway?” and dismiss the criticism. But I couldn’t dismiss it because I knew that person loved me like a son. The phrase “It’s gonna feel so good when it quits hurting” came to mind. A few days later I found myself thinking, “You know, he was right.” I grew in confidence and began expressing my faith more boldly. That growth was painful, but the days of smarting from the sting of truth told by a friend paid off.

A few weeks later I received some critique about my leadership style from another close friend. At the time I wanted to say, “What does this person know about me?” and dismiss the critique. But I knew that this person loved me like a brother. The phrase “It’s going to feel so good when it quits hurting” came to mind. Several weeks later I thought, “You know, a lot of what this person said was right.” I learned additional lessons about assertive leadership. A little more pain. A little more growth. The weeks of relational conflict paid off.

The writer of Proverbs said, “My child, don’t ignore it when the Lord disciplines you, and don’t be discouraged when he corrects you. For the Lord corrects those he loves, just as a father corrects a child in whom he delights” (Proverb 3:11,12 NLT). No discipline, criticism, or character correction seems pleasant at the time, but when it results in personal growth, it feels so good when it quits hurting.

Clark Cothern pastors in Ypsilanti, Michigan. This article first appeared in the November 14, 2002, issue of the Church Leader’s Newsletter.

Thought Provokers

- *How has pain or stress you’ve encountered in your life opened up areas of growth for you?*
- *What aspects of your leadership or your giftedness feel “so good” now that they’ve stopped hurting?*



PRACTICALLY SPEAKING

Need a Confidence Boost?

Discover these secrets to believing in your gifts.

by Verla Gillmor

I was a reporter for 12 years. One of the first things I learned in researching a story was “garbage in, garbage out.” If your raw data is flawed, you end up with a faulty conclusion. The same is true with how we see ourselves. If we lack self-confidence, maybe we’re working with flawed data.

The reality is, in hundreds of subtle ways, our culture, family, friends—even our thought life—conspire to undermine our confidence. Our paycheck, our title, our designer labels, or some other artificial yardstick gives us temporary entrée into the world of The Accepted. But in our hearts, we know it isn’t real. How do we find our way to the truth?

In the J.B. Phillips translation of the Bible, Romans 12:3 reads, “Try to have a sane estimate of your capabilities by the light of the faith that God has given to you all.” Our relationship with Jesus sheds new light on who we are and what we do.

Before we can “hear” it, though, we have to identify the “dirty data” we’ve believed. We need to expose two ways in which *we’ve* inadvertently contributed to the problem:



- 1. Comparison Traps.** I'm technophobic. My brother got all the genes required to understand operating manuals, to repair things, or (gasp!) to make sense of computers. When I first had to learn how to use a computer for my job, I was convinced it was the end of life as I knew it.

I remember with painful clarity a beginner's computer class where the instructor told us to "press any key." I searched in vain for the "any" key. By the end of the class, I was certain I wasn't smart enough to drive myself home, much less dress for work the next day. This was despite the fact that I managed a home, a family, a job, and a professional staff. Why was it so humiliating? Because I compared myself to the 10-year-old girl next door who effortlessly surfed the Net to research her term papers while I struggled just to log on. Instead of simply concluding that technical prowess is not one of my strengths, I concluded I must be stupid. It was a lie.

- 2. Self-doubt.** Sometimes the problem isn't faulty data. We have an accurate picture of ourselves or a situation, but we capitulate the first time someone challenges us.

Several years ago, I discovered a grape-size lump on my left breast. My doctor scheduled outpatient surgery right away. A month later, when I resumed periodic self-examination, I felt the same lump in the same hard-to-reach place. I was certain of it!

When I called the doctor to suggest he might have missed the lump in question, he insisted I was wrong. It could not *possibly* be a lump, he said, because he had removed it. After all, he *was* the doctor.

I got off the phone, doubting what I'd felt with my own hand. But fear of lethal consequences gave me the courage to insist he re-examine me, at which point he reluctantly acknowledged that, yes, it did seem to be the original lump. He removed it in a second surgery.



Leading with Confidence

Need a Confidence Boost?

21

Reclaim the Truth

It's time to go on the offensive and regain the confidence God wants for you. Here are a few ways to get started:

- 1. Name the lies—and give them to God.** Make a list of the falsehoods others have said about you (and what you've believed about yourself). Be specific. Then agree with God that it's not how he sees you. Tell him, "God, I know you made me—and you don't make junk. These lies have got to go. I want to see myself the way you see me. Please begin the process of changing my mind."

Eugene Petersen, in *The Message* paraphrase of Romans 12:2, urges us to reject the flawed thinking of our culture and those around us: "Don't become so well-adjusted to your culture that you fit into it without even thinking. Instead, fix your attention on God. You'll be changed from the inside out."

- 2. Grieve the loss of what you'll never have and never be.**

I once knew a woman who believed the lie that she was a victim. She wasn't in an abusive situation; she wasn't poor or ill or alone. But she felt as though the world always let her down. Eventually, she confessed to God the truth—playing the victim was easier for her than dealing with her own emotional "junk." But that was only the first step. Next she had to grieve the loss of a "crutch" she couldn't use anymore. She had to find a whole new way to live.

In my case, I had to confess the lie that I was stupid because I didn't understand technical things. Yet, even after acknowledging that I'm actually a pretty intelligent person, I still had to grieve the fact that no amount of classes or training would ever completely solve my technical ineptitude!

Another lie I believed about myself was that I'd been selfish for having only one child. The truth is, I nearly died giving birth to my daughter, and my husband didn't want to adopt. Still, I spent

Features



Leading with Confidence

Need a Confidence Boost?

22

years feeling like an inferior mother—like I should have trusted God to protect me in subsequent childbirths.

I now believe that—in my case—one child was God’s will for me. I’ve rejected the condemnation. Nevertheless, I had to grieve that I’d never have the houseful of children I’d always wanted.

3. **Replace the lies with the truth.** God’s Word is full of information about your identity and position as a believer in Jesus Christ. Let the wonder of God’s perspective on you soak in. Do you fully realize what it means to be

Fearfully and wonderfully made (Psalm 139:14)?

Precious to God (Isaiah 43:4)?

Cared about since your conception (Isaiah 46:3)?

God’s child (John 1:12)?

Jesus’ friend (John 15:15)?

Chosen by Jesus (John 15:16)?

Loved dearly by God (John 16:27)?

Free from condemnation (Romans 8:1)?

A temple—a dwelling place—of God’s Spirit
(1 Corinthians 3:16)?

Redeemed and forgiven of all your sins (Colossians 1:14)?

4. **Do a reality check.** You can pinpoint the ways you may be sabotaging yourself by answering the following questions:

· *What judgments do I make about myself that are, in fact, untrue? What’s something wonderful about me that I’ve undervalued?*

Features



Leading with Confidence

Need a Confidence Boost?

23

- *How do I typically respond when someone brags about me? Is it hard for me to receive a compliment—and why?*
- *Do I fail to stick up for myself when someone challenges what I know to be true?*

Verla Gillmor, a TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN regular contributor, speaker, and writer, lives in the Chicago area. Adapted from an article that first appeared in the May/June 2000 issue of TODAY'S CHRISTIAN WOMAN.

Thought Provokers

- *In what ways do the culture's values affect what you believe about your own abilities?*
- *In what areas do you need to replace lies with truth regarding your abilities? Which Scriptures might help you replace those lies?*

Features



LEADERSHIP TOOLS

Spying New Leaders

They may not step forward. Here's how to find the leaders you need.

by Angela Yee

Julie was a quiet girl in our Bible study. Petite and soft-spoken, she shared things on her heart and expressed her love for God. One day my husband and I drew Julie (names have been changed) aside.

“I think you may have the spiritual gift of leadership,” said my husband.

“Me?” Julie looked stunned.

We talked to her about why we thought she was a potential leader—how she took initiative, influenced people, and didn't seem afraid to encourage people to get more involved.

She went home in a bit of a daze. The thought of being a leader had never occurred to her.

We began giving her leadership assignments in our small group, leading worship time and Bible discussion questions. She tried leading in bite-sized chunks. Our Bible study eventually ended, but Julie led another Bible study group; then she led worship one Sunday. Now Julie leads the worship team regularly.



Effective Mentoring

Spying New Leaders

25

This never would have happened had not someone nudged her toward leadership.

This is part of our calling as leaders—to spot and cultivate other potential leaders to serve God and use the gifts given them. There’s also a side benefit—we end up finding people for the many ministries that always seem to be in need of leaders!

How do we find these hidden people and encourage them to lead? Three steps are involved.

1. Seeing

Leaders come in a wide range of giftedness, personalities, and working styles. The better we understand the different kinds of leadership, the better we are able to assess those who may have leadership potential.

Some are “natural leaders.” Leadership seems to come naturally to them. Their teams flourish. They have a compelling vision of what God has called them to accomplish, and they lead effectively.

These leaders are easy to spot: They usually talk about leadership or ministry direction. The thought of impacting people gets them excited. They enjoy facing a challenge and empowering people to meet it.

Jim was such a leader. He came on as the pastor of a wilting church. Attendance was a mere handful. Morale was low, and the question of survival loomed on the horizon.

Within a year, however, Jim changed the leadership team, the church name, the mission statement, the location, and the time of the Sunday service—all things he had been told not to change within the first year of his pastorate.

But because of his leadership skills, there was little dissent. People enthusiastically supported the changes. Over time, the church began to grow. Jim, a natural leader, found it energizing to face such challenges, and people followed him willingly.

Many natural leaders feel compelled to lead. If they are not leading something, they sense that something is missing. If there is no current ministry to lead, then they will start something up!

Features



Effective Mentoring

Spying New Leaders

26

Other people are “situational leaders.” They may not have a natural inclination toward leadership, but if the need presents itself and no one else is stepping up, they will step in and lead.

One church wanted to send a group on a one-week mission trip to Mexico, but they had no leader. Finally, Andrew stepped forward. He coordinated the entire trip and led the team safely to Mexico and back, but afterward, he was exhausted. Some conflicts had drained him, and leading the entire event had taken a heavy toll on him emotionally.

Despite the fact that the mission was successful, Andrew needed to rest from leadership for a while.

Situational leaders do an excellent job overseeing an area of ministry for a limited time. But if they are in ongoing leadership positions, they begin to feel frustration and burnout.

Unlike natural leaders, who thrive in a leadership setting, situational leaders do best in short-term projects where they can rest from the draining role of leadership.

Still other people are “undeveloped leaders.” Most leaders are not born with automatic leadership skills; they discover their leadership gifts over time. Those who discover their leadership gifts at a later age are usually unaware of their leadership potential. Their valuable leadership abilities are latent. If others tell them they may have the gift of leadership, they’ll deny such a ridiculous idea.

Melissa stepped forward to coordinate a Vacation Bible School program at her church. Despite the fact that the church was small, she was able to produce a program that tripled the number of children who attended. Because of her leadership, the majority of the adults in the church came to help, even though many of them had to take time off from work.

Afterward, Melissa returned to obscurity. She helped out with background tasks but didn’t step forward to coordinate any teams.

“Melissa,” I said, “I really think you have a gift for leadership.”

Melissa laughed. “Oh no,” she said. “Not me.”

“Why don’t you think you are a leader? You coordinated VBS. You were on the church council. You’ve led Bible studies. You definitely are a leader.”



Effective Mentoring

Spying New Leaders

27

“Oh, that stuff? Anyone can do that.” Undeveloped leaders may have the gift, but they don’t even realize it.

Leadership styles and personalities exist in a wide spectrum. Even those who are not natural leaders may find themselves enjoying a leadership position if they are leading out of another spiritual gift.

For example, my husband has the gift of mercy. He enjoys being a small group leader because he extends his compassionate gift toward the people who attend. He doesn’t like the administrative aspects, so I take care of those details. This allows him to focus on the part he likes, caring for and encouraging people. He’s a great shepherding leader, because he is influencing and guiding others.

I, on the other hand, love leadership. I read leadership books, I go to leadership conferences, I listen to leadership tapes. Nothing quite gets my blood racing as much as leading a team of people to further God’s kingdom.

But put me in a small group week after week to care for their emotional needs, and I find myself in a state of paralysis. That’s because my leaning is toward operational leadership.

Understanding the different kinds of leadership helps us know how to spot potential leaders and match them with ministries where they can develop. Keep an eye out for every kind of leader—they are all needed!

2. Searching

The next step is actively seeking out leaders. Start with prayer. Ask God to bring you to the right people and to help them to be available. Then search. Where do you look?

Natural leaders are usually immensely busy and leading multiple ministries at once. If you’re looking for a natural leader for your ministry, try looking at:

People already actively leading in ministry. The most effective leaders are those who have been sharpened through experience. Although natural leaders may already be quite involved, if the leadership opportunity is



Effective Menoring

Spying New Leaders

28

in an area they are passionate about or feel called to, they will be willing to lead and reprioritize their other commitments.

People who are leaders at their workplace but aren't serving at the church. Sometimes those who are leaders do not realize the need for leadership within the church. They may be leaders in their careers, but haven't stepped up to minister in the church.

Sometimes they mistakenly assume that only those with Bible degrees can be leaders, or that their skills are not needed, or that they are not called to serve. They need to have their misconceptions cleared up.

People with a passion for their ministry. The best leaders are those who have a passion for what they are doing. They are naturally motivated and their enthusiasm spreads to others. If you're trying to find a leader, find someone with a passion for that area.

Sometimes all you need is a situational leader, someone willing to step up on a temporary basis. How do you spot these people? Look for:

People with a servant heart. Situational leaders arise because of their willingness to serve. They know that even though they may not be the most qualified, they'll lead because otherwise needs will not be met. Their motivation is not because they enjoy leadership, but because they know that service pleases the Lord.

Undeveloped leaders are the most challenging to find. They exist in obscurity and are often discovered by accident. How can you be more intentional in finding these leaders? Look for:

People who take initiative. Non-leaders are content to follow what others plan and rarely take initiative in relationships or tasks. If you see someone who is willing to take initiative to change something or to improve the situation, you have a motivated person who may be a potential leader.

People who are reliable. Don't ask someone who doesn't follow through! Leadership requires reliability and integrity. Look for people who have a track record of faithfulness and dependability. Undeveloped leaders are respected by those around them, even though their efforts may be haphazard due to inexperience.

Features



Effective Mentoring

Spying New Leaders

29

Ask friends for referrals. Sometimes undeveloped leaders lack confidence or are too modest to step forward, but their friends are willing to volunteer them!

When my friend Mary and I began attending a new church, we saw an announcement about a meeting for those interested in how the church hires a pastor. Since we wanted to learn more about the church, Mary and I decided to attend the meeting anonymously and slip out later without being seen.

To our dismay, it turned out we were the only ones who attended—along with the senior pastor and chairman of the elder board!

During the meeting, the pastor shared his dream of finding a leader to oversee the whole area of service ministries. I listened quietly, but Mary pointed to me and blurted out, “There she is!”

I would have never said anything, but today I am the leader of this ministry because of Mary.

3. Setting

Placing leaders into leadership should be just as intentional a process as searching them out. It’s not enough to drop leaders in a ministry and hope that they swim. The best way of developing leaders is walking alongside them.

Prepare your leaders to be successful. Give them the tools, training, resources, and encouragement they need.

Communicate the purpose of the organization. Having an understanding of the church’s goals helps them define how their ministry fits into the big picture. They will be able to better make decisions and know how to plan for the future.

Review accountability and decision authority. Let your new leaders know ahead of time what kind of authority they have to make decisions. Go over what kind of decisions they can make and to whom they are ultimately responsible for their decisions.



Effective Mentoring

Spying New Leaders

30

Find out their working preferences. Every leader has a different preference for the environment and situation in which they work most effectively. Ask them:

How frequently should I meet with you? Many new leaders appreciate regular meetings with you for some guidance about challenges they are facing. Others see frequent meetings as a sign of micromanagement. Ask! If your personal preference is for as few meetings as possible, realize that some new leaders may feel inadequate and need times of encouragement from their mentor.

How can we best communicate? What's their preferred mode? E-mail or phone calls? On one of my teams, one person didn't have e-mail and was never home when I tried to call. Finally I discovered the best way to communicate was to leave text messages on her cellular phone.

Others respond better to instant-messaging. Communicate in a way that best suits them, not you!

Are you task- or people-oriented? Knowing their preference helps you place them in a leadership position that fits.

If they are in a ministry that requires them to use both orientations, encourage them to develop in the other area, or to find people who can help them in their areas of weakness.

Finally, work with them to build a long-term plan for direction. Beginning leaders tend to be more short-sighted, focusing on the needs of the present. As you meet, prod them for longer-term goals and vision for their ministry. At the same time, give them a short-term goal to work on, which will give measurable results.

As they achieve these results, their successes will build their confidence as a leader.

Finding and developing leaders is a challenging task. But for our ministries to be more effective, it is a task that we all must intentionally pursue.

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Features



Resources

Find more places for more information.

Developing Leadership Gifts, from **BuildingChurchLeaders.com**. These assessment tools help your team discover their spiritual gifts, find their style of leadership and maximize leadership potential. Each assessment conveniently fits on one page, so they're easy to print, copy and hand out.

Finding Your Place in Ministry, from **Today's Christian Woman Store.com**. This downloadable resource helps women, of all ages, find their specific place in ministry. These articles and testimonies will inspire you to pursue your dreams, while putting God's given passions to work.

Courage and Calling, by Gordon Smith (Inter-varsity Press, 1999). God has called you—first to himself, to know and follow him, but also to a specific life purpose, a particular reason for being. In this book Gordon Smith invites us to discover our vocation by listening to God and becoming coworkers with him.

When God Says Jump: Living Courageously in a Spineless Culture, by J.R. Briggs (Nav Press, 2006). What's God calling you to do? This book urges readers when God calls to follow his will, not be afraid to take the chance to live with a reckless abandon for him.



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