

The Care And Feeding Of Leaders

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Humans, like animals are sensitive creatures. Ministry operates by the power of the Lord, but on the backs of humans. The better we care for these precious members of the Body, the more fruitful the ministry will be. Here are some things to consider while caring for the leaders in the ministry.

1. **Understand Your Own Needs** – The easiest way to understand the needs of those serving under you is to understand your own needs. We're all created with the same "basic" set of needs. Individual needs will vary, but this is a good beginning. Here is a list of your "basic" needs:
 - a. **Respect** – Value for who you are, what you've accomplished, and for your ideas/opinions, etc. This is not affected by gender!
 - b. **Significance/Purpose** – You need to feel that you have a part in a "bigger plan." You need to feel that your hours or days "amount to something." This need is enhanced after accepting Christ, but the human need for significance is still tied to human interaction.
 - c. **Physical Needs** – Your physical needs (rest, food, protection) must be met or you will instinctively "flee" the environment, or "fight" to protect yourself. Feeling "safe" lets you serve and enjoy life more fully.
 - d. **Emotional/Spiritual Needs** – Significantly tied to all three of the above needs, your emotions can "tell" you what you must do next. Obviously, your spiritual needs, if they are met by your personal relationship with God, affect your emotional "state," but you still must feel "safe" emotionally, or you will change your environment.
2. **Nurturing "Young" Leaders** – As with all living creatures, humans in leadership positions must be nurtured when they are "young." At the beginning, you, being the "parent," must seemingly do everything for them. They must watch you and learn from your example. In the animal kingdom, this is called "imprinting." In the beginning "season" of life, the "young" leaders learn by watching you, and not by listening to your words. During this critical "season," you earn the young leaders' trust through sacrifice. Here are some ways to nurture the "young" leaders:
 - a. **"Complimentary Care"** – Do all you can to care for the needs of the "young" leader, while complimenting his/her natural abilities and insights. This first "phase" takes time! Don't hurry through this "phase" too quickly. Inadequate attention to this first "phase," may result in a weak leader! This "complementary care" happens well at Starbucks, or during the "afterglow" conversations after a service. Ideally, the "young" leader is "apprenticed" under you and observes you as you interact with team members or parents. Later, the "young" leader can do the interacting, with you observing.
 - b. **"Limited Experiences"** – Once you feel the "young" leader is ready to do so, let him/her "test his/her wings" a bit, with you right there to lend support. These experiences must be preceded by observing you, and personal conversations about the situation, the objectives, and possible challenges. The experience must be followed by a "debriefing" conversation in



which you personally affirm the “young” leader’s “performance,” and compliment his/her abilities. The “debrief” may also include suggestions for improvement.

- c. **“Always Available”** – No matter how busy you are, or by what you are “bothered,” you must always be available to talk with the leaders who serve under you. Unless the building is burning down, or unless a child is being abused, the needs of the leaders under you are more important than anything else! (STOP, LOOK, LISTEN) They must feel this, and believe that it is your real perspective! To ignore a leader’s comment or need can destroy all you have done to build that leader! If you must “postpone” a conversation, apologize for doing so, and resume the conversation within minutes, if possible! The longer you wait to resume the conversation the more negative the impact!

- 3. **Nurturing “Veteran” Leaders** – Everything you do for the “young” leaders, you must continue to do for the “veteran” leaders! We humans never “get enough” of affirmation or support! If your support of the leader ends after the initial “honeymoon” of being a “young” leader, the leader will sense that, and interpret that as a sign that you really don’t care! This is a destructive perception, and one that is almost impossible to “fix.” Here are some things to do to continue to support your “veteran” leaders:



- a. **“What Can I Do For You?”** – Sacrifice is the “front door” to respect! Your example of sacrifice for the leader will be repeated by the leader to his/her team members. If you don’t see something that can be done for the leader, ask! Jumping in and assisting with room setup, room cleanup, or anything else that the leader needs will create a sense of “family” within the leadership team. This sense of “family” is a direct cause of longevity in the leadership team!
- b. **“What Do You Think” Questions** – One of the greatest ways to affirm a leader’s value is to ask him/her for wisdom or opinions. This can happen when you encounter a team member situation, a parent situation, a child situation, a scheduling situation, a programming need, or even a personal issue. A team is built through “intimacy,” and this is the greatest way to build intimacy. You don’t have to use what the leader says, but you should thank him/her for their input. If you do use the information or advice, and if you can share that use with the rest of the team, that public affirmation is worth a ton of gold to the leader!
- c. **On-going Compliments And Care** – We all know how it feels to receive a “random act of kindness,” or a “no special reason” gift or compliment! These on-going tokens of support are vital for humans, and especially important for leaders. Leading can be a lonely task. There are times of doubt, or times of feeling like everybody is “against you.” This is why we must always give on-going support and compliments to our leaders. Here are some ways to do that:
 - **Hand-written notes** (texts are okay, but not as valuable as notes).
 - **“Swing by comments”** after a service – to comment on faithfulness, etc.
 - **Complimentary emails or phone calls** to express your thankfulness and support.

Whatever you do, do it with pure love and awe for those under you! They will feel it and give you faithful service and 100% effort as a result! The more you give, the more you get. “Give and it will be given to you.” Hmm, where have we heard that before?