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Redefining Leadership: Character-Driven Habits of Effective Leaders [review] / Stowell, Joseph M.

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implement asking rather than telling is our attitudes toward status, rank, and role boundaries. These forces, which emerge from our stereotypes of where people belong in the structures of society or organizations, can stand as challenging barriers to efforts toward creating a more relational platform upon which we launch our efforts to fulfill goals and objectives. Schein states that these barriers reside in us and create forces that inhibit purposeful humble inquiry. Our psychological efforts to maintain self at a level of superiority relative to others will resist behavior that implies equality or even subordination. These inhibitors require us to see a shift from telling to asking as an adaptive process that requires change in us and how we see others—not always as easy as might be imagined.

Schein delivers on his stated purpose in the Introduction—he convincingly and successfully makes the case for relational leadership via the simple humble art of asking instead of telling. The book is well-written and edited in a clear and organized manner. It seems that I was either so drawn into his point or, more likely, he wrote and presented what my heart has long desired to see demonstrated in our personal and organizational leadership environments—a respect for all wherein the dignity of all is preserved regardless of role or station in life.

Schein makes a case for leadership as conversation, not command. The implications are especially pertinent to our religious institutions where the “level” ground at the altar of grace silently professes the equal status of all of God’s children, while behaviors and stereotypes all too often reveal a stratified community where telling often overrides humble inquiry.

I give this book a 5-star rating and

recommend it to all who wish to lead effectively in the midst of this complex postmodern society that longs for genuine connection and resists the traditional command and control leadership model that is accustomed to telling rather than asking.

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REDEFINING LEADERSHIP: CHARACTER-DRIVEN HABITS OF EFFECTIVE LEADERS

*By Joseph M. Stowell
Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan (2014)
Hardcover, 175 pages*

Reviewed by BRANDON WESTGATE

This book is a must-read for all who desire to better understand themselves in the light of the leadership qualities of Jesus, who, in the opinion of Stowell, is the greatest Leader the world has ever seen. He brings us to the reality of the counter-intuitive techniques and unique leadership tendencies that mark the methods of a true leader. He abandons the typical formula used by many leadership book authors, with their step-by-step methods of manipulation of others to achieve desired results. Instead, Stowell focuses not on the techniques of manipulation or posturing to gain an advantage or a position, but rather on the position of the leader’s heart to recognize the advantage of leading like Jesus led.

Stowell writes in a very easy to follow format and the flow of this work is very logical and intuitive. He challenges his readers time after time to think deeply about their own leadership tendencies and possible charac-

ter deficiencies. He reminds the reader many times that just because an organization is successful in the eyes of the world, does not mean that God approves of the leadership qualities of the leader. Perhaps the Lord is blessing in spite of the leader! That thought is a key component in his approach. Success, externally measured by outsiders by numerical growth or expanded facilities, may not be success when measured by God's standards of conduct and expectations of the one at the helm.

It is so refreshing to read a book on leadership that actually addresses the leader's heart and calling. Stowell does an exceptional job of taking on this subject and does not pull any punches when it comes to the true measure of success in leadership. Stowell proposed that the leader can only be a leader if he is firstly a follower. He introduced a word that was new to me, but very descriptive of what he means in terms of modeling Jesus as a leader. His word is "followership."

According to Stowell, "followership" is the crucial first step that so many leaders miss. Using Jesus as the example and model of and for leadership, he submits that no one can truly be an effective leader in a way that honors God and people, without first observing Jesus' methods and form of leading. It is only when followership happens that effective leadership begins.

The insight and acumen that Stowell reveals in this work is inspiring and challenging all at the same time. He gets to the heart of the matter and uses illustrations and personal accounts that reinforce his proposals and bring the reality of life and leading to center stage. Stowell offers a behind the scenes look at a true leader's agenda, and invites us backstage to discover where we stand in

light of these searching revelations.

Words like "thought provoking" are a bit over used in some circles. Yet this work of Stowell's is that and more. "Paradigm shifting" and "motivationally humbling" might also be terms that could be used to describe the encounter with self that Stowell manages to incorporate into this book. His method of revealing the needful pieces of leading makes for a journey that is pleasant to read and self-revealing. I found that his writing resonated deep within my being. His words reinforced many shortcomings I have seen in other leaders and within myself. Stowell also challenged many preconceived notions regarding leaders and the results-oriented, goal-focused model that is sadly predominant even within the church. This work should be, and perhaps will be, considered required reading for anyone entering a ministry leadership position. If you only read one book on leadership in ministry, this should be that one book!

BRANDON WESTGATE serves as pastor of the Bonnerdale, Amity and Mount Ida Seventh-day Adventist churches in the state of Arkansas.