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Boundaries for Leaders: Results, Relationships, and Being Ridiculously in Charge [review] / Cloud, Henry

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are not afraid to change themselves and empower their employees to “kill” the company.

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BOUNDARIES FOR LEADERS: RESULTS, RELATIONSHIPS, AND BEING RIDICULOUSLY IN CHARGE

By Henry Cloud
Hardcover, 237 pages

Reviewed by RON AGUILERA

Boundaries for Leaders is the latest book by well-known author and leadership consultant Dr. Henry Cloud. In it, he shares various tools and techniques beneficial to leaders who want to grow healthy organizations. Cloud stresses the importance of creating boundaries by developing structures that determine what will exist and what won’t. He states that “you get what you create and what you accept.” What this means to me is that a leader is either creating or allowing the culture he inhabits. This is especially true if the leader has been leading the organization for some time. Maybe you have heard the old adage: “Up to three years the problems in your organization belong to the previous leader; after three years the problems are of your own making.”

Cloud says that the leader is “ridiculously in charge” of the vision, the people that get invited onto the team, what the goals and purposes are going to be, and what behavior is going to be allowed and what isn’t.

In other words, establishing the boundaries. He spends the bulk of the book explaining seven boundaries that will fulfill the vision of the organization and help its people thrive:

- Helping people focus on the things that matter most,
- Recognizing the emotional climate that drives brain functioning,
- Facilitating connections that boost energy and momentum,
- Creating organizational thought patterns that limit negativity and helplessness,
- Identifying paths for people to take control of the activities that drive results,
- Creating high-performance teams organized around the behaviors that drive results,
- Leading yourself in a manner that protects the vision.

One of the most fascinating sections of the book has to do with building a healthy emotional climate. Cloud uses the latest neuroscience research to make an argument for conditions leaders can set that will motivate, empower and unify the team. He also describes other conditions that will result in the opposite. One great example is the tone of voice we use when communicating with an individual or with our team. Neuroscience reveals that when we use “put-down,” angry tones, or harsh words, we trigger a switch in brain function—“it’s like a switch going on from the upper brain to the lower brain.” The upper brain is where the higher cognitive capacities happen, things such as logic, judgment, creativity, problem solving, planning, and big picture thinking. In the lower brain, not a lot of what we call thinking goes on. The lower brain controls the “fight or flight” response. Cloud describes a third option in which people simply freeze: They do nothing. The brain
shuts down. He refers to this reaction as “lizard brain.” What can we learn from this? Leaders must avoid practices, language, and behaviors that sow seeds of negativity and toxicity. This book is full of fabulous tools and language that is helpful in dealing with leadership issues, like building trust and setting boundaries. These not only contribute to achieving results but also to building relationships that are essential to effective leadership. Dr. Cloud’s mix of research and practical insight, as well as inspiring stories and real life examples, make this book a fabulous read. I give Boundaries for Leaders a 10 out of 10 rating. Every leader should read this book!

Ron Aguilera is an experienced pastor and Christian leader who currently serves as the executive secretary for the Illinois Conference of Seventh-day Adventists.

AS I FOLLOW CHRIST: 20 ESSENTIALS EVERY LEADER SHOULD KNOW

By Dwain Esmond (Ed.)
Hagerstown, MD: Review and Herald (2013)
Paperback, 139 pages

Reviewed by Ron Aguilera

As I Follow Christ: The 20 Essentials Every Leader Should Know is a new edited book on leadership written by some of the most notable leaders in the Seventh-day Adventist Church. The conviction of the authors is that Scripture provides eternal principles of leadership as a guide for every Christian leader. Each chapter reflects an author’s experience with a unique principle or value. As an avid reader and a student of leadership, I could not pass this book up.

Esmond collects and compiles the leadership thoughts and principles of leadership from a broad range of topics: a leader’s spiritual life, a leader’s vision, and a leader’s character, to name but a few. In each chapter, the authors share learning experiences in ministry that have provided transforming principles they have applied in their journey toward becoming a Christ-like leader.

Among my favorite chapters is the one by Gordon Bietz, who writes about a leader’s first steps and how to begin a new ministry cycle, whether as a new pastor or conference administrator. This excellent chapter is filled with practical and thoughtful ideas. There is also a great chapter on God’s woman as a leader, written by Prudence L. Pollard, in which she writes of how women and men lead differently and why. She speaks to the qualities women often bring to the leadership table and the ongoing challenges women face as leaders. Another outstanding chapter, by Lowell Cooper, sets forth five leadership priorities—character, a balanced life, building trust, teamwork, and developing people. This excellent collection of priorities remind us of some of the key pillars of leadership.

At just 139 pages, I easily read this valuable book in one sitting. Whether you are a ministerial intern or a seasoned pastor, or if you are leading a ministry, an organization, or a family, I highly recommend As I Follow Christ!

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