

Leadership and Credibility: Making the Tough Call

Earning Your Right to Have Followers

BIBLICAL
BASIS

We loved you so much that we were delighted to share with you not only the Gospel of God, but our very lives as well, because you had become so dear to us. Surely you remember, brothers, our toil and hardship; we worked night and day in order not to be a burden to anyone while we preached the Gospel of God to you. (1Thessalonians 2:8-9)

In order to be a leader, a man must have followers. And to have followers – at least in today's world – a person must have credibility. Leaders must earn the right to be followed. The greatest reason pastors fail to get more followers in their church is the lack of credibility. Many talk the talk, but fail to walk the walk. Others pass the integrity test, but fail to lead their church effectively. People may like them as a friend, but they won't follow them as a leader. There is a big difference between the two.

The Leadership Equation

_____ plus _____ equals _____

Your credibility as a leader comes from both your strong character and competence. People must believe that you have integrity and that you can get the job done. While God grants you the grace for both, you must develop them through discipline and personal growth in the area of your gift.

This is why we have focused on three categories in these leadership notebooks:

- ♦ The Spiritual Formation of a Leader (character and spiritual life)
- ♦ The Skill Formation of a Leader (leadership skills and behaviors)
- ♦ The Strategic Formation of a Leader (wise use of strategy to fulfill the mission)

Making the Tough Call

Probably the acid test of credibility for leaders lies in their ability to "make a tough call." This test answers two questions: *Can* a leader make and follow through on a difficult decision? *Will* the leader make and follow through on a difficult decision?

Marion Folsom said, "You're going to find that 95% of all the decisions you'll make in your career could be made by a reasonably intelligent teenager. But they'll pay you for the other 5%."

According to a study of unsuccessful executive leaders in more than 200 organizations, the inability to make decisions is one of the principal reasons why executives fail. The greatest difficulty in making decisions is not in knowing the right decision but in making it.

What Makes a Tough Call Tough?

1. _____
Choosing to do what is right even when it goes against popular belief.

**KEY
POINTS**

2. _____
Placing the interests of others before my own.
3. _____
Letting go of things I enjoy so I can continue my growth journey.
4. _____
Making disciplined choices in the weak areas of my life.
5. _____
Moving forward even when it is expensive. Growth stops when the price gets too high.
6. _____
Knowing that I don't know, yet knowing that I have to make the call.
7. _____
Choosing to swallow my pride and admit: I have found the problem...and it is me.
8. _____
This is the toughest call: choosing to confront situations or people who have strayed.
9. _____
A leader may make a call without others, but once it is made, it will affect others.

Common Ingredients in Tough Calls

1. Each tough call requires much _____, _____ and _____.
2. Each tough call demands _____.
3. Each tough call is _____ and _____.
4. Each tough call _____ leaders greatly.
5. Each tough call _____ a leader's ministry to a higher level.

Ten Helps in Making the Tough Call

1. **Accept tough calls as a requirement of _____.**

All through Scripture, great leaders stepped out and took a risk in obedience to God. Often they must have looked foolish to outsiders. Think about Joshua who marched his troops around Jericho without weapons, attempting to knock down the walls. What about young David who confronted Goliath with five little stones? And I am sure when Moses stepped into the Red Sea he wondered out loud, "Why must I always go first?"

2. **Do your _____.**

Research can make or break a major decision. According to Professor Baruch Fischhoff, "Some of the biggest mistakes in decision making come from leaving out pieces of the puzzle."

Steps to Complete the Decision Puzzle:

- a. Define the issue and write it down.
- b. Gather information. Seek insight not just information.
- c. Question your first impressions.
- d. Outline a strategy.

KEY
POINTS

3. Set a _____.

"Again and again the impossible problem is solved when we see that the problem is only a tough decision waiting to be made." Dr. Robert Schuller

A Deadline Should Be Set When:

- a. Others depend on our decision.
- b. It is part of a larger decision.
- c. Our homework is complete.
- d. Our decision will not be a pleasant one.
- e. Our fear of failure delays our decision.

4. Make sure the _____ is right.

The wrong decision at the wrong time is a _____.

The wrong decision at the right time is a _____.

The right decision at the wrong time is _____.

The right decision at the right time is a _____.

5. Seek _____ from the right people.

Proverbs reminds us several times that there is wisdom in much counsel. Why seek greater participation from others? One compelling reason is the great need. No single leader today can possibly know enough about all the areas of ministry they're involved in to be able to make intelligent solo decisions. Second, good leaders know that no decision will succeed without buy-in from their people.

As one leader said: "Remember, the boss can't execute decisions alone, and execution is 90% of the job. What we have learned the hard way is that conceptual planning needs to involve everybody who is accountable for turning plans into reality."

6. Make your decisions based on your _____ and _____.

Cowardice asks the question: Is it safe?

Consensus asks the question: Is it popular?

Conscience asks the question: Is it right? Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

7. Develop _____ that enable you to make the tough call.

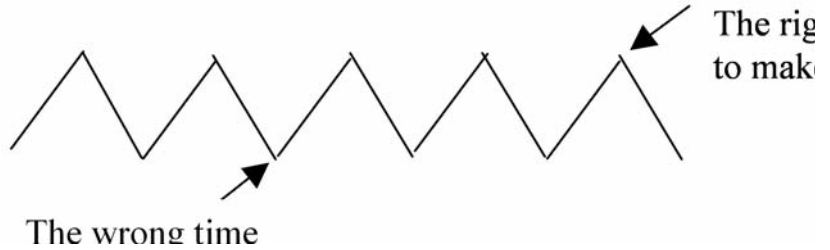
One of the wisest decisions you can make as a leader is to establish systems to help you make decisions. Identify the principles you embrace and use those principles to guide your process.

TRUTH IN A PICTURE

Example for a Board Agenda

- a. Information Items – Discuss what is happening in the organization.
- b. Action Items – Vote on what has been previously discussed.
- c. Study Items – Address issues to be discussed and explored, but not voted on.

Example of Timing for Tough Decisions



8. Understand the _____ of making a tough call.

"The best decision-makers are those who are willing to suffer the most over decisions, but still retain their ability to be decisive." M. Scott Peck

Decisions mean change and change can be threatening. Fears may try to force you back to your comfort zone. Remember to:

- a. See second thoughts as normal. Major steps of faith come with major doubts.
- b. Take time to mourn what you are leaving behind. It's OK to grieve the loss.
- c. Accept the principle of trade-offs. Take hold of the new and let go of the old.
- d. Pray for strength and passion. You will find courage, as Jesus did in Gethsemane.

"Successful leaders dare to be unpopular when they have to make tough decisions...and they accept that there may be long periods before the rewards of their efforts finally appear." Andrew Sherwood

9. Understand _____ part and _____ part.

"My obligation is to do the right thing. The rest is in God's hands." Martin Luther King, Jr.

We must live just like the three Hebrew children in Daniel 3:15-18. They determined to do what was right and trust God for the results.

10. Pray for _____ and _____.

"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him." (James 1:5)

"I have been driven many times upon my knees by the overwhelming conviction that I had nowhere else to go. My own wisdom and that of all about me seemed insufficient for that day." Abraham Lincoln

ACTION PLAN

ASSESSMENT: Identify two tough decisions in front of you. How are you handling them?

APPLICATION: Based on the list above, what steps should you take to handle these decisions well?