

Healthy Leaders

Keith E. Yoder, D.Ed.



Teaching the Word Ministries
Leola, Pennsylvania 17540

***For Jesus' sake, cultivating healthy leaders who
transform their world and finish well***

Copyright © 1998 by Teaching the Word Ministries
Second Printing: 2001
Revised & Updated: 2007
3rd Edition: 2015
Tele: (717) 656-4056

ISBN 10: 1-886973-31-8
ISBN 13: 978-1-886973-31-2
ISBN: 978-0-9855895-5-4

Unless otherwise noted, all scripture is taken from the New King James Version. Copyright © 1982 by Thomas Nelson, Inc. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Quotation references marked (NASB) come from the New American Standard Bible, copyright ©The Lockman Foundation, 1960, 1962, 1963, 1968, 1971, 1972, 1973, 1975, 1977, La Habra, California, All Rights Reserved. (www.Lockman.org)

All rights reserved. No portion of this book may be reproduced without the permission of the publisher.

Dedicated with affection to
those who serve
in the responsibility of leadership
to influence others toward godly purposes.
To Marian, my wife,
whose leadership challenges and encourages
others to excellence.

Acknowledgments

We're each indebted to numerous individuals for the knowledge we have gained. Communicating knowledge through a text such as this also requires a joint effort.

With joy I acknowledge more than a score of individuals who encouraged me to write this book. Steve Prokopchak and others at House to House Publications gave their encouragement and expertise to bring the first edition to final form—namely, Larry Kreider, Sarah Sauder and Karen Ruiz.

Many thanks to Bob Petersheim, Cindy Riker, Don Riker and Marian Yoder, my close associates who helped to clarify the way I communicate the convictions presented here.

This edition has been enriched, updated and fine-tuned by the contributions of Patricia Tillman, Wil Tillman, and Tina White.

I'm grateful for what I've learned from working with men and women in responsibilities of leadership; some of their experiences are illustrated on these pages.

Harold Eberle opened my understanding to creative perspectives in responsibilities of leadership in his visionary work, *God's Leaders For Tomorrow's World*.

The late Edwin Friedman introduced me to several significant concepts regarding leadership. Edwin pointed me to Jesus Christ who embodies these truths to the fullest.

In Christ are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge. Join me in considering His word in the words that follow.

Contents

<i>Foreword</i>	6
<i>Introduction</i>	7
<i>Chapter One</i> A Clear Sense of Identity and Individuality	9
<i>Chapter Two</i> Direction In Leadership	29
<i>Chapter Three</i> Identity In Leadership	42
<i>Chapter Four</i> Service In Leadership	56
<i>Chapter Five</i> Character In Leadership	70
<i>Chapter Six</i> Leaders In Community	81
<i>Chapter Seven</i> Empowering A New Generation of Leaders	87
<i>Healthy Leaders Definitions</i>	92
<i>About the Author</i>	96

Foreword

A number of years ago I was ready to quit. I had served as the Senior Pastor of a church that had grown from a handful of believers to over 2000, but I had come to an impasse. Most of my struggle involved my apparent inability to work in harmony with some members of our leadership team.

In the midst of this turmoil, I met with my friend Keith Yoder. I had known Keith for years and admired his ability to “cut to the chase” to help pastors and leaders deal with the real issues confronting them. This time I was not just observing; I was desperate.

Keith helped me to understand how the Lord had “wired” me. He showed me how to be secure in my relationship with Christ and His call on my life as a servant leader. I learned practical biblical keys to understand other leaders with differing gifts and abilities.

Since Keith fathered me through a process of healing, and served as my mentor, I have found myself compelled by the Father to do the same—to be a spiritual father and mentor to others. Much of what I have learned from Keith during this vital season of growth in my life can be found within the pages of this book.

I recommend *Healthy Leaders* to Christian leaders and future leaders everywhere. Don’t wait until you face a crisis. Allow the Lord to use the truths in this book to lay a foundation in your life for your present and future role of leadership in the body of Christ. Become the healthy leader the Lord has ordained you to be.

Larry Kreider
DOVE Christian Fellowship International Director

Introduction

Are you in a crisis regarding your leadership?

There is hope.

Do you need to revitalize your influence upon others?

There is a way.

Are you an emerging leader seeking to avoid pitfalls?

There is wisdom.

Do you yearn to fulfill your destiny?

There is guidance.

Do you desire to mentor a new generation of leaders?

There is a path to follow.

Leadership is vital. The quality of life and the productivity of every group rises and falls according to the effectiveness of its leadership. This cannot be understated. It's true in congregations, families, businesses, synagogues, community organizations and civil governments. Learning to lead may seem overwhelming. Leaders have several options to increased effectiveness. We can study a wide range of *theories* of leadership. Or we can consider a multitude of *principles* mined from experience by successful leaders throughout the centuries. We may seek to emulate *models*—contemporary leaders—who have found success in our specific field of endeavor.

But we can't borrow effective leadership. While we do need to learn from how others lead, the foundational conviction of this text maintains that effective leaders have a clear sense of *identity* and *direction*. They maintain a healthy sense of individuality by which they can influence others in a wholesome way. Hence, the title, *Healthy Leaders*.

Identity and intimacy are linked. God empowers leaders as they establish their identity in a personal relationship with Him. In the Gospels, Jesus Christ demonstrates this kind

of close relationship through His own intimate fellowship with His Father. Through His death on the cross, Christ made this relationship possible for us. As God empowers you, your identity becomes your influence.

Please note that I narrate a number of stories to illustrate key principles. The stories are true, but to protect the identity of those involved, I used pseudonyms.

And now, let me introduce you to Glen . . .

Keith E. Yoder
Teaching the Word Ministries
Leola, PA



Chapter One

A Clear Sense of Identity and Individuality

Glen* had pastored Trinity Congregation for a year when the “honeymoon period” ended. Some of the “old guard” members on the board resisted his new initiatives. False accusations surfaced from the rumor mill. The turn of events didn’t surprise or sway Glen. He knew God had called him to this congregation. Without defending himself, Glen kept clarifying his vision in his preaching and in one-to-one lunches with key leaders. He stood firm in his convictions, remained friendly to all, and prayed.

As the weeks unfolded more of the story, Glen realized that he could trace board resistance to one businessman who held sway with the leaders, but was himself uninvolved. He didn’t like the “new preacher’s” style of leadership. When the time for election of church board members arrived, Glen had no indication of what the results might be. As he prayed and waited, he didn’t compromise the direction he sensed the Lord had given for this congregation.

Without campaigning or manipulating on Glen’s part, miraculously the mood of the congregation changed. In the election, the congregation replaced the “old guard.” One younger leader repented of his rebellious attitude. The new board became more responsive to Glen’s leadership.

While we may not see all conflict resolved in this manner, this one was, in part, because the leader had a clear

*Glen is not his real name. Throughout the book, I use pseudonyms to protect the identity of the leaders, but their stories are true.

sense of who God made him to be. His identity remained firm in the midst of resistance.

Effective leaders have a healthy sense of *individuality* and maintain a clear awareness of personal identity because

Effective leaders have a healthy sense of *individuality* and maintain a clear awareness of personal identity because of an intimate relationship with Father God.

of an intimate relationship with Father God. Jesus Himself embodied healthy individuality throughout His entire ministry. If we want to lead like Christ, we need to embrace this important principle of leadership. Knowing who God designed us to be will

bring a fresh release and responsibility to our ministries and workplace. People will appreciate us much more as leaders, which will allow us to move forward in the area of authority where God placed us.

Dynamics of Healthy Individuality in Leadership:

1. Intimacy with God
2. Clear Purpose and Direction
3. Clear Identity
4. Clear Boundaries of Responsibility in Service
5. Integrity of Character
6. Interdependent Community

As we look at Jesus as a leader, we can glean some significant insight. First of all, in His anointing and in His lordship, Jesus is not only the Christ, He is also a man—a person, an *individual*.

In John 13:1, we read that Jesus knew the hour (to sacrifice Himself for the world) had come. As He prepared to leave His disciples, Jesus recognized this hour as His primary purpose during this season on earth. He faced the most

difficult task that any human being has ever faced. He knew He had come from God and could deal with the coming task, even though He would soon agonize in the Garden in a very human way, pleading, “Do I have to go through this? Is there some other way?” (see Luke 22:42).

Jesus postured Himself as the vessel—the earthen humanity through which God would work to demonstrate that we, also, can walk as He walked, and lead as He led.

Love, our motivation

We need to embrace love as our primary motivation in leadership—to love unconditionally, as Jesus did. Jesus loved His disciples through it all, “having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end” (John 13:1). He didn’t love them only through a certain period of time, but He loved them to the fullest extent, right up until He departed.

If we translate this concept into Swahili, I’m told it describes a picture of the horizon. Jesus loved His disciples “unto the horizon.”

When we scan the horizon

we see it extend on and on as a beautiful picture of how Jesus “loved to the fullest extent”—without end.

In a beautiful way, the Apostle John illustrates the interrelationship between the healthy individuality that Jesus demonstrated, and His love for His disciples. John described Jesus’ sense of identity in the narrative of the Last Supper: “...knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God... He poured water into a basin and began to wash the

“Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end... Jesus, knowing that the Father had given all things into His hands, and that He had come from God and was going to God...”

- John 13:1, 3, NKJV

disciples' feet" (John 13:3-5). The text reveals three important things about Jesus:

- 1) He knew His purpose
- 2) He knew His identity
- 3) He knew His roots

Jesus knew His purpose

Jesus clearly knew His purpose. He knew the Father had "given all things into His hands" (John 13:3). He knew what responsibility the Father had entrusted to Him. The Father arranged everything Jesus needed at His disposal. Jesus understood His role. He understood His relationship with His Father in reference to what God had given Him. He didn't covet His role. The Father handed it to Him—a stewardship for which He needed to care.

Jesus knew His identity and His roots

Jesus knew "He had come forth from God." He recognized His source, reservoir and identity as rooted in His Father. Jesus was God, but He also knew that as a human, He had come from God—that Someone had sent Him. Not merely doing something just because He wanted to, but He had a commission as an ambassador. Not a floating, itinerant minister with no roots and no relationships—Jesus was accountable back home. He had come from God.

Jesus knew where He was going

Jesus knew He was "going back to God." He knew from where He had come—His identity and roots. Now He was going home. We need to know our roots as well as the direction we're heading. Human beings still need to know the answer to life's questions. *Who am I? Where did I come from? Where am I going?* Jesus knew the answers, and those answers came out of an intimate relationship with His

Father. He knew His identity through a personal fellowship He shared with His Father, sustained by daily prayer and listening to His Father's will.

Since we can't cut ourselves off entirely from our past, we can't ignore our roots or take them lightly. We need to look honestly at every part of our experience—even those painful ones—and face who we are. If we deny our past or despise our roots, we can only remain unhealthy. To mature as healthy leaders, we need to acknowledge our roots, accept them for what they are, and build on that foundation.

Of course, a plant consists of more than just roots. It develops all the way to fruit. Jesus knew His past—He had come from God—in relationship to where He was going—back home to God. We, too, need this same appreciation for our roots, because it gives us hope for the fruit of the future.

While on earth, Jesus identified with us as humans. Now we explore how *we* can identify with *Him*, and lead as He led in light of knowing our purpose, our roots, and our direction.

Ask the hard questions

If we, as leaders, grapple with understanding our past or our direction, we need to take the critical step to seek the Lord's guidance with the help of other believers in answering those questions. When the answers elude us, our leadership lacks clarity and decisiveness. We impose our problems on the ones we're responsible to lead.

Alex had pastored a church for several years when issues in his life surfaced, not only in his home, but also in the congregation. Administration became confused, attendance declined, and people grew disillusioned with several unsuccessful "new directions" over the past five years. Alex straddled the fence on issues, not wanting to offend people

who may disagree with or reject him. His fear of rejection emerged whenever controversial issues arose.

While the people loved Pastor Alex as a person, some of them grew increasingly frustrated with his leadership. The confusion, the vacillation, and the unresolved fears within him spilled over into the persona of the congregation.

Through seasons of change and transition, things can get rather foggy and confusing. During those times we especially need to depend fully on God's grace to define our identity, our roots, and our direction. Intentionally and effectively seeking God's answers to those questions empowers our capacity to lead God's people.

For example, Tom and his wife sat across the living room from me as we began to sort through the changes and resulting transition in Tom's life. He struggled with his identity after several years as a successful university football coach. Coaching and all that it had required to grow a successful program—month by month and year by year—energized Tom. Now that he resigned, he experienced an alarming sense of emptiness, worthlessness, and confusion. His identity had become so associated with his role as coach that he “lost himself” in the process. Now the Lord led him into a season where “being” shaped his identity more than “doing.” The question, *Who am I?* faced him.

Healthy identity

As we have noted, Jesus had a clear definition of Himself and a clear direction of where He was going. This understanding forms the foundation that supports the principle of healthy individuality. Healthy individuals have a sense of who they are and where they're going—their identity and direction. Therefore, they can lead and influence others effectively. It causes a chain reaction within the group