

June 2004, *Equipping*



Leadership in a Time of Change and Conflict

'*Leadership in a time of change and conflict*' is the theme Keith Harder will be addressing at the Ministers' Conference on July 7th in Winkler, Manitoba.

If leadership is the power to influence others for change, there is often a profound ambivalence among us to exercise that power. When leadership involves staying at the helm when the crew is divided, we may feel a strong temptation to step aside.

Many of us would rather hunker down among the weeds rather than step up to the challenges of leadership, especially when leadership involves working through difficult conflict - we would rather have someone else do it. As criticisms and judgments are launched, we would prefer to cruise below the radar rather than be out in the open, picking up flak. When it comes to actual conflict and change, we would rather actually not lead.

If you are struggling with the challenges of being a leader, consider yourself in good company. Consider Moses - even after God gave him a number of impressive signs and wonders, such as the burning bush event and the stick turning to snake miracle, both of which were designed to convince him of God's power for the leadership task, Moses was overwhelmed with his own disqualification: *I have never been eloquent...I am slow of speech and slow of tongue.* (Exodus 3:10)

And there was Gideon who responded to his call to leadership by protesting to God's messenger: *But sir, how can I deliver Israel? My clan is the weakest...and I am the least in my family.* (Judges 6:15)

To both of these reluctant leadership candidates, the response from God was the same: ***I will be with you.*** To Moses, God was even more specific: *I will be with your mouth and will teach you what you are to speak.*

Kingdom leadership is not essentially a function of the charismatic personality, the brilliance of the quick analytic mind, or the gift of being articulate. Although these are wonderful assets for leadership, the heart of the matter is in God's promise, ***I will be with you.***

Why leave your comfort zone in order to take up a leadership challenge? Why voluntarily engage highly conflicted issues and questions? Good questions, if we are able to look only to our own resources. But there are sources of power for leaders: God's call, which gives us confidence that as leaders we are placed where we should be, and God's promised presence to empower us for our leadership tasks.

The act of leading finds courage from God's call. Willingness to step into the challenges of leadership comes out of a heart that is still in the assurance of God's presence.

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