

November 2004, *Equipping*



## Toward a Theology of Leadership?

“What is your ‘Myers-Briggs’ type?” they ask. When we are considered for leadership, we are often selected on the basis of our personalities. So, if I am an extrovert, I am more likely to draw attention than if I am closer to the introverted-end of the scale.

Recognizing that certain personality characteristics are helpful for leadership is not new and has a lot of value. Nevertheless when God chooses men and women for Kingdom leadership, there is something afoot that may not appear on a personality

inventory.

Remember, when David was chosen, he was the last person anyone would consider to lead Israel. Apparently God had a different way of imagining David as a leader or king than did his family or his community.

There are observable leadership values and personality strengths conducive to leadership; but is there such a thing as “a theology of leadership?”

When we survey the great leaders described in the biblical narrative, the most obvious thing about them is their great diversity. Hebrews 11 provides us with a handy list of biblical heroes, all leaders in their own way. It is an informal example-list of those who “did it right.” The author calls them a “great cloud of witnesses” to whom the reader is to look for inspiration. (Hebrews 12:10)

Included are Abel, Noah, Sarah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, and Gideon; and the list goes on. Their feats include these:... “administered justice, obtained promises, shut the mouths of lions, quenched raging fire, escaped the edge of the sword, won strength out of weakness...” Although the word leadership is not found, leadership is observed.

What characterizes these and other leaders who accomplished God’s will? Are there ingredients without which Kingdom leadership would NOT be found, irrespective of public acclaim or prowess of personality?

First, faith, in the most basic sense of believing what God has said. This is base-one in theology. Perhaps it may have been first believing by doubting, or by questioning, like Sarah did at the unlikely promise of having a child. Or, faith, as with Moses believing the stories of Yahweh as they had been passed down to him; believing in them more than in the power and glory of the Pharaoh and the Egyptian reality, in which he had grown up.

Second, obedience. Every one of these hero-leaders in Hebrews 11 did something that they would “normally” not have done. They took risks; they did audacious things, out of sync with prevailing values and political correctness.

Finally, they had a vision that reached well beyond their horizon of understanding. This future-vision was so profoundly compelling that it gave them the ability to suffer and die for it.

Manuals and courses on leadership tend to focus on personality strengths and various skill-sets for leadership. But the biblical narrative focuses on faith, obedience and vision. The effectiveness of our native gifts and skills as leaders depend on these. Without them kingdom leadership is not to be found.

—Sven Eriksson, *Denominational Minister*

**Please note the date change for Lent Planner at AMBS:** *The day-long workshop at Associated Mennonite Biblical Seminary focusing on worship planning for Lent is rescheduled for Tuesday, January 11, 2005. (This was previously announced for January 28 in the AMBS Pastors Week brochure). Deadline to register is December 20, 2004, with Beverley Sawatzky: bsawatzky@ambs.edu or 574.296.6207. A variety of worship resources for Lent will be introduced as participants preview the Mennonite Church resources for Lent and Holy Week 2005, “Marvelous in our eyes!” published in Leader. More information is available on the AMBS web site: [www.ambs.edu](http://www.ambs.edu); select Church Leadership Center, then Continuing Education, then Lent Planner.*