



Episode 035

Insights into Longevity in Ministry with Ps Larry Kreider

Ps Wilson

Hi, welcome to wilsonlailing.com. This is our leadership podcast, and today I am halfway around the world. I'm with Larry Kreider from Pennsylvania. We're right here in a town called Lititz.

Ps Larry

Lititz, Pennsylvania, USA. Welcome.

Ps Wilson

Thank you. And we are at Larry Kreider's studio. So I'm just so excited to be here with you and where you are. And it's just tremendous.

Ps Larry

You are now a global podcaster.

Ps Wilson

Thank you. Well Larry, tell us a little bit about yourself and DOVE, which you founded.

Ps Larry

Well I grew up right here in this area. I grew up in a church home and when I was 11 years of age, I gave my life to Christ. But I wasn't disciplined, and honestly, my life didn't change very much.

When I was 18 years of age, out of school, I had met a young girl that I really liked a lot, who really knew the Lord in a way I didn't. And she one day said, "Larry, are you sure you'll go to heaven when you die?" And I said, "Nobody knows that." And she said, "Well, I do." And she was right. She really did.

Ps Wilson

And that's a very important question. You should ask that question.



**Ps Larry**

Exactly. And so I went home that night and I remember I was so convicted by God. I opened up my Bible and I hardly ever read. And it said, "You hypocrite." It was when Jesus was speaking to the Pharisees. And I realized, God was speaking to me and then I said, "Jesus, if you can use my messed up life, I'll serve you. I'll give you my whole life, serve you the rest of my life." And he changed my heart that night.

Ps Wilson

Wow. And how old were you then?

Ps Larry

I was 18. And then we got involved in a youth Bible study. And we started to reach young people who didn't know the Lord at all- no Christian background- in our local community. We wanted to see people come to Christ. And then they came to Christ. I married the same girl, by the way, that was good.

Ps Wilson

Wonderful.

Ps Larry

Yeah, wonderful. And we became missionaries for a year, came back in this youth ministry, and make a long story very short, we realized that you cannot place new wine in old wineskins. New wine needs new wineskins, Jesus said. If you place new wine in old wineskins, you break the wineskins, lose the wine. And new life in Christ, these new Christians, who knew nothing about Jesus, I was having Bible studies at home for them, and we realized, and then later in our barn, and then in larger buildings, and realized that we needed a new church for these new believers.

So in 1980, DOVE started. D O V E, Declaring Our Victory Emmanuel. So that's how it all started back, it was 25 brave people back in 1980.



**Ps Wilson**

And tell us, what is DOVE like today?

Ps Larry

Well, you know, in those days, I remember our church just started and I told my wife one day, I said, "Honey, wouldn't it be amazing if our church would grow to 200 people by the time we're 80?" I'm 72 now. And we had no idea what God had planned because over the next 15 years, our church had grown to over 2300. We started, we're starting churches in different parts of the world. And then, we call it DOVE chapter 1, chapter 2, chapter 3. DOVE chapter 1 was, I was pastoring this mega church and started a few churches in other parts of the world: Kenya, Brazil, Scotland.

But then chapter 2 was realized. We were a multi-site church. We had eight different sites. So we realized we're called to be a movement of churches globally. So we trained each of the leaders to be pastors of the churches, lead elders we call them. And then there were eight local, three overseas churches joined. So we were a family of 11 churches worldwide.

Well fast forward, chapter 2 then, fast forward till today, we've grown to churches in 25 nations, about 1100 churches in 25 nations. It's just been the grace of God. It's been amazing, amazing. Chapter 3 is coming, because I'm going to be turning everything over to my successor, Merle Shenk, in about 8 months. And that'll be chapter 3. We'll see what God does then.

Ps Wilson

It's just amazing when you look at what God is doing in a group of people, just simply trusting Jesus and wanting to be bold and courageous and do whatever God wants to do, and just see the progression. I'm really excited that we've been able to see some of your journey, and I hope we will see the rest of this in many years to come as well.

Ps Larry

Amen, amen. And I've enjoyed being with you many times in different parts of the world, in Asia, and just love what God is doing through you as you're now leading this HIM movement. And now all over the world, which is really a joy to work with other movement leaders and see what God does globally.



Ps Wilson

Now, what will be some of your highlights of your ministry? What will be some things that you really treasure?

Ps Larry

I mean, as I look back in ministry?

Ps Wilson

Yes.

Ps Larry

Well, I think that one of the things I would treasure is my wife and I have been able to walk together as one. She's very different than I am. She's very pastoral. I'm more of a visionary leader and she has really resourced my weaknesses in so many different ways. I treasure that. We believe God's a God of relationship. And of course, we have a relationship with God, through Jesus Christ, and then a relationship with one another. And so we, God's helped us to build, I mean, He's done a relational movement. I treasure relationships. I mean, I'm working with people, some of these people you've met, people like Ron Myer, Brian Sauder, and others who I've worked with now for 42 years.

Ps Wilson

Which is incredible.

Ps Larry

It's incredible. And I didn't do that well in the beginning. We had lost some leaders after 10 years, [which was] very painful.

And I was just an immature leader. Didn't know how, didn't realize any spiritual fathers in my life and just had a lot of vision. And I look back now, and I could have done things a lot better. But I do treasure even those relationships today, even though they're in different parts of the body of Christ, treasuring the relationships of all the people who walk with us all these years.

Ps Wilson

So, are there any other highlights for yourself besides this relationship and working with your wife?



**Ps Larry**

Well you know, we're blessed with four wonderful children. Again, my wife and I have now ministered literally all over the world, you know, because of the DOVE movement and helping other movements, and so we feel, we feel very, very, very, very blessed. Just training the next generation of leaders has been a highlight again and again and again to us and our succession time is a highlight for us. Realizing that I'm decreasing, my successor who is 42. I'm 72. He's increasing and it's wonderful and it's been a great joy.

Ps Wilson

Now, of course, you know, when you have had ministry for 40 years, right? I'm sure you have had occasions where you had to go through some disappointing moments. How did you walk through those?

Ps Larry

Good question. I think of some of the most painful times I went through is after I was a pastor for about 10 years. And I just got tired of trying to make decisions with people who wanted to make decisions different than the ones I thought were right. And you know, I was accused of things I knew weren't true and I wanted to quit. I grew up in business. I wanted to go back into business. That's what I wanted to do.

I remember I went to the mountains to pray and the Lord made it clear he had called us to do what we're doing. And unless he un-calls us, I really didn't have a choice really. And here's the greatest thing I learned. I learned this powerful truth: That Jesus loves me, this I know, for the Bible tells me so. I realized, and this was huge for me, I was trying to get my significance, my security, out of what people thought of me, rather than what God thought of me. And I went back to that simple truth. And I also realized that I didn't have any spiritual fathers in my life. I had no one to look to. And when we started, we did. And then things, we were growing, God was blessing. And so, we realized that we, we thought we didn't probably need spiritual fathers very much because God was blessing us. But when it got very difficult, and we lost some good leaders who went to other parts of the body of Christ.

It was very, very difficult. But, when that happened, I realized that my significance can only come from God, not come from what I do.

Ps Wilson

Amen.



Ps Larry

So nothing with the movement has to do with my relationship with Jesus. That's what counts.

Ps Wilson

It's, I think, so fundamental for all of us. Even if we're in leadership or not, actually, it's so fundamental, but sometimes we forget about that. Sometimes we're caught up in who we look like.

Ps Larry

A really humorous thing happened. One of our leaders, his name is Steve Prokopchak, one of our long term leaders. He's a real counselor. And so I, in the midst of the pain I was going through, I went to his office and I said, "Steve, we hired you to be a counselor for many people. I want you to counsel me." And so I said, "I'm just tired, I'm weary, I'm just tired of trying to share a vision with people and they have another vision, it's just not working, you know, two visions become a division, you know." And he said, he was very patient, very kind, prayed with me. He said, and this is the day where's cassette tapes, way back in the day. He said, "I have this cassette tape I'm going to give you. This is going to help you." I said, "Well, thank you."

Two weeks later, I'm driving down the road, in my car, where's the cassette player? I put the cassette tape in, and the speaker was talking about people who have a messiah complex. They try to be the messiah. They try to fix everybody. And I thought, well, this is really good. That sounds like what I'm going through. I listened a little more, and I thought, he sounds so familiar. I realized the guy on the cassette tape was me. He gave me my own teaching. I had been training pastors about a year before that and talking about the messiah complex and here I fell into the same trap. He thought it was really, really funny. It really was. But that's what happened and that was some of the fun we had in the midst of some of the pain.

But looking back, we saw the grace of God again and again and again. And today we have wonderful relationships with even these persons who've gone to other parts of the body of Christ. We kept the relationship and we have wonderful relations. We're very grateful for the way they sowed into our lives, our movement for the seasons they were with us.



Ps Wilson

Incredible. You know, one of the things with this interview, I'm trying to tease out some of your secrets, the longevity of your ministry. Because it's not often that we can say to somebody who has been in senior roles of leadership, in your case, a global role of leadership for four decades and still looking forward to more.

Ps Larry

I am.

Ps Wilson

What would be some of your keys you've learned to keep the freshness in your ministry, in your life.

Ps Larry

Well, number one is keeping short accounts. You know, never lying, or keeping any bitterness. As we have in Hebrews 12, you know, it talks about that root of bitterness can spring up and defile us, defile many others. So keeping short accounts, forgiving quickly. And number two is recognizing the power of the grace of God. When we look back, the reason we have long term relationships is because of the grace of God. It's just God's grace. And thirdly, I say, all over the world, I mean, we've just been blessed to work with good people. I mean, God's provided good people. I don't try to do their role, they don't try to do my role.

We each find our own role that we do well. And we resource our weaknesses and honor one another. I'm so blessed with people who can do things so much better than I can. I will try to do that. They're good at that. And I think that's made a big difference. And obviously our walk with God, our daily walk with God, it's all about Jesus.

It's all about our relationship with him. That's what really, really counts. And then our relationship with those close to us. Relationship with my wife, our family, our kids, our grandkids- six grandkids. You know, that is a real joy and a real blessing also.



**Ps Wilson**

I think that's something special when you work with a team of people, a group of people, that you actually enjoy working together. It just makes it special.

Ps Larry

Yeah, it's been a real joy for us. And it's been a blessing seeing nations, you know, people from many nations come to Christ and churches started and training and leadership and writing books and all those things. But it's really down to a relationship with Jesus, really, you get down to the bottom line. That's really what it's all about and loving Him and walking with Him.

Ps Wilson

Now, can I ask you a question? What advice would you give to some younger leaders who are in or stepping to senior roles like this, whether it be national or bigger roles?

Ps Larry

Number one, without Him, we can do nothing. We just need Jesus desperately.

Number two, learn from everyone you can. You know, I've read so many books. And the reason I'm a writer is because I've been helped by so many other people's books. People even who are gone. People like D. L. Moody, the evangelist. People like John Wesley, founder of the Methodist Church. People like Charles Finney, the revivalist.

You know, I've learned so much from them. And so always, never stop learning, always. I remember I was in New Zealand years ago and I was ministering at a church and there was an apostolic leader- I was a young leader. There was this apostolic leader there who was well known in the nation. I was asked to speak at his church.

So I got there on a Sunday night, Sunday night service. And he had a coffee bar down, down below the bottom part of the church building. And he sat down with me and he said, now, he said, "Now, as soon as you're done preaching, we're going to come down here. I have a lot of questions to ask you." But why is he asking me questions? I wanted to ask him questions. But really that was a key to his life. He had learned to ask questions. He had learned to try to learn from everyone he could. And once we think we know it all, we're in trouble.





Ps Wilson

Yes.

Ps Larry

Because we don't, we just need God. We need others. We need the body of Christ.

Ps Wilson

That's so wise and I truly see that it's important too. We all have to keep ourselves humble. Well, thank Larry, thank you so much for your time. It's wonderful.

Ps Larry

You're very welcome.

Ps Wilson

With you and your studio and to do these podcasts together.

Ps Larry

It was a joy to have you here. Welcome to Pennsylvania.

Ps Wilson

Thank you. Well, God bless all of you.



Discussion Questions

These questions could be done personally or as part of a group discussion.

1. What impacted you from the story of how Larry Kreider started the DOVE movement? What can you learn from it?
2. What are some take home points you can learn from Larry when he was confronted with major difficulties in ministry? Discuss.
3. What can you learn from his insights into maintaining freshness in ministry over the long haul?

Actionable Steps

Following questions are to prompt us on suitable actions. Importantly, come up with steps you will take to make progress. Give them datelines and priority.

1. What is the one key lesson you learnt from Larry's sharing? What would you like to do about this area in your own life and ministry? Are there some practical steps that you can take?
2. What is a key lesson you learnt about relationships from Larry? Are there any changes you should be making in your perspective about relationships? What steps can you take?.





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