



Episode 008

The Challenge to Be an Inspirational Leader

Introduction

One can be a leader, but it is another matter to be an effective leader. And yet another matter to be an inspirational leader. Effectiveness can only carry a leader and his people so far. Inspiration can carry them much further. Would you take up the challenge to be an inspirational leader?

Why Do People Need Inspiration?

Why do you think most people need motivation? Most people are not self-motivated. There is considerable inertia because they are often looking to meet their own needs and desires first.

When there is leadership that pushes the people. It can get them moving, but it seldom becomes their own desire to move along that route. Other than perhaps a desire to achieve the goals for personal advancement. In the church or volunteer organisations, a leader that knows only to push will eventually fail to get adequate mileage because it is hard work to continue to push people along. The work will eventually grind as most will only seek to fulfil their quota.

In the book of Exodus, we see the classic case of a leader that pushes to the extreme. When Pharaoh forced the Israelite slaves to construct their buildings etc. They were forced to work to quotas under the watchful eyes of slave-masters. Sadly, there are still people who rely on such forms of leadership, who stand over, cajole, manipulate, threaten others to get the job done.



On the other hand, when a leader is able to inspire their people, something begins to happen inside! People begin to dream. They begin to aspire to something more. They begin to catch a corporate vision. It becomes their own, more and more. The more that happens, the motivation becomes more internal rather than external. Now I am not saying that internal motivation alone will always be sufficient, as most people still need some amount of external motivation as well to complement the internal. But what it means is that they begin to take more initiative in order to see that dream come to pass. They begin to take ownership. They begin to be willing to pay the price to get the dream. They will end up going further.

Once people get inspired, what they need is guidance and course adjustment and empowering to get there. It is no longer whip the horse to run. But steering the horse and helping it run better.

Why Be an Inspirational Leader?

Now it is one thing to realise that inspirational leadership is good. It is another to aspire to be one. After all, to be an inspirational leader will actually cost you. Cost you more than the more truncated styles of leadership. It will take more out of you. It will require more change in your life! So why on earth would any of us aspire to be an inspirational leader?

1. We believe it is biblical

When we look at the great leaders in the Bible, we find them to be inspirational.

Nehemiah came into a context where the returnees to Jerusalem failed to rebuild the city and its wall over a decade. But with his leadership inspired the people to rebuild the walls in 52 days despite opposition. What made the difference? Little except one man came on the scene!



Gideon was a nobody that came from a family of nobodies. The least of the least. Yet he was able to inspire an incredible uprising against the vastly more powerful Midianites. What changed? How did one man achieve that?

David was a man outlawed by King Saul. He ended up in a cave with all the disgruntled men, running from Saul, dropouts of society. Yet eventually he shaped these men into mighty warriors. He led them to win great battles. He eventually became king and won the hearts of the nation. How did he do that?

Paul was a man of little outward stature. History tells us he was short and balding, nor was he an exceptional orator. Yet he inspired whole teams of people into missionary efforts. He inspired whole groups of people to be leaders in churches. What made the difference?

God Himself demonstrates inspirational leadership styles as well. How did He inspire Abraham, Moses, Gideon, etc. How did Jesus inspire the 12 disciples?

2. We believe in the vision that we have

Another reason that would motivate us is because we believe in the vision that God has given us. That the vision is important enough, valuable enough – for us to invest deeply into it. That we would be willing to pay the costs to become inspirational leaders. In order that we may lead our people further in order to fulfil the God-given vision.

In my leadership, I am utterly convinced that the Church of Jesus Christ is God's answer to this sin-infested broken world. I believe the power and impact of the Church derives from our obedient and loving relationship to God. For the Church to impact this world, we need to nurture fervent disciples of Jesus Christ. So that these disciples may go forth and multiply. Making disciples and planting churches into every nation of this world. It is this conviction that fans the vision I have. It is this vision that sparks the hearts of many others who, together with me, are invested in the growth of God's Kingdom. It is this vision that spurs me to dedicate my entire life to the God-given vision.



Yet even as we seek to carry out God's purposes, we will face huge challenges. The Enemy will undermine us at every step. We will hit huge walls of resistance and opposition. Unless there are inspirational leaders, there will be insufficient momentum created to break past all these challenges. That is why we need inspirational leaders who will lift God's people to greater heights and reach to their fullest potential.

3. We believe in the need for excellence

Let me make an important observation. Higher levels of excellence can be drawn out of our people when they are inspired. David lifted the excellence of his followers to the extent that they became the mightiest of warriors under His command. No longer would they be satisfied to be mediocre warriors. Instead, they sought to be the best warriors. Far exceeding the warriors with King Saul and surrounding nations. Imagine 3 of his greatest warriors being able to single-handedly win against incredible odds. For example, Ishbaal who single-handedly killed 800 warriors in a single battle.

Why can that happen? When we are inspired by something greater than ourselves, it stirs us to improve beyond our comfort zone. Because we see that it requires our better self to be operating. Because we see that it requires our full potential to be tapped! In order to move towards the vision. This stirs a deep inner motivation to improve, to excel. This will drive many to be the best they can be.

Steve Jobs was able to lift Apple to become one of the greatest technology companies in the world because he believed in his vision that Apple can be the company that brings innovative technological tools into every person's hands.

When people can see the benefits far outweigh the cost. When excellence brings us closer to the dream. Then people are willing to pay the price for excellence. Even eager to do so. We see this all the time in the elite athletes.



4. We believe in the need to multiply leaders

To fulfil God's vision, it is necessary to multiply leaders to shoulder a bigger load, a bigger portion of God's work. So that the Kingdom of God may spread far and wide. It is impossible to do God's work on a global scale without multiplying multitudes of leaders.

If this is to come to pass effectively, then we need to rise up and become inspirational leaders. Leaders who are self-motivated for a greater cause. Leaders who raise the bar for themselves. Leaders who in turn motivate others to rise up in God. Leaders who inspire an inner motivation in others. That together, we change this world.

But Can We Become Inspirational Leaders?

I believe any normal person committed fully to Christ can become an inspirational leader. Because God can anoint us. He can transform us inside to grow us into that kind of leader. Let me give a few quick tips:

1. Resolve to be an inspirational leader for God. This is the critical starting point. Be willing to pay the price to be the best leader you can ever be, with God.
2. Be willing to make changes in your life. To grow in your character, your relationships with God, your skills and knowledge in all aspects related to leadership. Invest in these diligently.
3. Learn from other inspirational leaders. If you have the opportunity, hang around them. There is so much we can pick up when we watch them in action. Learn from them. Read their books. Watch their videos. Etc.
4. Apply the best of what you have learned in your life and leadership. We will always learn more as we apply what we have discovered.
5. Most importantly, go to God. Avail yourself fully to God. Let Him transform your life. Let Him lead you. God will lead you the path He has destined for you. To be the type of leader He desires you to be.





Of course, the quality of our leadership will vary. The areas we inspire will vary. The scope of our influence and impact will vary. But it will be far greater than if we did not aspire to be inspirational leaders.

Growing up, I was never a leader. Not in school, not at home. I was shy, soft spoken, quiet, introvert. I did not have the people skills. I was not a natural leader. I had near zero leadership understanding. I had no vision worth speaking about.

But one day I saw the value, I saw the importance. One day I became inspired to be a leader. That began my journey into leadership. I learnt and studied. I worked upon myself. In understanding, in skills, in character, in experience with God's grace. I saw the need not to only be a good leader, but an excellent leader. An inspirational leader.

If I can be. So can you.

Conclusion

God is seeking for inspirational leaders who can inspire God's people into the purposes of God. You can be used of God to make a difference in this world. Will you rise up to that challenge?



Discussion Questions

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

1. What do you see to be key reasons why inspirational leadership is needed?
2. What may be some elements that may make you apprehensive about being an inspirational leader?
3. What would motivate you to determine to be an inspirational leader?

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. Identify 3 major concerns you have about becoming an inspirational leader. What specific steps can you work on to reduce those concerns?
2. What are some actionable steps you can take to increase your motivation to be an inspirational leader?
3. What are 3 specific actionable steps you can take to be on the journey towards an inspirational leader.





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