

Defining Moments
Volume 71—Learning From Big Blue

SPEED OF THE LEADER, SPEED OF THE TEAM. Since we can only invite people to join us at the level that we have attained, it is crucial that church leaders actively seek to personally grow and develop their leadership skills.

DISCERNMENT REQUIRED

Regularly engaging in the discipline of reading can substantially facilitate personal growth. Read widely on a variety of topics from both Christian and secular titles.

There are secular leadership materials that contain valuable information. However, use discernment as you read. Churches and corporations have fundamentally different missions. Since corporations are driven by a profit motive, some of the ideas presented for corporations are not appropriate for churches and can be destructive to ministry if implemented.

All truth is God's truth. If you discover a secular business book that contains valuable insight regarding issues currently faced by your church, present it to your leadership team. Assure them that you have confidence in their ability to read with discernment and prayerfully separate wheat from chaff.

BIG BLUE'S LESSONS

One secular title that the leadership team at Willow Creek Community Church found helpful was *Saving Big Blue*. It showed how, before undergoing a major turnaround, IBM became bloated, arrogant, and ineffective.

The story contains some lessons that have been adapted to ministry and described in the following paragraphs:

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The Danger of Pride

Pride before the fall. Beware of that subtle form of pride that manifests as being “so busy” that you do not have time to learn from sources outside your own church. Cultivate a hunger to learn, an openness to new ideas, and a willingness to change.

Speak the Truth in Love

Speak the whole truth. Beware of a culture in which people are *overly* polite to each other. Such excessive politeness can indicate that people are not willing to enter into the chaos that comes when they speak the whole truth.

Much time and energy is saved in an environment where people practice lovingly speaking truth to each other. For instance, rather than unnecessarily inviting people to attend meetings so they will not feel slighted, after an appropriate explanation, invite only those people who really need to be present.

Do Not Confuse Activity with Results

Every good tree bears good fruit. Beware of the tendency to confuse activity with results. Most ministries are busy, but carefully evaluate whether they are bearing good fruit or merely generating activity.

Two Helpful Phrases

“Are we predicting rain or are we building an ark?” Rather than invest energy in discussing how hard or unproductive a particular ministry is, determine why it is so and find and implement a solution. Focus that energy on “building an ark.”

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Swimming through peanut butter. Every organization needs checks and balances, but beware of cumbersome systems that discourage healthy change.

Moving at the Speed of Life

Many corporations embrace a set of values that hold speed and profit above all else. However, churches are in the life business and *life takes time!* People are violated when driven too hard or too fast.

ESSENTIAL DIFFERENCES BETWEEN SECULAR AND GODLY LEADERSHIP

An endorsement of a particular leadership practice by a secular book does not automatically give Christ followers permission to engage in that practice. As Christ followers, we are accountable to God for our *process* as well as our results.

No Public Hangings!

Whereas a corporate culture may endorse the practice of making an example of an individual who is fired, biblical values dictate that the church reject such a practice.

Instead, as a demonstration of godly love, every effort should be made to preserve each person's dignity. Graces such as job placement and severance should be offered to terminated staff whenever possible.

Allow Time for Transitions

It takes time for people to understand and align themselves with new directions. In keeping with the philosophy of *moving at the speed of life*, allow time for transition when implementing change

THE HOLY SPIRIT IS OUR ULTIMATE GUIDE

As you study secular leadership materials, remember that as a believer you have access to the most powerful and priceless leadership resource available...the Holy Spirit! Nothing can compete with counsel of God.



*“Unless the Lord builds the house,
its builders labor in vain.”*

Psalm 127:1

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