

Tools for Wise Leadership

A programme of TWR-Africa, produced by TWR-Zimbabwe, presented by Rev Dr Roy Musasiwa

Series 11: Levels of Leadership

Talk 08: The Five Levels of Leadership Summarised

Welcome to the programme TOOLS FOR WISE LEADERSHIP.

Let me begin this program by quoting Paul in 1. Timothy 3, “Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an overseer, he desires a noble task.” If Paul was writing the same thing today he would probably just write, “Here is some truth you can depend on. If you aspire to be a godly leader, you are aspiring to something that is very noble.”

Why is leadership something very noble? Maxwell would say, “It’s because everything rises or falls on leadership.” In other words cooperative human endeavour is impossible if there is no leadership. That applies to the family, a club, a school, church, sporting team or a whole nation. So that is why if you aspire to be a godly leader, you are aspiring to a very noble task.

What we have been saying in the last few weeks, however, is that leadership does not all happen at the same level. There are five levels of leadership according to leadership guru John Maxwell. I want to encourage you not only to aspire to be a godly leader, but to aspire towards the highest level of leadership. Our task today is to help you to know how you can progress from one level of leadership to the next one.

These five levels are in fact like steps on the ladder. Each level builds on the previous level. You do not leave level 2, which is the permission level, in order to go to level 3 which is the production level. No. You build on and maintain the relationships while you are getting to the production level. Similarly you do not stop being productive (level 3) in order to do people development (level 4).

Another important point to note is that a leader is on different levels with different people. You may be at level four with one group of people and at level 1 with another. That may even happen within the same institution. Ok here is an example. I am principal of Domboshawa Theological College which serves more than 100 students at a time with 14 full time staff and 10 adjunct lecturers. We also have 10 trustees on the board that is responsible for policy decisions. For all these trustees, students and staff I enjoy level 1 leadership. I am the legitimate principal of the institution and everyone recognizes that.

For some of these people, however, I have not yet moved beyond level 1. For new students who have just been recruited, and many of the adjunct lecturers who only come to lecture in their contracted subjects I am operating at level 1 leadership. These are people who only know me as someone in authority over them. When I ask them to do something they will do it because they have no choice if they want to keep their jobs or remain as students at the college.

But there is another group of students and staff with whom I have moved to the permission level, which is level 2. For all the trustees I have also reached this level. For argument sake let me assume this is 50% of the college community. These people find me approachable. In me they have found freedom to share their joys and sorrows, their struggles and triumphs. This does not mean I am no longer principal to these people. No. But while I remain principal (which is the position level) they have now acquired a personal commitment to me and they always say, “This is the man we want as our leader.” That is a sign of having reached the permission level of leadership with that particular group of people.

Tools for Wise Leadership, Series 11: Levels of Leadership

Then there is another group still for whom I have reached or surpassed level 3 – the production level. Maybe that is only 30% of the college community including all the trustees. These people point to the results I have achieved and they appreciate and enjoy those results. They point out the way the college developed from a certificate level to a Diploma level. Then they appreciate the way the college moved from the diploma level to the degree level training, the facilities acquired, the policies designed and the graduates who are now making a significant difference in society. But even for this 30% I still retain my position and my permission status.

Then there is a group of students and staff for whom I have reached the people production level of leadership even if the proportion may only be about 10% of the college community. These are people whose lives I have greatly impacted through academic and spiritual mentoring. Then there is an even smaller group who regard me as having achieved personhood. To them I am a role model. They take my teachings seriously and would jealously protect my reputation against anyone who tries to speak bad about me. They show unquestionable support for me as their leader. You see followers respond according to the level that they are on with the leader. Now leader let me ask you: What level are you with your board, staff, family? Church members?

Now here is another interesting dimension. The higher the level you are with any group the larger the reservoir of good will you have with your followers. It is like having so much goodwill in a bank called Trust Bank. Any good you do is like a deposit into the trust bank. A mistake is like a withdrawal from the bank. Now a level 2 leader may make a mistake and be forgiven and tolerated whereas a level 1 leader making the same mistake would be kicked out. Why is that so? To get to level 2 implies that the Trust account has more goodwill deposited and therefore the mistake done still leaves a surplus of goodwill which does not yet exist for a level one leader. That means you can even make a big mistake, but as long as the trust account is in surplus you will still survive as a leader. But if you make a small mistake when there is only little goodwill, your trust account goes into an overdraft and it's all over for you. All leaders have to be aware of the problem of losing more goodwill than is being deposited. When that happens, even a leader at personhood level can continue going down the ladder until he or she loses even the position level of leadership. You see people move up the ladder, but can also move down the ladder of leadership levels.

So let me end by encouraging you to keep climbing the leadership steps. You can do this in several ways:

1. Consistently ask God to build you into a more effective leader.
2. Develop excellence in all you do. For example, know your job description, accept responsibility, do more than is expected of you. Develop a vision and strategy so you know where you and the organization are going.
3. See every relationship you have as a chance to develop that person. Do not just spend time with people but invest time with them.
4. Constantly keep a list of potential leaders you can invest in. Find systematic ways to train people.
5. Select and mentor key leaders. Yes, it may be a slow and deliberate process. It is hard but it is the only way to exponential growth.
6. Live a model life that others would want to imitate. Lead by example, model your life and people will not only learn to be like you but will DO like you in investing with others.

Well there you are. What an opportunity to move from one leadership level to another. Remember how we started this programme. Indeed here is some truth you can depend on. If you aspire to be a godly leader, you are aspiring to something that is very noble. But you need to aspire to the very highest level of leadership. Until I meet you in the next programme please practice these tools for wise leadership, and may the Lord bless you.

Discussion Questions for: Series 11 - Talk 8 - The Five Levels of Leadership Summarised

For this series of *Levels of Leadership* you can use the following study questions to guide you in deepening the impact of this series:

Study Question 1: for Personal reflection

What does this episode mean to you personally as a leader?

Study Question 2: for Group Discussion

What does this topic mean you as a group of leaders?

Study Question 3: for applying the topic

What can you apply from this topic in your role as a leader?

Summary:

Being a Godly leader is noble. Through Godly leadership, we aspire to the highest forms of leadership. We climb the leadership ladder by relying on God and building key relationships.

Discussion Questions:

Study Question 1: Personal reflection

What do you think personally is the most important area in which you need to grow as a leader?

Study Question 2: Group Discussion

In an African context, how important is it to develop a balanced style of leadership with the people around you?

Study Question 3: Applying the topic

What are some of the ways that you as a leader can help other leaders balance their different levels of leadership?

Tools for Wise Leadership, Series 11: Levels of Leadership

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