**LEARNING LEADERSHIP**

***Keep Growing***

I love reading. Lately, due to eyesight that’s not what it used to be, I have grown to love listening too. I enrolled in an audio book service called Audible so I could download books to listen to while I walk or drive. This allows me to pass the hours that normally would be “dead” time into “growing” time. Whether it is a history book, a how-to book, or a religious book, I have grown to cherish my hours of listening pleasure. And growth.

Over the years I have read and collected many books on Leadership. One author I have learned so much from is John Maxwell. I have read, and often re-read, many of his books, all on the subject of Leadership. I have recently listened to his readings to get a refresher course on this critical role in my life. Mr. Maxwell used to be a “pastor” of a large church in California before turning his attention to becoming a businessman and then a public speaker and writer on Leadership.

As a Christian, as a preacher, as a shepherd of a flock, as a husband, as a father, and as a Papa to my grandkids, I want to make as big an impact in the lives of others as I can within the remaining years God gives me on earth. To do that I must do what Tony Robbins says we must all do if we are going to keep growing, we must practice CANI. That’s his acronym for **C**onstant **A**nd **N**ever-ending **I**mprovement. No matter our age (I’m 68) we must never, ever stop growing. Or, as Peter put it, “*Give diligence to* ***add to your faith*** *virtue… knowledge… temperance… patience… brotherly kindness… love*” (2 Pet. 1:5-7). He then summed that up with this exhortation: “***Grow*** *in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ*” (2 Pet. 3:18).

My determined goal in life is to keep “adding” and to keep “growing” in leadership. Why? As Maxwell reminds us, “everything rises or falls on leadership.” I want to be a leader because I want to go to heaven and take as many as I can with me. To do that I must first follow Jesus, then turn to you, and with a wave of my hand forward, shout “Follow me!” Isn’t that exactly what Paul did when he said to others, “*Imitate me as I imitate Christ*” (I Cor. 11:1)?

John Maxwell defines leadership in simple terms when he says, “*Leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less*.”

That definition changed everything for me when I first read it. I used to think that a leader was someone in a position of power, and that I would never be in such a role. A paradigm shift in my life came when I gave thought to Maxwell’s definition. He explained it this way, “Turn around and look who is watching, listening, learning and following you. If nobody is, you are not a leader. But to the extent one, or a few, or many are being influenced by you, then to that extent you are a leader.”

In other words, leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less. And what that means is, whether for good or for ill, most of us are leaders because we are impacting people in our circle of influence. Whether you are a CEO, Manager or Supervisor in a company, or whether you are a stay-at-home mom with kids running at your feet all day, you are in a position of leadership. So, let me ask you to do something right now. Stop. Look behind you (figuratively or, if you are that mom, literally). Do you see anybody being influenced by you? A mate? A child? A schoolmate? A workmate? A neighbor? A new convert? A brother or sister in Christ? A lost sinner?

You might be shocked to discover that you are influencing far more people than you realize. There is always someone watching you, whether you know it or not. Isn’t it interesting to read of the judgment day when “*The Books*” are opened and our life is broadcast for all to see? It’s interesting because we will then see that we will be saved or lost depending on such simple things as mercy shown. James 2:13 says *“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.”* Jesus reveals how that works when He pronounces, to our stunned amazement, “*When you did it to one of the least of these, you did it unto Me*” (Matt. 25:40).

I’ve told you John Maxwell’s definition of leadership. Do you know what God’s is? It is clearly defined in I Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Yes, the qualifications of an elder are what God is looking for in leadership. But if you look really close you will notice that those qualities are what will work in the family, the schoolroom, the corporations, the government, and in every walk of life. Those people, and those alone, are the ones who measure up to God’s standards of influence. And remember, “Leadership is influence, nothing more, nothing less.” Those qualifications of a shepherd are not for the elite or some “super-saint.” Every one of them is also given to every Christian to aspire to.

**QUALITY** **ELDER** **CHRISTIAN**  
Blameless I Tim 3:2 / Tit 1:6 Rom 12:16-21

Vigilant I Tim 3:2 / Ac 20:28 I Pet 5:8

Sober I Tim 3:2 / Tit 1:8 Rom 12:3; 13:13-14

Temperate Tit 1:8 2 Pet 1:6

Good Behavior I Tim 3:2 Rom 12:9-15

Hospitable I Tim 3:2 / Tit 1:8 Rom 12:3 / Gal 6:10

Patient I Tim 3:3 Rom 12:12 / 2 Pet 1:6

Good Reputation I Tim 3:7 Rom 12:18 / Tit 2:7-8

Lover of Good Tit 1:8 Rom 12:9 / Tit 2:3-5

Just Tit 1:8 Rom 13:7 / Jam 2:1-13

Holy Tit 1:8 Rom 12:1 / 2 Cor 7:1

Teacher I Tim 3:2 2 Tim 2:2 / I Pet 3:15

Stewardship Tit 1:7 I Cor 4:2 / Matt 25:14-30

Lead Family I Tim 3:2 / Tit 1:6 Rom 7:2 / Eph 5:23-32

Good Parent I Tim 3:4 / Tit 1:6 Eph 6:4 / Col 3:20

Not Self-Willed Tit 1:7 Rom 12:3 / I Cor 4:6

Not Soon Angry Tit 1:7 Rom 12:18 / Eph 4:26

Not Given to Wine I Tim 3:3 / Tit 1:7 Rom 13:13 / Tit 2:2-3

Not a Strike / Brawler I Tim 3:3 / Tit 1:7 Rom 12:19 / Jam 3:16

Not Greedy / Covet I Tim 3:3 / Tit 1:7 Rom 13:7-9 / I Tim 6:10

Not a Novice I Tim 3:6 2 Pet 1:5-7 / Heb 5:12-14

John Maxwell reminds his readers that a leader is not born but made. I would add to that, a leader is made by faith, prayer and service. Brother or sister, keep growing. Then, look behind you. Is anyone following? - Rick