

Helping Other Do Right

By: Wes Clemer

The assignment of helping others do right is a tough business. Those of us dedicated to people-helping and leading know this fact first-hand. This challenge was vividly illustrated for me during a walk with my friend and his dog, Coke, just this morning.

Things were going well between leader and follower. Both were enjoying the serenity provided by invigorating crisp air, Pennsylvania autumn foliage and the pastoral farmland countryside. As we approached Jack's Creek flowing under the bridge of our country road, Mike decided that his chocolate lab would benefit from a short impromptu swim.

Released from the leash that had kept Coke performing at his honorable best, the lab bounded down the bank and into the refreshing water, just as expected. After a short dip, the dog made his way up the embankment and out onto the roadway again, on the other side of the bridge.

It was at this moment that Coke caught the attention of a fellow hound in the yard, a short distance up the road. Immediately his dog-mind kicked into high gear. Coke bounded that direction, fully intent on invading that little dog's turf. Mike's commanding voice demanded immediate retreat. The directive fell on "deaf" ears. Previous years of instruction and coaching were of no avail. At this moment, instinct was obviously the more effective leader. Only after repeated pleas, commands, and threats from Mike would that dog be finally motivated to do right.

This is perhaps one of the greatest challenges in leadership — knowing how to effectively coach and exhort in a way that motivates, empowers and promotes the people we serve.

We need to remember that a person's capacity to respond is strongly influenced by their unique history, personality, gift mix, and the like. Also, different stages of their development require different mentoring initiatives from us.

This was a profound revelation to me during the early years of fathering my son and daughter. Scott required the more typical approach of directing and disciplining, often accompanied with the reinforcement of a raised voice and firm hand. Valerie, on the other hand, was quite different.

She needed much more encouragement; much less directing. The raised voice and firm hand easily crushed her. The progression of years also brought the need to periodically adjust and readjust my approach to correcting, counseling, and coaching with both of them.

We see this dynamic vividly illustrated by Jesus in the Gospels. As He counseled and coached those assigned to His oversight, Jesus profoundly models the godly wisdom and sensitivity of helping others advance to a place where they can perform their full potential successfully.

One great example is His response to the disciples while they were competing among themselves for the priority positions of power in Jesus' emerging Kingdom. Here's the account:

And there arose also a dispute among them as to which one of them was regarded to be greatest. And He said to them, "The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who have authority over them are called 'Benefactors.' "But not so with you, but let him who is the greatest among you become as the youngest, and the leader as the servant.
Luke 22:24-27 (NASB)

I am surprised that Jesus didn't challenge these understudies about their self-centered pride and short-sightedness. Instead, He coached them. Jesus skillfully transformed the dispute into an equipping session on how to become truly great. Rather than disqualifying them, His insightful response was effective in helping them qualify for advancement.

John Maxwell, well-known coach and author on the subject of leadership, challenges us with a profound nugget of truth. "To lead others to do right is wonderful. To do right...and then lead them, is more wonderful—and harder."

A big part of our "doing right" so we can effectively lead followers into fruitfulness requires that we discern clearly in the areas of motivation and capability. For example, if a child care helper is significantly gifted and resourced, but low in motivation, they will probably benefit from a strong dose of encouragement. In contrast, if the worker is motivated but lacking in ability, then coaching is the order of the day.

If we as leaders fail to discern these differences, we will be apt to hinder more than help those we serve.

The insights diagramed below have been helpful through my years of

pasturing and coaching people—helpers and leaders. Though not a complete list of scenarios, they help to illustrate this principle. I trust they will be beneficial to you as well.

Yes, the assignment of helping others do right is a tough task. But I believe there is no other work that has greater potential reward. Helping advance people toward fulfilling their purpose—to do right—is the great passion of Christ. It is to be our great passion as well.

Not Motivated but Capable ENCOURAGE	Motivated but not Capable COACH
Motivated and Capable DELEGATE	Not Motivated Not Capable DIRECT

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