

God Cares about Details and Numbers: Lessons I Learned from the Bible about Leading a Ministry

Is it spiritual to pay attention to details and numbers? How are numbers and details a part of ministry leadership? Why don't most ministry leaders like to focus on details and numbers? This session will show demonstrate that an important part of godly, spiritual leadership is careful attention to numbers and details.

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I. Both/And Leadership

- A. We don't accept principles or practices, simply because they *work* in secular organizations or businesses. In our fallen world, sin and depravity *work* much of the time, they can accomplish a lot.
- B. Nor do we accept principles or practices, simply because some Christian organizations or Christian leaders use them or endorse them. Throughout the history of the Church, ministry leaders have endorsed many unbiblical approaches to leadership and management.
- C. The foundation of our approach to leadership and management is studying the Word of God and learning what the Bible says about it. The Bible is the foundation of a Christian worldview of leadership and management.
- D. It is not either prayer OR attention to numbers and details. It's not studying the Word OR management tasks. It is BOTH/AND.

II. God cares about details

- A. The bible is full of details
 - 1. Genealogies
 - 2. Tabernacle blueprint (Exodus 26)
 - 3. Clothing of priests (Exodus 28:15-22)
 - 4. Job descriptions (Numbers 3:21-37)
 - 5. Travel log in wilderness (Numbers 33)

6. Boundaries for each tribe of Israel (Numbers 34)
7. Platform arrangement for the Bible reading (Nehemiah 8:4)
8. Mediterranean travel log for Paul's missionary journeys.

III. If God cares about details, then we need to care about details.

A. Physical Details

B. Organizational Details

C. Activities and History

1. Leadership and Staff
2. Clear job descriptions will include the following:
 - a. Title
 - b. Overall responsibility
 - c. Key Result Areas
 - d. Responsibilities
 - e. Who the position reports to
 - f. Needed attributes: character, competency, professional, and preferences
 - g. Inter-relationships—categories of people the job will interact with
 - h. Climate and working conditions of organization
 - i. Compensation
3. The other side of a good job descriptions is periodic evaluation.
 - a. What can I do to help you do your job?
 - b. What can pray with you about?
 - c. What aspect of your work do you find most fulfilling—and why?
 - d. What areas of your work cause you the most stress and why?

- e. What do I or other colleagues do that motivates or helps you?
- f. What do I or other colleagues do that hinders you?
- g. Is there any unresolved problem that you have been hoping to speak to me about but haven't known how to approach?

D. Financial Details

E. Legal Details

F. Practical Steps

1. Record the details with a journal or a diary.
2. If you're not strong on details, then find someone you trust who is good at details.
3. Honor each person as playing an important role in the ministry.
4. Learn and grow in your weak areas.

IV. God cares about numbers

A. The Bible shows us what is important to God and it is full of God's focus on numbers.

1. Census, Numbers 26
2. Ezra's inventory, Ezra 1:9-11
3. Ezra's people-list: Ezra 2
4. Nehemiah's people-list Nehemiah 7:6-65
5. Nehemiah's animal-list, Nehemiah 7:66-69
6. Disciples counting before multiplying the loaves and fish.
7. Counting spiritual noses on Pentecost, Acts 2:41

B. Numbers aren't everything, but they are something.

V. Since God cares about numbers, what does that mean for us?

- A. We take time to track numbers.
- B. We are careful and accurate in tracking numbers related to our ministry.
- C. We are open about numbers.
- D. We track numbers but we don't worship them.
 - 1. Numbers can easily become an idol.
 - 2. Let good numbers direct glory to God, not to you as the leader.
 - 3. Don't count when God tells you not to count. 1 Chronicles 21:1-17

VI. Balanced Both/And Leadership

And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them. (Psalm 78:72) (TNIV)

At this, the administrators and the satraps tried to find grounds for charges against Daniel in his conduct of government affairs, but they were unable to do so. They could find no corruption in him, because he was trustworthy and neither corrupt nor negligent. (Daniel 6:4) (TNIV)

- A. Both spiritual *and* well-organized
- B. Both skillful *and* godly
- C. Both ethical *and* diligent (attentive)

That is the kind of leader God is calling.

VII. Leadership is hard work.

- A. Ministry leadership is not for those who want an easy life.

I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked. Besides everything else, I face daily the pressure of my concern for all the churches. (2 Corinthians 11:27-28) (TNIV)

VIII. The Best Leader ever offers to be your Mentor

- A. Good leaders listen to the Best Leader

Dallas Willard said, "Jesus is the smartest man who ever lived. He knows more about everything [including ministry leadership and management] than anyone in the world."

Col 2:2-3 “Christ, in whom are hidden **all** the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.”

Take time to sit down. Imagine Jesus sitting across from you. What would you ask the smartest, wisest, most experienced Man in the world if He were physically there in the room with you?

1. Walk through your schedule with him.
2. Issues you’re facing with your staff and your board.
3. Review your to-do list with him.
4. Go over your budget and financial statement with him.
5. Talk with him about decisions you’re needing to make.
6. Difficulties and problems in your ministry.
7. Ask Him where you can find the funding for your work.
8. Ask him to give you wisdom on ways to fulfill your calling.

After you have asked Him, then stop talking and listen. Write down ideas as He gives them to you. Listen. Be patient. Learn from the Greatest Leader ever.

Suggested Readings

Biehl, Bobb. *30 Days to Confident Leadership*. Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1998. 243 pp. Lots of questions that bring clarity to so many issues of leadership such as decision making, delegating, goal setting, prioritizing, problem solving, team building and recruiting. The greatest collection of insightful perceptive questions in the world. A must-have for every leader.

Finzel, Hans. *The Top Ten Mistakes Leaders Make*. Wheaton, Ill.: Victor Books, 1994. 200 pp. We all make mistakes, so why not learn from others? Very practical on real-life issues.

Myra, Harold and Shelley, Marshall. *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2005. 348 pg. A very insightful book which demonstrates that Dr. Graham was not simply an effective evangelist, but even more so, a superbly effective leader that built not only a major evangelical organization, but assisted and influenced scores of others. A must read for every Christian leader.

Parrott, Roger. *The Longview: Lasting Strategies for Rising Leaders*. 1st ed. Colorado Springs: David C Cook, 2009. 255 pp. Solid counsel from a successful leader on being a long-term godly leader. How to give away credit for success, vulnerability and humility, accountability essential, sharing new ideas, and many other helpful issues.

Pearson, John W. *Mastering the Management Buckets: 20 Critical Competencies for Leading Your Business or Nonprofit*. Ventura, Calif.: Regal, 2008. 284 pp. This book brings clarity to the day-to-day issues and problems leaders and managers face in ministry. Specific practical advice, ways to do things and lead people.