

The 5 Non-negotiables of Leadership

What does a leader do? The answers (and books) are endless. But there are five things every leader *must* do for the organization they lead, not least of which when it comes to the church.

1. Uphold Core Values

Every organization has a set of core values (At least, I hope they do). It is the leader's job to uphold those values. To make sure they are followed, honored and embraced. If a core value is "excellence," then that value is only as real and formative as a leader makes it by upholding it throughout the organization.

At Meck we have 10:

- The Bible is true and the catalyst for life change.
- Lost people matter to God and, therefore, they should matter to us.
- We aim to be culturally relevant while remaining doctrinally pure.
- It is normal to manifest authenticity and to grow spiritually.
- We want to be a unified community of servants stewarding their spiritual gifts.
- Loving relationships should permeate the life of the church.
- Life change happens best through relationships.
- Excellence honors God and inspires people.
- We are to be led by leaders and structured biblically.
- Full devotion to Christ is normal.

My job is to uphold all 10; celebrating when one is fleshed out, admonishing when one is not.

2. Cast Missional Vision

If there was one task almost universally affirmed for a leader, it is casting vision. But not just any vision – it must be the casting of missional vision. If we're taking a hill, you need to define where the hill is and why it is worth taking.

Meaning: "Here's the target on the wall. Here's what we're trying to do."

On a more personal level, casting missional vision is helping individuals see how they are contributing to the vision in ways that expand their own vision about their investment.

It's walking up to a person serving in the nursery and saying: "I'm so glad you're serving. Thank you. Because of you, there's a young couple in the service able to explore what Christ can mean for their lives. That's what you're doing."

3. Create Unity

The Bible teaches that the number one requirement for becoming a pastor is leading your own

personal family well. Why? *Because the church is a family.* Almost every organization would be served by being led as if it were a family. The question is whether it is a functional family or a dysfunctional family. The answer lies in whether the "parent" does the hard work of keeping everyone unified relationally.

A good leader works to bring parties together, work through conflict, and create open lines of communication. I'll never forget a time when my two daughters were at a relational impasse at the tender ages of 8 and 6. Susan sat them down, brought them together and helped them talk it through. It ended, if I recall, in a time of prayer.

My wife is a good leader. My daughters are close friends to this day.

That is the goal organizationally.

4. Give Permission

Only a leader can give permission. This isn't about control, but the privilege of turning people loose. A leader enables people to develop their gifts, chase ministry dreams, take risks and explore new ventures. In fact, the Apostle Paul wrote in the New Testament letter of Ephesians that the job of a church leader is to equip people for ministry. A leader clears the way for people to follow paths of God's design and leading.

Going further, a good leader sees things in people and encourages them to explore things they never dreamed of for themselves. So it's not simply permission, but provocation. It's putting your arm around someone's shoulders and saying, "I see you doing this," or "I think you could make a difference here."

5. Develop Other Leaders

I don't know if I have ever read this statement (I can't believe it would be original to me), but I believe it to the core of my being: "Only a leader can develop another leader."

Which means that developing other leaders is one of the indispensable things a leader must do. At Meck, we've developed an entire Leadership Development Program through which we take 100 burgeoning leaders annually. It's a one-year program that requires reading six books, attending three seminars (on leadership, mission and values, and the personal life of the leader), attending a three-day retreat (covering a course on systematic theology), cohort gatherings, engaging the annual Church & Culture Conference, and more.

Sound robust? It is.

It's also one of the most important things I do.

So there are five things a leader must do. There are many more, of course, but these five?

All are musts.

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