

INSPIRE

On Leadership

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Leadership is everywhere

Leadership is everywhere: In organizations. In families. In parents. Between friends. In the midst of strangers. At the checkout counter. On the freeway. In restaurants. Between colleagues. In volunteerism.

A few things I believe about leadership:

- > It is a struggle.
- > It is selfless.
- > It changes lives.
- > It is born.
- > It is difficult.
- > It is critical.
- > It is a privilege.
- > It is noble.
- > It impacts people.
- > It is made.
- > It is simple.
- > It is a responsibility.

And, perhaps most of all, I believe employees deserve strong leadership. Leaders too often think the leadership thing is about them: it's about their promotion, their raise, their title, their power, their corporate climb, their accomplishments, their office. In fact, one leader said to his employees, "Listen, I want to get one thing perfectly clear; I don't work for you, you work for me." This person is missing the boat entirely. It's much more humble than that. Leadership is a privilege. It is a responsibility. Leaders GET to help people.

Employees need support, encouragement, direction, clear expectations, candid feedback, recognition, a career path, a cheerleader. Employees need to know that they matter, that they even exist. We've heard many employees say something like, "I feel completely invisible... like I don't really even matter." One woman shared, "I want to be able to come to work every day and know that there is just ONE person who even cares about me." Still another was passed by a manager in the hallway who did not even acknowledge her hello, said to me, "I feel like a piece of furniture."

When you ask people what they do for a living, very few people respond by saying, "I'm a leader." They went to school to learn a trade or craft or technical talent. This is what defines them. Yes. That is, until they become a leader. Leadership is different from your technical expertise, and it needs attention. The day you become a leader is the day you sign up to learn how to be a leader. It's the day you commit to caring more about other people than you care about yourself.

Aleta Norris provides an ongoing column on developing better leadership skills. She is a leadership expert and Principal at Living as a Leader LLC.

