

Will Steward Leaders Be the Only Ones Left Standing?

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Hypothesis

Assumption #1 - Our American culture is becoming increasingly hostile to the Christian message, to our biblical, kingdom values and to everyone who strives to live as a true follower of Jesus.

Assumption #2 - This hostile culture will overwhelm and ultimately destroy owner leaders.

Conclusion - Steward leaders are uniquely prepared to lead effectively and faithfully in our current, post-Christian environment.

Conclusion

If this hypothesis is true, we would draw the rather audacious conclusion that as our culture grows more hostile to the Christian message, it is only steward leaders that will be left standing.

Ten Characteristics of a Steward Leader

I suggest there are ten specific outcomes that exemplify the work of steward leaders. Each are critical to leadership in these times.

1. Steward leaders let go of reputation and lead with integrity. They are not burdened or tempted by opportunities for image-building, and so are freed to ask the right questions, hear the truth and make hard and healthy decisions.
2. Steward leaders build others up by giving away power. They delight in success of those around them. They absorb criticism with dignity and deflect praise with joy.
3. Steward leaders seek affirmation from only one source. They are not distracted by the pursuit of worldly acclamation but yearn for the applause of nail scared hands. They will pay the price for speaking truth because they work for the One who is the Truth.
4. Steward leaders die in order to lead. They die to the need to be right, best, liked, applauded and promoted. In their place, they simply seek to be faithful. They are leaders who delight in joyful obedience to God.
5. Steward leaders come when called and leave when told. They are not owners of their position or office. They accept a leadership role because God calls them and leave when He tells them to. They are free because they find their identity in Christ, not the office they hold.
6. Steward leaders know that victory starts with surrender. They want only to be obedient to God's leading for them and the welfare of the people they lead. They know that requires them to surrender their will and seek after that which serves the greater good.

7. Steward leaders lead with courageous humility. They hold these two marks in tension and never compromise on either but are free to lead with both selfless courage and noble humility.
8. Steward leaders do what is right and trust God with the outcomes. They are honest without compromise, honor their opponents, admit when they are wrong, refuse to delight in the misfortunes of their enemies, listen to those with whom they disagree and speak the truth with grace.
9. Steward leaders live and lead with outrageous generosity. They give freely and without need for recognition. They abhor greed and model for others the heart of a joyful steward. By doing so, they create cultures of selfless generosity.
10. Steward leaders redefine success for their people. They are free to lead people to greater heights of service, selflessness, generosity, peacemaking, community, honesty, integrity and forgiveness. They redefine success in these terms and by doing so help reform and renew a society and culture.

Owner Leaders vs. Steward Leaders

Owner Leaders	Steward Leaders
Tend toward self-reliance over God-reliance, intimacy with God suffers	God-reliant, intimacy with God is their highest calling
Seek to control outcomes rather than entrust them fully to God	Seek to be faithful in the work they are called to do (inputs) and trust God for increase (outcomes)
Tie their identity to their job and role and need job success for personal validation	Find their identity in Christ alone and are free in relationship to their job and title
Tend to see people as means to their own (and their organization's) ends	View the people they lead as fellow travelers and are free to serve them and see them thrive
Tend to use resources to meet their own goals and operate with a scarcity mindset	Seek God's leading as they steward His resources for His work and His glory with an abundance mindset

Summary of Why Christian Leaders Fail

1. Leaders stop seeking God, lose their first love, minimize God's sovereignty in their life and work
2. Neglect interior life, stop growing and listening, poor self-management
3. Lack of accountability, self-reliance, looking for personal significance

What About the Coming Challenges? What might you add to this list?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

How might leading as a Steward Leader best equip you for these challenges?

Conclusions

- Leadership failure almost always involves actions and attitudes that are illustrative of an owner leader mindset.
- We believe a steward leader approach would mitigate these failure markers and better equip leaders for success defined as faithfulness
- Leading as a steward leader has immense practical applications
- This way of leading is a radical departure from most approaches to effective leadership
- The effects are systemic
- They are indicative of the inward => outward movement that is at the heart of steward theology