



The Inescapability of Leadership

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Article:

I have two jobs. The one which pays the mortgage is teaching science in a college; the other (which pays very little) is writing science fiction/fantasy.

In theory, they both absolve me from leadership. And that suits me just fine. Temperamentally, I do not like leading. I have served my time as a leader; managing oil company projects and even chairing a university geology department in the Middle East (that's a tale for another time) but I don't like it. I don't like worried people looking at me expectantly to solve their problems. I don't like lying awake wondering how I am going to tell someone that their work is substandard. I don't like having to constantly pester management for resources and salaries.

For me, the burdens and nagging responsibilities of leadership far outweigh any rewards. In teaching, all I have to do is prepare and deliver my material as creatively and as effectively as I can. In writing, I am the boss of my characters and if I kill them off that's my business. They never complain.

The world is full of people like me who, for various reasons, have sought to avoid leadership. But have we succeeded? I think not. All we have evaded is the formal, public office of leadership by management. Other forms of leadership are not as easy to escape. There is, for instance, *leadership by modeling*.

As a teacher, I will spend over a hundred contact hours a year with any one student. Some inevitably come from homes without any adult male so, whether I like it or not, I am an important role model for what it means to be a man. And—a scary thought—a Christian. As an author, I lead too by what I write about and what values I portray in my books. Our heroes and villains say a lot about what we prize or deplore.

There is also *leadership by motivation*.

I teach on the edge of the Welsh coalfield, where the old industries have fled, leaving little behind. The combination of industrial decline and family disintegration means that some of my students come to college with low expectations. I spend a lot of time saying: "Look, you can succeed! Work hard, get the grades! Go to university. Don't look down and don't look back!" That sounds like leadership to me.

In our considerations of leadership, I fear we may have created a 'priesthood and laity.' We divide the few (who we know are leaders because they have titles and sit in offices) from the many (who we presume don't lead). The Reformation re-established the biblical doctrine of the priesthood of all believers ([1 Pet. 2:9](#)), and we still need to recover this concept for leadership. The reality is that we all lead. We all have responsibility, we all exert influence. And that being so, we all need to work and pray so that we do it better.

Read more of Chris Walley on his blog <http://chriswalley.blogspot.com>, one of the many blogs in our network at HighCallingBlogs.com.