

Providing insight and encouragement to educational leaders.

SEPTEMBER 2011

# THE ENCOURAGING LEADER

"Why doesn't someone help those poor people?"

"When is someone going to clean up the trash in the hallway?"

"What is the boss going to do about advertising our event?"

"If only we had more money in our budget, think of all we could do"

"I wish I had more time in a day, then I could really accomplish some great things."

We all do it. We all complain, make suggestions or wonder aloud. We want something to change. We want to right a wrong. We think something could be done differently. We want a better situation.

## DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT

We've all been there. I certainly have. Every one of us has a different situation, a different story to tell. We talk about stuff. However, do we really ever do anything about it. How many of us actually pursue solutions? How many of us actually think outside of the box? How many of us put true action to our words?



I read this week of Larry Powell. He is the Fresno City Schools Su-

perintendent that gave up nearly \$800K in salary over the next three years

because his district was struggling financially. He was in a position to do this. We may not be able to sacrifice part or all of our salary toward our budget or for another staff person. The point is that he didn't just complain that they didn't have enough money...he did something about it. Are you going to talk about stuff or are you going to do something to make your situation better?

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## DON'T CALL ME STUPID!

By Michael Nichols, Southern Wesleyan University Assistant VP

I really don't like to be criticized. A single criticism can ruin my entire day. I often wonder how someone so thin-skinned ended up in administration – and in educational administration.

Recently, I was thinking about criticism and about how often I am faced with criticism – daily! I realized that over the years I have benefited significantly from criticism. In fact, I am a better dad, a better husband, a better professional, a better leader... because of my interaction with critics. [Here are six things I have learned from critics:](#)

**Not all personal criticism is personal.** I know. This statement sounds contradictory. But many personal attacks take place because the critic is dealing with his or her own problems. We are often unaware of the circumstances and deep hurt others are experiencing. Growing leaders take time to stop, listen, and experience the feelings of others.

**A quick response is usually ill-advised.** Although I'm working on improving my response to criticism, I occasionally react to criticism without much thought. I do better to say less rather than more. When I speak quickly to a critic, it is usually an emotional response that I regret later. I'm learning to keep quiet although it's not easy.

*(article continues on page 5)...*

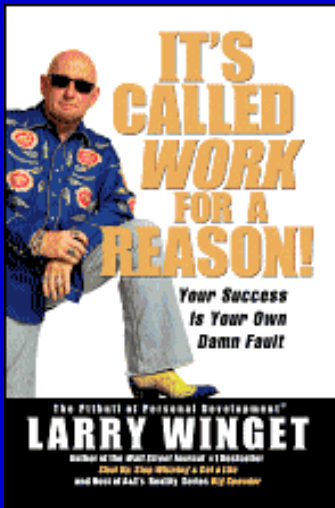
"You cannot escape the responsibility of tomorrow by evading it today."

ABE LINCOLN

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## CLIFF NOTES



*"We've gotten to the point where everybody's got a right and nobody's got a responsibility."*

**Newton Minow**

*"When priorities are clear, decision making is easy."*

**ROY DISNEY**

- The bottom-line answer to every problem in business is this: People aren't working.
- Poor results are the result of poor performance
- Your "things to do" list is not much more than a wish list. Your "Things that have to get done" list is more focused and concise, and acts as an action plan for your day. It will force you to constantly evaluate your tasks and separate them into "what would be nice to do" and "what absolutely has to get done."
- Everyone should forget about managing time and should instead focus on managing priorities. When the right things get done, time takes care of itself.
- Companies spend more time disciplining a poor employee for doing the job wrong than they did teaching the employee to do it right.
- Business gets better right after the people in the business get better.
- Everything in your life gets better when you get better; and nothing is ever going to get better until you get better.
- Mark Twain—"Don't go around saying the world owes you a living; the world owes you nothing; it was here first."
- If you tell me you love your job and aren't great at your job, I'll call you a liar. That's right—a liar. If you really love your job, you will do what it takes to be good at your job. That's what love does to you. It causes you to become better.
- You aren't paid to like your job. You are paid to do your job.
- You won't always have the job you want. You won't always get the employment that deserves your talents. Tough. You are employed. Many aren't. Give thanks. Work hard. Do what you are paid to do and look for something better while you're at it.
- Insist on clean desks. No excuses. Regardless of the fact that people say a dirty desk is just their style, it's a lie. A disorganized workspace means disorganized work habits. A sloppy work environment equals sloppy results.
- It is better to have a thief than a liar working for you, because at least you can watch a thief.
- Look at who you are. What is your history? What have been through that no one else has been through? What lessons did you learn? What do you do that no one else does? What could you do that no one else does? What is there that is so uniquely you, that you could exploit in the service of others? It's there. I promise. Discover it. Use it. And you will never concern yourself with the competition again.
- If you must constantly make sure that your people keep their heads down and stay busy, you (1) have the wrong people and (2) are managing the process, not leading the organization.
- There is always enough time to do what is important to you.
- If firing someone comes as a total surprise to them, then chances are, you need to be fired as well.

## **FEATURED LEADER: Dan Wood**

Executive Director; National Christian College Athletic Association

*Dan Wood has been the Executive Director of the NCCAA since 2000. The NCCAA's membership numbers more than 100 institutions across the country, including such schools as Indiana Wesleyan, Southeastern University, Palm Beach Atlantic University, Trevecca Nazarene University and Azusa Pacific University. It was established in 1968 and today sponsors 23 championships. The national headquarters is located in Greenville, SC.*

### **Best advice you've ever received?**

*"Remember whose you are and who you are!". My dad consistently shared this with my siblings (all older) and then me as I begin to venture out on my own during high school years. The first piece reminded us that we belonged to Christ and the last piece reminded me of the Wood name and all those who had worked to serve and build the family legacy of faith. It did not always stop my poor decisions but it did always allow me to understand the guilt after such poor decisions. That guilt, not overbearing, directly reminded me of who could forgive my failures of character.*

### **Phrase/quote you tend to use the most often?**

*"I am better than I deserve." With apologies to Dave Ramsey, this reply to any greeting was original with Bobby Temple. He was a mentor and friend who died at age 53 of cancer. Over 11 years of friendship and golf excursions, he taught me the truth as to why that statement is true for every human being.*

### **How to balance professional and personal life?**

*First, what I do professionally and how well I do or do not do it does not establish my worth or value in my home. Second, quality time has always come from quantity time. Special moments come every day from just being there with your family. Third, "God has it all, so trust." Your family, job and finances will be fine if God's installed as the authority.*

### **Proudest professional accomplishment?**

*As a coach and athletic administrator since 1983, having over 150 former players and coaching peers that are involved in my life to this day has to be the top accomplishment. Every day brings a conversation via email, text or phone that reminds me how God works all things for good in the lives of those who call him Lord. Now to see my former player's children competing in intercollegiate athletics really allows me to see legacy versus immediate.*

### **Books that have influenced you the most?**

*Obviously, the Bible is my daily reading choice. But not out of requirement or habit, but because of its proven truth and, my belief, that Jesus Christ was the greatest coach/mentor ever. I also read "They Call Me Coach" each year as I hold John Wooden. Until his death, he had former players hanging on his guidance and advice because, and here is that word again, he had a legacy of giving truthful advice. Just finished a book called "Lead...for God's Sake" by Todd Gongwer. It's a must read for anyone, certainly coaches, who desire to develop authentic, lasting leader skills.*

### **Biggest challenges you've faced in your job?**

*Apathy and transient athletic staffing. Many small Christ-centered institutions have been struggling for years and apathy or just living in status quo mode can take over without anyone noticing. Then you have part-time coaches who come and go to the point that no consistency is developed with student-athletes, compliance procedures, or the local fan base/community. On the flip side, it is incredible to see 12-15 institutions "blow-up" relative to growth in enrollment and program offerings while staying committed to their core mission. Some examples are, Southeastern, Philadelphia Bible, Indiana Wesleyan University, and Point University (formerly Atlanta Christian College).*

### **How's the NCCAA grown in these economic times?**

*The grace of God, a Board and staff that proves we "out punted our coverage", and our own clarity of our mission. The NCCAA is viewed by many as another banner or championship to chase. However, since 2002 when we pointed our mission as simply using intercollegiate athletic events to serve the Great Commission, we have seen a 50% increase in donor giving and a 16% increase in membership. All the while our Regional and National Championship events have improved in quality and experience.*

### **Leaders you've modeled yourself after?**

*At the risk of being redundant, Jesus Christ's servant leadership and humility are the best examples of how to live and lead. Certainly, John Wooden's leadership attributes have influenced me greatly. I was also blessed to have two parents who never stopped teaching and developing their kids. My dad's work ethic and attention to detail coupled with mom's positive outlook on life and everyone she met, have served me well. Dad was a pastor, assistant principal, and farmed 8 acres for over 30 years. Not once he did ever complain about life being hard. Mom battled multiple sclerosis the last 43 years of her life but always embraced each day for the good or bad that God had for her to experience on that particular day. Priceless!*

### **What makes the NCCAA unique in the world of athletics?**

*The first "C" in NCCAA is the difference. Our member schools are a diverse group of intentionally Christ-centered institutions who truly strive to be places of influence within our culture. We are a self-absorbed sports culture here in the United States so we all have to be careful when placing athletic endeavors ahead of those areas of life that truly are more important. We also are blessed to work in an environment where trust is still the norm. Yes, we deal with infractions and judgment errors like other associations. However, our schools trust each other and know that we all share a mission that begins at the cross of Christ. That makes for a good community in which to work and serve.*

## EMBRACE THE FIRE

Life is hard! If you are like most people you go through life hoping that things will get easier at some point. We are constantly making decisions today with the idea that someday in the future things will get easier. It seems the world we live in dangles this idea in front of us like a carrot in front of a horse. The media entices us with images of what this easier life might look like: more money, nice cars, big beautiful houses, no more difficult decisions, a life that we can have once we've "worked hard" to achieve a certain level of financial security...a level of comfort...a safe and secure place. Let me be clear, there is nothing inherently wrong with any of these ideas.

However, let's be sure our attitudes and desires are aligned with our world view. How many of us have entertained such a life? I am as guilty as anyone. I have even found myself praying for such things. Not money, houses, and cars, but safety and security...an easier less stressful life. I have prayed for the safety of my children, for them to have a "straight path".

We all have a lot on our plates. We have careers, relationships (spouses, children, friends, and co-workers), community responsibilities, and a finite number of hours to make everyone happy. We all face difficult peo-

ple, decisions, and situations all at the same time. We have filled our days with "stuff", most of which we would all agree has little significance. We get caught up in the "things of this world" and struggle to find a balance that everyone tells us we should have in our lives.

I have found that in the midst of all of this, my prayer life is surrounded by the concept of safety, security, less stress....an overall "easier" life. Through adversities in my life, I have learned that the attitude of my prayer life has been somewhat off-base.

Listen to what John F. Kennedy said during a time in our country's history when things were getting increasingly difficult, "Do not pray for easy lives. Pray to be stronger men". Ephesians 3:16 says this, "that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man,".

This has caused me to re-think what I want out of my life and the lives of those I care deeply. I don't want things to get easier, I want to get stronger. The required strength will come from God, not from us. This is not a "just try harder" proposition. I want to be prepared to handle the difficult issues in life. I want a life of awesome experiences, prepared for leadership, and set apart. I also want this life of significance for my family; my children. It is hard not to pray for their safety, their comfort. However,

the significant life is often lived outside of the "safety zone". It is where the passion is, where the rewards are, and where most of the tears are found.

My oldest son spent 13 months in Afghanistan rebuilding infrastructure and leading troops. It was hard to pray that he would make a difference, rather than pray keep him safe! We prayed that he would lead in a God-honoring way and that God would allow him to be prepared for the difficulties he would face. Dying for your brother or for something you believe in dearly is not the worst thing that can happen to someone who is living a life of significance.

My oldest daughter is studying to be a missionary. She has traveled all around the world, even to some places she was unable to tell us exactly where she was. We prayed that her life and her work would change people's lives. As you know that puts her in harm's way in some of these countries where Christians are not as accepted. A life of safety or a life of significance?

I pray that God will allow me, and those I love, to experience the adventures in life. All of the good times as well as the difficult times. My desire is to live a life of significance and embrace the fire!

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**LEADERS ARE RESPONSIBLE** for the choices they make. Many of a leader's choices involve tough decisions and difficult actions. Leaders must have the courage to do what they think is right and be willing to accept the consequences of their choices. When I was president of a company in Ohio, I came up with several (what I thought were) innovative ideas for improving the company. Some worked. Some did not work. I had to keep reminding myself to give the credit to others for those ideas that worked and accept personal responsibility for those that floundered. And then there were those disastrous hiring decisions that I made. I remember one time hiring a Quality Manager after my staff had warned me of several reservations they had about this individual. I hired him anyway and regretted my decision almost immediately. There was no place to hide. I had made a poor decision and had to deal with it. In my current role as a professor, I have many opportunities to watch some students attempt to explain poor performance in many terms except personal responsibility (sort of the grown up version of "my dog ate my homework"). But how I relish working with those students who accept a project assignment and then no matter how many roadblocks they encounter, they accept personal responsibility for their success and meet their objectives. If you and I will stop blaming others and accept responsibility to move forward, we may find that there are several who are willing to follow us.

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## PERSISTENCE

Daniel “Rudy” Ruettinger persisted through years of rejection before finally landing a spot on the practice squad at Notre Dame. He was known by his teammates as one who would not quit; one who would push his teammates to be better than they currently were; one who never let his circumstances dictate his behavior.

He became so well known for pushing his teammates to greatness, that they pressured the coach to let him play on their final game of his final season. On the final play the coach sent Rudy in for the only play of his career. Rudy sacked the quarterback, forced an end-zone fumble, and Notre Dame ended up winning the game. Rudy remains the only Notre Dame player to ever be carried off the field on his teammates’ shoulders.

The Bible exhorts us to be persistent. In the seventh chapter Matthew, the Bible says, “Keep on asking and it will be given you; keep on seeking and you will find; keep on knocking [reverently] and [the door] will be opened to you.” (Matthew 7:7-11, Amplified Bible).

We should be tenacious pray-ers in the way Rudy was tenacious on the football practice field. We should be like Jacob, who said, “I will not let you go unless you bless me” (Genesis 32:26). Giving up is easy. Anyone can do that. People do it all the time. We throw out the next possible opportunity sometimes, simply because we failed in some way or another, or because someone else finally wore us down with their repeated message that we couldn’t succeed. Persistence, however, is a discipline worth

nurturing. If you can keep at something, if you can find and stoke that little spark of faith that encourages you to succeed, then you can get up again and again. Persistence is the deliberate act of doing something, doing it again and again, until you get it right, and maybe doing it over and over after that, too.

One of my favorite scenes in the movie *Radio*, is where Radio is hitting the shoulder pads of the boys on the football team and saying, “Don’t quit! Don’t quit!” I wish we all had Radios in our lives who would keep telling us the same thing, “Don’t quit!”

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*Don't Call Me Stupid (Continued from page 1)...*

**Criticism helps me to become a better person and a better leader.** Often the remarks cause me to look in the mirror, and occasionally I don’t like what I see. I have learned that I do not grow, my team does not grow, and the institution does not grow if everyone agrees with me all the time.

You may have noticed that occasionally I am an emotional person – criticism almost always hurts me. Believe it or not, sometimes the pain is more than I can handle. I have to turn criticism over to God, or it will consume my mind – and affect my productivity and ability to lead effectively. I am regularly reminded to stay close to God – 1 Thessalonians 5.17.

Critics help refine me. They help me to be a better person, though the process is always painful.

**Criticism keeps me from criticizing others.** I know the pain of criticism. I know the hurt that comes when a critic comes after me with an unfounded accusation – or a founded accusation for that matter. I don’t like that pain – and I am reminded of this when I am tempted to criticize others.

**Consider the source.** Some people are just negative. I made a decision that I am not going to spend time with negative people. In Philippians 4, Paul writes – “Rejoice in the Lord all the time”. While some critics should be heard, many should not.

**Sometimes the critic is right.** Since I am a relatively sensitive guy, it’s painful to be criticized. But occasionally my pain is compounded by the fact that I needed the criticism – the criticism addresses an area where I need to grow. Proverbs 12:1 – Whoever loves discipline loves knowledge, but one who hates correction is stupid. So criticize me, but don’t call me stupid. Criticism hurts. But criticism often presents an opportunity to grow.

**When was the last time someone criticized you? What was it about? How did it make you feel?**

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*I know that summer is now over because our school has started again, but more telling is that college football has kicked off. Even as these college football teams have concluded their training camps and preseason work, they will not stop learning. They must continue to improve week in and week out if they are to achieve their goals. So it is with leaders. As a leader, you have never reached your fullest potential. You can always learn something new or see something from a new perspective. There are a lot of challenging stories and truisms in this month's newsletter. I hope that you are encouraged and inspired by something you read in this issue of THE ENCOURAGING LEADER.*

*Jamy Bechler*

## MAXWELL MOMENT

*Look behind you: What have you learned?*

*Look around you: What is happening to others?*

*Look above you: What does God expect of you?*

*Look besides you: What resources are available to you?*

[www.johnmaxwell.com](http://www.johnmaxwell.com)

The term leader might be the most over used vernacular within the athletic culture. An athlete who plays through pain is labeled a leader, as well as the teammate who balances an academic full load and a part time job. What really constitutes a leader in an intercollegiate athletic program?

Is it the individual's talent...should the best player of the team be named captain? Is it the player's long term commitment to the program...should the player with the most seniority be named captain? Is it the player who is most liked among his/her peers...should the most popular player be named captain? If leadership is allowed to remain ambiguous among a culture, then any above average characteristic will draw praise to the individual as having exemplary leadership qualities among his/her peers.

## A LEADER IS...?

The concern to adequately equip student-athletes as leaders continues to be a problem at all levels of sports. Coaches tend to see their primary role to prepare their teams for athletic achievement and rarely spend any intentional time developing a leadership culture. Even more neglected is the equipping of emerging leaders which usually consists of freshmen and sophomores. The underclassmen seem to be the most pliable as they seek to gain affirmation from the upperclassman and coaching staff. The belief that by becoming a senior or being named an All American makes an individual a quality leader is dangerous especially if there has been limited leadership development before entering into a leadership position. Does leadership naturally be-

stow upon a student-athlete during the summer of their junior and senior season? What usually takes place is that the leadership either mirrors their predecessors or the team leaders create their own expectations. The saddest reality of leadership roles, within athletic programs among inter-scholastic and intercollegiate programs, is that the most common tasks administered is a coin toss before athletic contests and leading team stretches at practice.

As a new school year begins, who are your leaders? Do they have expectations more than wearing an arm-badge or flipping a coin? Most importantly, how will you intentionally develop the leaders of your program?

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