

Core essentials of effective Leadership in Church Schools

Based on Kevin Bullock's latest national research, his observations as a leadership consultant and his own practice.

Thirty reminders for Thriving Organisations

... from 30 key insights of highly effective Leaders
(Industry and Education)

Kevin Bullock & Simon Ladd

The following reminders were compiled after 5 years of research focusing on effective/outstanding organisations and their leadership/management (industry and education) coupled with my own leadership and consultancy experience.

I intended to publish them originally as stand-alone reminders but as I scanned my final drafts it dawned on me that every point could be linked to a Biblical truth/principle. This was genuinely an unintended consequence of this publication.

I approached Simon Ladd, senior Leader at West Road Church, Bury St Edmunds, Suffolk, who readily agreed to link the reminders to the most appropriate parts of the Bible. The result is this down-to-earth, easy to read publication.

Simon would also like to thank Janet Souster, Ruth Lee and Dawn Elliot for their help in the linking of Biblical truths/principles in this publication.

Kevin Bullock

I know a man called Bob Gordon. He was a church leader in Norfolk. He was a 'big' character. The boss of the biggest BMW dealership in the Norwich area heard him speak and was so impressed that he invited Bob to address his sales team at a motivational conference. Bob came at them directly from a Christian perspective arguing that the principles of Christianity are so powerful that they work in business – even if you don't believe in them. He talked to the team about honesty, integrity, reliability, truthfulness, how to work as part of a team, developing relationships, the meaning of real success, coping with disappointment – all sorts of things. He challenged them to put into practice what he had talked to them about. Sales increased markedly. Bob was regularly invited back to speak to the sales team – and last time I saw Bob he was driving a very nice BMW.

My task in this paper is to link the '30 core essentials' to examples, quotations and principles from the Bible and the teaching of Jesus. Like Bob, I'm convinced that the principles of Christianity are so powerful that they can bring measurable improvements in school life and educational outcomes.

Simon Ladd



➤ Leadership is singular but you can't do it alone

To engender absolute clarity – an organisation's vision must be 20/20.
20/20 vision can only originate from one central source – the head of the organisation.
However it should be remembered that the head is only one small part of the body and for a body to function effectively all parts have a contribution to make.

What a place to start! Both these statements could have been derived from the Bible which says that Jesus is the head of the church but for it to function properly people must work together. "Jesus is the head of the body, the church." (Colossians 1v18) "Now you are the body of Christ, and each one of you is a part of it. (1 Corinthians 12v27)

➤ You are never more than a thought away from your organisation (not a worry away!)

Make sure you are able to differentiate between constructive thinking and destructive worrying. Constructive thinking is best achieved within a relaxed, emotionally neutral body. Excessive worry can sap energy, thwart creative thinking, distort reality and suck you into a whirlpool of despair.

Jesus challenges his hearers not to worry about things over which they have no control, (Luke 12v22) but the New Testament encourages positive thinking. (Philippians 4v8)

➤ Affecting change in others is not about intellectual persuasion but emotional engagement

"Convince a man against his will
He's of the same opinion still..."

"But give him time to find the fault
And then you'll get a great result."

It's not about how much a leader knows but how much he cares.

The starting point is not about winning arguments but expressing concerns, not about showing your power but sharing your feelings.

The shortest verse in the Bible is (John 11v35). It says simply "Jesus wept." The following verse continues; "Then the Jews said, "See how he loved him!" Jesus was not afraid to express his emotions. Everybody knew that Jesus loved his friend Lazarus and was deeply affected by his death. (Don't worry the story has a happy ending!)

➤ Questions have more impact than statements

He who asks the questions controls the dialogue, encourages thoughtful responses and shows he is prepared to listen.

Being God, Jesus knew the answers already – but he used questions to build relationships, to clarify, to value people, to encourage people to express themselves – and lots more – and Jesus listened carefully to the answers.

➤ Information is not the same as communication

Informing feeds the intellect – a neutral interaction.

Communication engages emotions – motivates and inspires.

Both the above are essential for effective organisations, but make sure you know what mode you're in and why.

The story of the brilliant Old Testament leader Nehemiah illustrates the difference between information and communication. Nehemiah first surveyed the ruined city of Jerusalem and called a meeting and shared the information. The embattled leaders knew most of this already. When the 'information' phase ended they were probably more depressed than ever. Then Nehemiah shared his vision and his action plan. This was practical, motivating, empowering and inspirational. At the end the leaders said 'Let us start rebuilding'. They didn't just say – yes that sounds good – go ahead. They wanted to get involved themselves. The vision was now theirs too. "Let us start rebuilding" (Nehemiah 2v18)

➤ Adopt the 10 c's of Communication

Keep it clear, concise, contextual

Keep it current, credible, catchy

Keep it convincing, coherent, conciliatory

Above all, ensure there is absolute *consistency* in what you say and what you do!

The Lord's Prayer is arguably the best known prayer in the world. Including the doxology is only 70 words. The Sermon on the Mount is widely regarded as the best ethical statement in existence. It can be read aloud in around 5 minutes. Neither are hard to understand (living them is more of a challenge!) Both are concise, use ordinary language and everyday examples.

Jesus often taught using graphic language and memorable stories that reflected the everyday lives of his hearers.

➤ You can't not Communicate

So use every opportunity of making your views known and not necessarily by speaking.

It's not only how you say it but how you don't say it/respond.

The three key responses on the communication continuum, verbal and nonverbal, are:

Negative _____ Neutral _____ Positive

Be aware of how you want to come across at all times and why!

It is noticeable in the Gospels how often it is recorded that Jesus 'touched' people. Lepers were regarded as untouchable – but Jesus reached across and touched them. Jesus did this deliberately. He was communicating that he noticed and valued them as people.

"make the most of every opportunity" Ephesians 5v17

- Practice the art of being more interested in the other person than you are in yourself
Who needs to attend listening seminars? If you're genuine in the above, a myriad of skills relating to active listening will come to the fore naturally.
Be warned, it is suggested that we only remember one-fifth of any conversation and four-fifths of that is what we've said ourselves! We are hard-wired to be self-centred, but the more we fight this natural tendency the more people will fight alongside of us to achieve the common goals

Paul, writing to the church at Philippi writes, "Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others." (Philippians 2v4)

God gave us two ears and one mouth for a reason!

- Differentiate between facts and feelings when presented with problems
Let anger have full expression first and allow it to blow itself out.

Remember: Emotions, when on high alert –
Reason stops and ears don't work.

A gentle answer turns away wrath, Proverbs 15v1

Anger should be dealt with properly, rather than suppressed or re-directed. (Ephesians 6v4)

- Judge others on their intentions not their behaviour
We tend to judge ourselves by our intentions and excuse our behaviour because we view our intentions as honourable.
Conversely we often judge others on their behaviour.
Try to start with the intentions of others before criticising their behaviour.

"Man looks at the outward appearance, but the LORD looks at the heart." (1 Samuel 16v7)
Only God has full insight into the intentions of others – but we should certainly try and 'see' deeper than the exterior.

- Help your staff to highlight their conscious and unconscious competences
Too many good leaders in middle management fail to become even better because they spend too long developing their weaknesses instead of building further on their strengths, simply because they are limited in their self awareness.

We should be aware of our weaknesses, but the emphasis in Romans 12 is firmly on using our strengths. Paul urges people to discover, develop and deploy their gifts.

➤ Strive for a balanced diet and healthy lifestyle

Beware of the importance of Hydration, exercise/activity, sleep and play.

Eureka moments are more likely in a balanced and calm state, let the release of endorphins through physical activity help the unclogging processes in your overloaded brain.

For physical training is of value 1 Timothy 4v8.

The Bible contains clear instructions about healthy living - including diet, behaviour and the importance of rest and recreation. You sometimes hear people say “The body is a temple.” Whether they know it or not – they are citing Scripture. 1 Corinthians 6v19.

➤ It is sometimes more effective to change staff than to try and change a specific member of staff

How hard do we find it to change our own habits, lifestyles and outlooks even when we're fully up for it in New Years Resolutions? We fail more often than succeed!

If we're incapable of changing ourselves – how can we truly hope to change others?

However, the single most effective way to change people is not to force or shout, but to sow seeds of doubt, by asking such questions as... 'Do you really think that's the best way to...' or... 'Are you sure that...'

Remember: Sowing seeds of doubt

Will help new thinking sprout.

The book of Jonah is the only book of the Bible that ends with a question. The prophet Jonah has flatly disobeyed God's instruction and now is showing a very uncooperative attitude. One may expect God to be angry and confront Jonah very directly, but instead God uses questions to encourage Jonah to re-evaluate himself.

➤ Being seen is sometimes more Important than being heard

'Actions speak louder than words' is a much over-used phrase...
because it's true.

The Old Testament character Job met with a devastating series of tragedies. His friends gathered. For a week they didn't say a word. Just being present was their first supporting action.

➤ Know the difference between activity and achievement

Think about the things that take up most of your time – Do they have direct links with your goals – if not, why not?

Jesus tells a story about two house builders. One wise and the other foolish. Their levels of effort and activity were virtually indistinguishable. But only one of them achieved something worthwhile.

➤ The main thing is to keep the main thing, the main thing

The first thing to do though is to be absolutely crystal clear in your own mind what you and your organisation are all about. Swap overly long vision statements for a brief statement of core purpose.

Jesus own mission statement was that he came to *“give his life as a ransom for many.”* (Mark 10v45). He did not let anything deflect him from fulfilling that mission. The Devil opposed him, his own family tried to stop him, his disciples advised a different path; Jesus was so popular at times that the people offered to make him King by revolution. But Jesus was not halted by opposition nor deflected by popularity. The main thing remained the main thing.

➤ Never underestimate the importance of remembering names

How many times have you heard someone say, ‘Wow, he/she remembered my name’. Motivation is all about engagement, engagement is all about personal relationships and what is more personal than someone’s name?

Phoebe, Priscilla, Aquila, Epenetus, Mary, Andronicus, Junias, Ampliatus, Urbanus, Stachys, Apelles, Aristobulus, Herodion, Narcissus, Tryphena, Tryphosa, Persis, Rufus, Asyncritus, Phlegon, Hermes, Patrobas, Hermas, Philologus, Julia, Nereus, Olympas, Timothy, Lucius, Jason, Sosipater, Tertius, Gaius, Erastus, Quartus. These are names of people that Paul sends greetings to in the last chapter of his letter to the church at Rome. And it is not just a list of names. There is a personal comment, or challenge, or thanks to each one.

➤ Always highlight clearly the rationale behind important decisions

Staff need to know the ‘what’ and ‘how’ relating to tasks/projects but knowing the ‘why’ behind key proposals gives them a greater sense of motivation and commitment, especially in the long-run.

The book of Isaiah contains this amazing phrase *“Come now, let us reason together,”* says the LORD. (Isaiah 1v18) In his prophecy Isaiah pictures Almighty God as willing to discuss and explain. God doesn’t merely want to announce his solution (decision) – he wants to ensure that people understand why it is necessary.

➤ Always ensure employees feedback mechanisms are effective

...because that is where your best ideas and suggestions are likely to come from.

The ‘employees’ terminology doesn’t fit too well. But Jesus gave his disciples many opportunities for feedback. Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs, without money, to travel and preach. When the disciples return, Jesus questions them and wants them to feedback how the mission has gone. Luke 22v35

➤ Make sure problem solving techniques are effectively deployed

Unresolved problems can curtail production, demotivate staff and waste a great deal of time. The most effective leaders are believed to bounce back from difficult situations.

When Nehemiah’s great rebuilding project was half way through – all kinds of new problems emerged. The people felt free to relate these problems back to Nehemiah and techniques and strategies were amended to address the situation.

➤ Always support and encourage staff in their own self-assessment

Goals that come from within are often pursued with more vigour than those that are dropped from on high.

It is damaging to the person and the organisation if a person's opinion of themselves is too low or too high. *Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, Romans 12v3*

➤ Involve everyone in evaluating the organisation's performance

...even those who hold different views to you.

Rising above personal differences is a vital characteristic for effective leaders.

Jesus involves his whole team (the disciples) and invites them to share their opinion even on the most fundamental of issues. ¹⁸ "Who do the crowds say I am?" "Who do you say I am?" Luke 9v18-20

➤ Link staff personal development to organisation's development

Staff are an organisations greatest asset. Use their development to link in with the organisations' development.

Jesus plan was always for his organisation (the church) to be global. But he started with just twelve disciples and spent three years full-time mentoring and developing these people.

➤ Endeavour to make staff feel highly valued and clear about their respective role

For many employees, feeling valued is second only to what they earn.

Don't underestimate your employees' feelings. Similarly, the clearer they are about their role, the more determined they will be to carry it out effectively.

Jesus valued everybody. He did this by giving time and attention to people who many in society considered to be rejects and outcasts.

➤ Relationships are as important as robust work systems

So ensure you have coping strategies to spot and deal with other employees' unrest/anger/anxiety, swiftly. Success in the latter will bring success to the organisation.

Putting people at ease in interpersonal interaction was seen as a vital attribute for effective leaders.

Relationships are vitally important. Jesus taught that people should housekeep their relationships and even postpone worship in order to restore harmony. ²³ "Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to your brother; then come and offer your gift. Matthew 5v23

- It is vital to have a clear insight with regards to your client-base
...and also a clear understanding of why potential customers go elsewhere.
Someone will always be trying to poach your customers.
Remember, transactions are not merely based on price but on value to the customer. Focus on value if you value your business.

As creator, God should have a perfect understanding of what makes people tick! Jesus functioned in an age of multiculturalism, with a wide variety of beliefs in many gods, and plenty of people who believed in no God. Jesus 'advertised' Christianity, but never in a misleading way. Jesus was clear that following him would be costly and he urged people to consider carefully and 'count the cost.' (Luke 25v27) However, Jesus also claimed to be uniquely the way to God (John 14v6), and offered 'life to the full' for those who follow his path.(John 10v10). Whilst He accepted and understood that it was tempting for people to follow their own self-centred desires and the way of the world, He made it very clear that no one else could offer what He could!

- It is healthy to have a clear insight regarding your competitors strengths and weaknesses
Healthy competition can act as a catalyst for improvement. It's not necessarily the strongest organisations that thrive but those that are the most adaptable.

The 'competitor' terminology doesn't fit well but:-

The apostle Paul has a clear understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and strategies of the 'false teachers' who sometimes opposed him.

The Bible gives clear teaching on things that undermine genuine spirituality and Peter warns his readers of things "which war against your soul" (1 Peter 2v11)

- Make sure you give time to management and leadership, know the difference and ensure both entities compliment each other
Whereas management is the 'how' factor, Leadership is the 'wow' factor. Another analogy might be the rally car partnership of mechanic and driver. The mechanic ensures the cars systems are operating at the highest possible performance (manager) whilst the driver takes the car forward and steers it through all obstacles (leader) with his eyes firmly set on the successful completion of the task.

Vicar, curate, prelate, sexton, dean, cardinal, suffragan, verger, people are sometimes surprised to learn that none of these terms appear in the Bible. Church life in the New Testament has a blindingly simple structure. The leaders are called Elders. The managers are called Deacons.

- Prioritising is not just about getting things done but knowing what things that can be left undone

Deciding what you don't do is important because it will give you that extra time to do those things that really are top priority.

Jesus warns against spending too much of today's time on worrying about tomorrow. *Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own. Matthew 6v34*

Ditch abstract policies for affirmation statements

Employees endure policies but are energised by affirmation statements. Keep them context-based, short, sharp, relevant and use everyday simple language. Let staff feel empowered by devising their own and displaying them around the organisation.

There is value in policy statements if they are short, clear, practical and memorable. Jesus summarises many thousands of words in one practical sentence. *"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the Law and the Prophets."* Matthew 7v12