

# The Salvation Army Leadership Letter

Issue 3:



## Finding Future Leaders John Maxwell's Guidelines

Dear Maurice,

You asked for some tips on adding leaders to your team.

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### The Leadership Challenge

Finding leaders is tricky at the best of times because you've got so many things to think about - and you rarely find anyone who exactly fits what you're looking for.

But when I rely on my gut feeling, I come up with the few things I featured in the October 30 War Cry – and you won't go far wrong following those.

However, leadership is a huge subject, so the more you read about it (and *choose* leaders!), the better you become at finding the right people – and you quickly discover that different people have different things they look for.

There are also a number of 'givens' when it comes to choosing leaders – non-negotiables we require before we consider a person for leadership. These include a living faith in Christ, character and integrity, and so on.

But once you're sure about these things, different people's lists can help you find the leaders you need. I gave my list in the War Cry article. In this article I reflect on questions John Maxwell asks when choosing leaders.

### John Maxwell's Questions

#### 1. *Do they show a constructive spirit of discontent?*

This is John's masterstroke - because however much leaders differ, they're never happy with the status quo and always willing to take risks to achieve more for their cause. Leaders are pioneers who gladly step out into the unknown. Followers are settlers who keep asking if the horizon beyond them is safe. Leaders can live with risk; followers steer clear of it.

So when you look for potential leaders, start with people who think beyond the status quo – and who look for solutions to take the cause to a better future. A constructive spirit of discontent is the first unmistakable sign of leadership potential.

Nehemiah was like this. He was shattered by the news about Jerusalem, etc. (Nehemiah 1:4), formulated the solution, and completed the wall in 52 days (6:15). Look at leaders you admire, and you'll see this same yearning for a better future, with courage to take the work they lead to a higher level.

I've seen this in my own life too. Before every major job change, I became increasingly restless as I felt the pull of doing more for the Kingdom of God – which is my great passion.

John Maxwell says this constructive spirit of discontent is the first thing you look for when you're choosing new leaders.

### *2. Do they offer practical ideas?*

We brainstorm when we're planning for the future – and it's fun. But brainstorming is useless if we can't sort out the practical ideas from the worthless and bizarre. People with leadership ability do that. Their ideas may be big, but they're earthed in reality, so no matter how numerous their ideas may be, they have a happy knack of spotting winners.

C. D. Jackson says, 'Great ideas need landing gear as well as wings.' So when you're choosing leaders, go for people who bring landing gear to the job – people whose ideas actually work!

### *3. Does anyone listen to them?*

Leadership is influence, so another indicator of leadership potential is how people react to potential leaders when they speak on a subject. If people pay special attention to them it indicates leadership potential. But if they don't take notice of them, they're probably not leaders.

People with influence lead others because of their character (who they are), their relationships (who they know), their knowledge (what they know), their passion (what they feel), their experience (where they've been), their past successes (what they've done), and their ability (what they can do).

So you can spot leaders in a crowd because people listen to them. When you're choosing leaders, choose the ones that people listen to – because if they won't listen to them now, they certainly won't later!

### *4. Do others respect them?*

Respecting people isn't the same as liking them. Liking is a subjective, emotional thing. Respect is based on values.

Maxey Jarmen said, 'It isn't important that people like you. It is important that they respect you. They may like you but not follow you. If they respect you, they will follow you, even if perhaps they don't like you.'

So when you're choosing leaders, go for people that others respect – because if they don't respect them before they join your team, they certainly won't afterwards. And then you've got problems!

### *5. Can they create or catch a vision?*

John Maxwell says that when he talks to people about the future, he wants their eyes to light up – and he wants them to ask the right questions about what he's talking about.

The founder of a great insurance company built a successful firm from scratch. He brought some of the greatest insurance people together by simply asking, 'Why don't you come and help me build something great?' They did! And Maxwell adds very bluntly, 'A person who doesn't feel the thrill of challenge is not a potential leader.'

Then he asks several perceptive questions to drive the point home. First, have they caught and bought into another leader's vision before they start promoting their own vision? Second,



do they add value to the vision given to them - or are they less than enthusiastic because it's not their own vision? Third, do they show a high level of commitment to the vision? And finally, are they contagious in passing it on to others?

This is another Maxwell gem; and if the people you're considering don't score well here, they may not score well anywhere, because leadership is about influence – stewarding the sacred trust of vision.

#### *6. Do they show a willingness to take responsibility?*

Maxwell suggests there should be a Statue of Responsibility to stand beside the Statue of Liberty in the harbour of New York City – because responsibility and liberty belong together.

So do the people you're considering for leadership give any indication of willing accountability for their actions? Or do they pass the buck when things go wrong? Remember, we raise leaders by casting a vision and then asking who will bring that vision to reality. Benjamin Franklin said, 'I never knew a man that was good at making excuses who was good at anything else' - because it's easier to go from failure to success than from excuses to success.

When you're choosing leaders, look for people who are willing to take responsibility.

#### *7. Do they finish the job?*

Again, John's hit the nail on the head because the completion factor is essential for leadership. Remember people in the Bible who started well and finished poorly – like some kings of Israel and Judah. And remember how Jesus said he'd completed the work God gave him to do (John 17:4).

Kenneth Blanchard says, 'There's a difference between interest and commitment. When you're interested in doing something, you do it only when it's convenient. When you're committed to something, you accept no excuses, only results.' Wise words!

The bookends of success are Initiative and Closure. So when you're looking for leaders, choose finishers – otherwise you'll never get the job done!

#### *8. Are they emotionally strong?*

Thank God for this emphasis too – because many leadership disasters would be avoided if we applied this test before appointing people.

John says, 'No one can lead without being criticized or without facing discouragement. A potential leader needs a mental toughness. I don't want a mean leader; I want a tough-minded leader who sees things as they are and will pay the price.' Then he lists 'The Ten Most Wanted Emotions' (from a survey).

They are: (1) Friendliness and liking people (2) Enthusiasm about product (3) High energy level (4) Enjoying what they do ((5) Confidence and optimism (6) Feeling of being in control (7) Relaxed alertness and concentration (8) Feeling of wanting to help people and provide service (9) Inner desire to persist, succeed, and excel (10) Openness and non-defensive attitude toward feedback, criticism, and new information.

Give high priority to choosing people who are emotionally strong.



### *9. Do they possess strong people skills?*

This is the crux of the leadership deal – if we don't like people and know how to relate to them, they won't follow us; and if they won't follow us, we can't lead them because leadership is about influence and relationships.

Maxwell says there are several things we need to know about people if we're to lead them. People are insecure, so we need to give them confidence. They want to feel special, so we should look for opportunities to sincerely compliment them. People desire a better tomorrow, so we should give them hope – they'll gladly change if they think there's hope. They need to be understood, so we should listen carefully to them. People are also selfish, so we should speak to their needs first. They get emotionally low, so we should encourage them. And people want to be associated with success, so we should help them win; and if we help them win they'll be ours for life.

When you're looking for new leaders, choose people with strong people skills.

### *10. Will they lead others with a servant's heart?*

Most potential leaders overestimate the perks and underestimate the price of leadership. Servant leaders, on the other hand, serve the mission of their organisation and lead by serving those who are on the mission with them. Servant leaders listen and learn from those they lead, and do not wander far from the front line because they lead so others succeed.

Self-serving leaders ask, 'What are others doing for me?' Servant leaders ask, 'What am I doing for others?' Self-serving leaders see people as commodities they own; servant leaders see them as people on loan.

When you're adding to your team, look carefully at candidates' motivation for ministry.

### *11. Can they make things happen?*

This is an obvious truth. If we can't make things happen for ourselves, we'll never make them happen for others. So there are two types of people: those who give us results, and those who give us reasons why they didn't get results. When it comes to leadership, it's the person who has done nothing who is sure nothing can be done – they've got a track record for not achieving, so if you put them on your team they'll continue to achieve little.

Walt Whitman says the people who are most welcome anywhere in the world are the people who deliver the goods. They're welcome because they get things done.

So when you're choosing leaders, look at the track record of the people you're considering. Do they make their mark? Do they get things done? Do they leave a cause better than when they joined it? If they do, have a closer look at them, because they're people who deliver the goods - and will help you and the church get to your desired 'promised land'. When you're looking for leaders, never choose someone who doesn't achieve. If they haven't achieved before they come to you, it's very likely they'll never achieve after they've joined you.

## **Towards A Balanced View**

Maxwell says there are other qualities we may look for when we're choosing leaders. But these are the important ones for him.

And, obviously, not everyone will score well in all eleven areas – but that doesn't matter. When you're considering people for leadership, you're looking at their life trends and the track record they're developing. Do they like being around people? Do people like being around them? Can you see them seeing the leadership challenge through? Do they handle trial well? And so on. When you're considering people for leadership, you're looking for signs of leadership potential, not full-blown leadership fruit.

So Maurice, choose carefully and prayerfully - keeping the whole person in view. And don't rush your choice. Better to take a little longer and be sure, than make a premature decision that you and the church later regrets.

Remember, everything rises and falls on leadership – absolutely everything!

When you're picking future leaders, choose so you and your church both win.

Goodbye.

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[To get John's CD or tape on Picking Potential Leaders (Vol. 8 No. 10), and/or receive his monthly tapes, ring 0800-446569 or email International Resource Network at: [welcome@irn.org.nz](mailto:welcome@irn.org.nz)]

### **For discussion at Leaders' Meetings**

1. Which of John Maxwell's desired qualities do you tend to overlook when appointing leaders?
2. How do you personally measure up to John's list of leadership requirements?
3. Which are your strongest areas?
4. Which are your weakest areas?
5. And what steps will you each personally now take to become the well-rounded leaders your church needs to go forward to its dream?