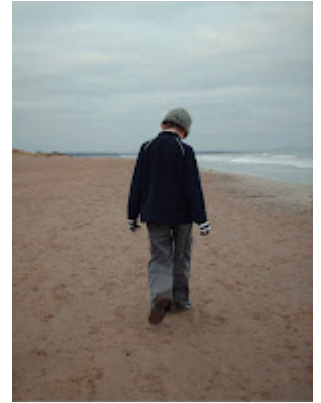


Driscoll, Loneliness and Leadership

Others are starting to comment about a recent post by Mark Driscoll entitled “Leadership is Lonely – Part 1.”



It is well worth the read. The following dot-points were thought provoking (honesty-provoking perhaps?)

For leaders and those who love them and can help them see their own sin, especially their spouse, the following self-assessment statements may prove helpful in diagnosing sinful responses to the loneliness of leadership:

- 1. I feel that God has abandoned me to an impossible task and have begun to question his goodness.*
- 2. I become annoyed by my team because they do not understand me or the difficulties I face as their leader.*
- 3. I wish someone would just tell me what to do, give me permission to not do so much, and sort out the complexity of my life.*
- 4. I am annoyed by others because I believe they are stupid, lazy, slowing me down, and simply unwilling and/or unable to keep up with me and all the work I have to do.*
- 5. I question if anyone really loves me and secretly think that almost everyone is simply using me.*

In order of propensity I relate to 1, 3, 5, 2, 4. Unlike

Driscoll I think my unhealth takes me towards self-blame and self-deprecation so I'm more likely to drift into melancholy about myself than be annoyed by any supposed stupidity in my team (Besides, there is very little, if any, stupidity in my team!)

Driscoll's initial sentence is intriguing though:

By definition, a leader is out ahead of his or her team, seeing, experiencing, and learning things before everyone else.

Once again we see Driscoll's tendency to not, um, *nuance* his definitions. Does leadership really mean being "out ahead." Perhaps, often, yes, leadership requires the input of novel ideas, new discernment, clarity of vision that no one else has yet considered. But that's not always the case.

A metaphorical consideration: I often spin the image of a bushwalk when talking about leadership. If anyone has ever hiked with their family they will know that to get that family up and over the hill to the glorious vista that awaits requires a combination of, yes, scouting ahead and finding the way, but also letting the young boys run ahead while the even younger daughters require a shoulder ride, pausing to attend to cuts and bruises, walking beside those who are discouraged. When the going gets tough it involves spinning the inspiration of why we're walking at all – encouraging, sometimes rebuking, sometimes from in front, sometimes from behind.

In this metaphor the leader is not necessarily the one "out ahead of the team." The leader may not be the "ideas person." But the leader is required to make the calls, carry them through, and bring the people with them. The leader is not necessarily the scout – or indeed the navigator.

A case-study consideration: I heard tell once of a senior pastor of a pentecostal persuasion who was struggling

significantly in ministry. He did not feel that he was receiving the necessary revelation from God that kept in “ahead of the team.” “How can I be a leader if someone else hears the word?” was the attitude. That was an unhealthy attitude. Someone else may “have the word” (in Pentecostal-speak) but the leader is the one who assesses, permits, resources, integrates, and if all else fails, carries the burden of that word.

I prefer the definition of leaders that I heard somewhere else – “Leaders beget leaders.” In that sense a leader will often times have leaders-they-are-leading out there “ahead” with them. Sometimes those other leaders will even “overtake” for a time, or in a particular area. All that means is that that leader has been led well by the leader who is behind.

Anyway, this is only Part 1 of Driscoll’s reflection. Looking forward to part 2.

