
*You Never Know
What You've Got*

...

Till You Give it Away

and other important lessons in leadership

by Brian C. Stiller

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Introduction

These editorials began with the writing of the *Issachar Notes* online. A Jewish chronicler noted this about a Hebrew tribe King David had recruited in rebuilding Israel: *The sons of the tribe of Issachar had an understanding of the times and knew what Israel should do* (see I Chronicles 12:32).

This description defined my contribution. I early had an interest in how social and political dynamics shape faith and witness. While serving with Youth for Christ this interest grew, but found its real vocational opportunity in serving with which was, at first, a small and unorganized association – the Evangelical Fellowship of Canada.

As the topic of leadership – a relatively new discipline – emerged in the late 1980s, I was interested but could find few substantive books. As president of Tyndale, I was encouraged by the writings of friend and spiritual mentor, Norm Allen, to reflect on leadership and its implications. I developed a habit of noting comments on leading and from that began to editorialize on the Web. I tried to point out the tough side of leading from those war stories we all have. Soon, readers gave feedback.

None of us in leadership are immune to weakness, self-doubt and making mistakes. We're human, and sometimes we get so caught up in our anxieties that we lose our focus. Keep these principles in mind:

- Jesus wants what others ignore.
- He blesses what others underestimate.
- He gives – people take.
- We need to take the gifts we've been given – and then give them away.

These are just the beginning of several lessons I've learned in my journey through leadership. How rich have been the insights and lessons given from so many.

For most of these editorials, Ruth Whitt carefully scrutinized language, grammar and syntax. My style was the subject of many conversations, but in the end she allowed pass this another of my idiosyncrasies. Janet Dimond has, with an amazing eye for content and selection, ordered and edited this final version, for which I'm so grateful.

I'm thankful for the opportunity to learn this trade of leading. Understanding our times, and from that developing strategies, is what we as leaders need to do.

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*You'll Never Know
What You've Got*

Jesus Wants What Others Ignore

Moses didn't know what he had – until he gave it away.
He learned this rather dramatically:

“What's in your hand?”

“Not much, Lord. A working shepherd's staff.”

“Throw it down.” (It turns into a snake.)

“Wow. How did you do that?”

Most leaders have little idea what they have. The times we're filled with our self-importance usually end up in failure and embarrassment.

The story-classic is Jesus feeding the five thousand. His disciples downplayed any expectation that people could be fed. Why, even the small boy's lunch they found wouldn't give a few a meagre bites. Here the creational story is played out. All sophistication of modern farming, the very best of entrepreneurial ingenuity, is reduced to the three elements of this story.

First, Jesus wants what others ignore.

Dr. Christiaan Barnard of South Africa was successful in doing heart transplants in the early 1980s, with one exception: within days, every one of his patients died. The new heart was seen as foreign and was rejected by the body. A young scientist working in Switzerland discovered that samples taken from Norway and Minnesota produced the opposite expected result. Instead of generating antibodies that in turn could be made into medicines to strengthen the immune system, the inverse happened. The samples produced medical therapy that put the immune system to sleep.

As the chief scientist was about to shut down these studies, Jean-François Borel, remembering Barnard's problem, asked if he could take the rejects and keep working on them. He did, and in a short time cyclosporin was developed, which revolutionized world medicine, triggering multi-organ transplants.

What's in your hand? Do you feel unappreciated, overlooked, ignored? Do you feel a sense of failure, unable to find any life of significance? What others ignore, Jesus wants. Leave to Him what it truly is worth. You never know what you've got till you give it away.



Prayer—

My hunch, Lord, is that what I have isn't worth a whole lot. In fact, most others don't even know I have it. However, I've decided: I'll give you what I have. How and where You use it is now up to You. Help me to be faithful in giving every day what has come my way. Amen