

Session 1.7 | The Leader Worth Following - Part 3

In the last few sessions, we have been looking at the 3 essential attributes of The Leader Worth Following:

1. Knowledge. Relevant Competence
2. Connection. Relationship. Who and what matters most in your life and in your work?

In this session, we are going to look at the third essential attribute of a Leader Worth Following.

Take a moment right now to download the Worksheet for this session and follow along as we move through the session.

The third essential attribute for the leader worth following is the attribute that most leaders struggle with....

Awareness (Self-awareness). Awareness has everything to do with noticing how your presence, how your voice, and how your actions impact and affect those around you. It's all about working and leading with your eyes wide open.

According to the Smith-Kettlewell Institute, the vision of a newborn is substantially developed over the first 8-10 months of their life. It is believed that most infants have 20/30 (or nearly perfect) vision by 8 months.

The reason I know this is because years ago, I Googled "when can my baby see" and I Googled that the week that my son was born. I wanted to know...

- Can my newborn son see me?
- When will he recognize his mom?
- Am I wasting time making all these funny faces at him?
- Is he really bonding with his older sister who is fascinated by him?
- Why does he occasionally cross his eyes?

So, for months, my son functioned – eating, breathing, sleeping, laughing, crying, growing, among all kinds of other things that newborns do – without being fully aware of everything that was going on around him, because he couldn't even see clearly.

And in our work with teams and organizations all over the world, we've witnessed a manager come in and ask a question. Then, after just a few moments of conversation, make a significant decision based on inadequate information. In fact, I've been that guy – more than once.

Don't get me wrong, I'm not advocating for analysis paralysis. If we're honest, we must admit that our problem isn't a vision problem. We can see – we just choose not to, at times.

As I spent time with my son, Andrew, the first few weeks of his life years ago, I thought about The Leader Worth Following. And I noted 3 reasons that we must approach life, work, and leadership with eyes wide open...

1. Often, what we are looking for is already there.

I've spent time with professionals who work every waking moment to build bigger, to become better, and to belong to something different. Yet, they've already been wildly successful.

The insatiable appetite for our culture, for newer and more, along with the ever-evolving marketplace continually outdistances any progress these professionals can make.

Please don't misunderstand me – I'm for growth. In fact, every organization where I've served has grown significantly while I was there. But if you've already intentionally evaluated your vision and passion, maybe it's time to stop obsessing over them. They're enough! They're okay. You can move forward with it.

If you are part of a team, maybe it's time to quit looking for another one. Maybe it's time to quit running from situations.

Since all people are valuable and are worth developing, try serving the team that you've been blessed with and help them grow. Help them accomplish their vision.

Like my son, frantically searching for a pacifier in his crib that's just inches away, you may find that what you're looking for has been there all along.

2. Everything we are working for can blind us to the treasures that are all around us.

As leaders, we must work with our eyes wide open. More than once I've cheated relationships and priorities that would have added significant value and brought greater fulfillment to my life and to my work because I was hurriedly working to improve my organization, my home, nonprofits with whom I was serving, or my personal financial position.

Effective leaders understand contentment. They have a high value of appreciation for where they are and what brought them there.

So we need to spend a few moments every day thinking about those things that are most important in our life and for which you and I can be thankful.

To help us with this, we developed a number of tools and disciplines which dramatically have improved how we approach life and work and the leaders that we've been serving.

3. Today is worth it too.

Regardless of what you're working toward, how huge your vision is, or how compelling your goals are, nothing is a worthy substitute for today's top priorities.

No project, no deal, no organization is more important than investing in people and creating memorable moments today. To be honest, very few things that "demand" our attention are really all that important.

Whatever you do, don't miss today because you're overly-focused on tomorrow.

Don't be a baby – open your eyes. You'll find more clarity and more focus than you ever thought possible.

The awareness tool is a foundational tool for the Leader Worth Following. The key question we ask to evaluate our awareness is, "What is it like to be on the other side of me?"

What people experience on the other side of us is directly related to our natural tendencies - our natural wiring. Do you know how you are naturally wired - your perspective, your personality, and the resulting tendencies?

When we look to improve our relationships, the goal is not to change our natural wiring or our natural tendencies. That's a futile effort. We don't want to try to change who we are to be more likable, to be different, or to be somebody else.

Our goal is not to change our natural tendencies. What we can affect or impact is our behavior patterns.

These are the behavior patterns which the world sees as actions. We can change our behavior patterns or actions and these improved behavior patterns or actions can have different positive consequences which will then lead to a different reality.

And so we can look at this tool 2 different ways. We can start with our natural tendencies which lead to behavior patterns, positive or negative behavior patterns, which the world around us sees as positive or negative actions which result in positive or negative consequences which then results in a positive or negative reality.

Or we can look at it the opposite way and look at our reality and say, "Is this a positive reality or a negative reality? Is my current situation, the current situation that I want to be in or do I want it to be different?" Then we can back into it. What are the consequences? What were the actions? What are my behavior patterns? And how does that come out of my natural tendencies?

I remember years ago, the first time I ever really used this tool to help me with something in my life. For several years our daughter had been playing competitive soccer. And the higher and higher levels that she went, the more passionate I became at her games.

And I'd stand there on the sidelines wanting to be a good parent. I knew that you weren't supposed to yell at the refs and then you, definitely, weren't supposed to yell at the players and call things out. And that the coaches wanted to do the coaching on the field. They didn't need the parents to do that.

But I would find myself standing there, trying to hold the words back and trying to hold my passion back.

One day, we were driving in the car and for one of the reason my wife was driving this day and I drew this tool on my pad that I had there laying on my lap. I began thinking about what are my natural tendencies that lead to the actions that the world may see if they're standing around me on the side of the soccer field?

Well, my natural tendency is that my personality wants to win. My personality is competitive. And while there's nothing wrong with that natural tendency, my behavior patterns could have negative consequences and lead to a reality that I didn't want.

And so I decided I'm going to change my behavior patterns. I'm not going to be less competitive. I'm not going to change my natural tendencies. I don't want to change my personality or my perspective. I want to change the behavior patterns so that I can use my influence in the way that I want to use it, not in the negative way.

At Guidestone, we use a couple of proven assessments to help leaders with awareness – this third essential attribute to The Leader Worth Following. We've used the Myers-Briggs type indicator for years and we recently developed a much simpler form at the 6 Lenses, which is built on the Myers-Briggs type indicator. These assessments are available online so you can take them at your convenience. Then, we recommend that you have a knowledgeable leader validate them for you.

Our validation workshop is included in the Simple Leadership Master-Class, and you can find more about the Master-Class using the link in this session.

If you haven't already, take a moment right now to download the Worksheet on this page and complete the action steps for this session.

In this session, we looked at the third essential attribute of a Leader Worth Following.

Next Session

In the next session, we're going to look at how Awareness impacts your ability to develop people.

If you haven't already, be sure to download the Worksheet and complete the action steps for this session.

Remember, it doesn't need to be perfect, you just need to take the next step.

I'll see you in the next session.

Fast Action Steps

1. The MBTI and 6 Lenses assessments are available online. If you haven't already, take them at your earliest convenience.
2. From your own sense of self-awareness write out what you think it is like to be on the other side of you. Show it to someone that you know and trust and let them share their thoughts