

The Power of Team Leadership, Book Review

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Abstract

Today George Barna is one of the most quoted American church people, but he is not always popular for his gloomy conclusions about the spiritual situation in the country in general and Christians in particular. He claims some want to remind him that he's the Antichrist, while others are grateful for his works. The chief Christian researcher assures he makes no bones about the fact that most pastors are not leaders and he tries to explain it is not bad, but he challenges them to work together with people who are truly leaders. Barna's studies represent more than 30 books and a series of training seminars for pastors and church leaders. Despite some unflattering results of his studies, Barna says that church leaders should not be discouraged. He warns pastors to be careful and not to make too many assumptions about the lives of their church members. One thinks if more people come to church, they have a real relationship with God or if they bring the Bible with them to the church, they read on week days. One often assumes, but how often these assumptions are wrong. In his newer research, *The Power of Team Leadership Finding Strength in Shared Responsibility*, George Barna expresses the clergy's and his personal concern about the needs of the modern US churches to bring certain innovations in the management style.

The Power of Team Leadership

The Christian researcher provocatively, though gradually and persistently unfolds a case, using surveys data and statistics to reason his beliefs of the spiritual challenge before pastors and criticizes the present one-sided whole-encompassing approach to the leaderships in church. George Barna applies the obtained data from the research made by his Christian group and draws conclusions resting on unfavorable statistical results. There is a single motif through the whole book, and that is the problem arising when a pastor fulfills the role of a leader on his own rejecting the possibility to build an effective team leadership. As the discussion evolves George Barna enumerates the welfares of the effective team cooperation. Lastly, the author makes an emphasis on the ways for today's denominations to put the team leadership techniques into practice. George Barna also enlists several drawbacks or barriers to overcome and moderate in the process of transition from sole to team leadership styles in the church.

The first chapter of George Barna's Team leadership tells its reader of enormous and ungrounded expectations the ministry has always been trying to put on its leaders with the conclusion it would inevitably lead to the failure. He gives statistics on the public opinion for the last 20 years that clearly shows the level of discontent with the leadership style in denominations, government, various institutions, educational establishments, companies and societies. The idea of team leadership came to Barna as plausible way out of the situation after he had studied the matter of the church authority decline. The author brings in the facts, discusses the findings, sets out suggestions on the management improvement, and draws conclusions resting on the cultural requisites. Concerning the examples Barna provides, they are mostly taken from the Holy Bible, like stories of the Great Exodus organization by Moses, the story of Joshua and Nehemia, and others. The abovementioned spiritual leaders

were able to accomplish their mission with the help of his followers, thus created a sort of team leadership among the closest adepts. The most prominent example, however, is the discussion of group management style described in the Ephesians four. The main issue spotted by George Barna is the disparity in the personal and professional qualities of the church leaders and the competences required for all the spheres the ministry should encompass. Thus, the service of those who lacks the strength to lead in a certain area yields the results shown in the surveys.

Barna proves many leaders fail by default without realizing how much they can get working in a team, since the achievements are always greater if worked out by more than one individual. This is more regarded like a math, when each element fulfills its function bringing altogether the team to its highest pitch. It is also about the universality of the group, where one supplements another member with the skills he/she has in abundance. On the other hand, there cannot be a sole leader perfect in each area of interest, given that the country needs hundreds of similar ministries. The team leadership style should always begin with realizing the power given to each pastor, strength and skills. One should also clearly see the weak spots and have courage to admit those to oneself moved by the higher aspirations to involve the flock in the church life. Team management consisting of pastors and leaders is not supposed to tell a pastor is incapable to cope with the congregation, its mission is to assist and reinforce the talents and efforts of each member. On the whole Barna's idea lies in the strategy of realizing abilities and skills of the leader to apply them for the team management, assess the probability of the team success or failures.

It is obvious team leadership can be built both ways, and in case of a poorly structured ministry, it may harm more than a sole unskillful management. The author also dwells on the team leadership results, describing the type of the ministry he has in mind. Each member in

the team should be called by God to lead, with open heart and god-loving nature, with inherent aptitude to transmit the God's will on earth. Despite the pitfalls and hardships of transformation from solo practice to the team leadership style, Barna proves the path followed is worth the time and efforts applied.

Barna's strategy for team ministry is to understand the types and gifting of a leader's aptitude that is used in the development of specific skill sets that can make or break an organization or a church ministry. In fact, organizing a poorly structured team can do more damage than having no team at all. Barna shares what he looks for when building a team ministry: people "called by God to lead, who have godly character, and they possess the competencies to help fulfill God's vision."¹ Although transitioning from a solo leadership style to a team leadership style is not easy, Barna clearly shows that the benefits far exceed the pitfalls.

Head of the center, Christian Research Group, George Barna, comments that the faith in America remains a topical subject. Everyone from politicians, athletes, philosophers, teachers, presenters, and musicians is striving to say something about faith, religion, spirituality, morality, and spiritual experience. However, the fundamental values and presentation of our nation continue to be loosened, followed by the loss of concepts of faith and spirituality in the way they were perceived earlier. Many of the provisions that were previously realized by themselves ceased to be so strong and predictable. Barna's researches clearly show how well it is explained in the book 'Non-Christian' by David Kinnaman that Americans are not as attracted and involved in Christianity as before. Only half of the U.S. adults believe that it's natural for an American to be Christian. At that 88% mentioned the

¹ The power of team leadership By George Barna. ISBN 1-557856-424-7

faith plays an important or very important part in their lives. 74% of Americans believe it has become more important to them than it was in the past. Non-Christian religions are still not widespread and many people have not even heard of some of them (for example, the neopagan sect 'Wicca' is only known to 45% of Americans). Most Americans considering themselves to be Christians believe that the sacred books of all religions teach the same. At the same time 50% believe that more and more people are sick of the immutability of the church.

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Bibliography

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