

The Final Distinction

The steward leader approach is based on the transformation that takes place in the heart of the leader as a faithful and godly steward and works from this inner transformation (which is ongoing) to the outward impact when a godly steward is called to lead. This inward-outward direction and the emphasis of **being** over **doing** sets the steward leader apart from this array of secular leadership theories.

Docking the "ship."

As I [Author Scott Rodin] said at the outset, this is a "**who**" book not a "**how**" book. That alone distinguishes it from many faith-based approaches to leadership. I am surprised at the number of authors who see personal transformation as an add-on rather than as the primary distinction of a godly leader. In some books on leadership, it is not brought up until nearly the end of the book and not treated in any integrated way with what has come before. In other books, even when it is included as being of fundamental value to the effectiveness of a leader, it is often described as the transformation of the leader as a leader, not as a child of God who is then called to lead. I believe this is an important distinction. God's work of transforming our lives does not begin when we answer a call to lead. Transformation is also not confined to our role as leader, nor does it end when we leave a leadership position.

Our transformation into the likeness of Christ is the central, all-encompassing reality of our lives from the moment Christ enters our hearts until he takes us home. From time to time we may receive many other well-intentioned books that are completely "doing-driven." They tend to communicate that godly leadership has nothing to do with a changed heart and everything to do with building teams, casting vision, empowering staff, raising money and discovering our leadership style. Most provide long to-do lists for us to accomplish. Checklists, traits and styles abound as we navigate our way through to find the real leader inside us. This outside-in movement is in sharp distinction to the development of a steward leader.

I have attempted to stay away from the term's leadership and stewardship. As soon as we add the *ship*, we shift our focus from the "who" to the "how" and "what." It is my belief, that in this rapidly changing world, the Holy Spirit is our sole guide to the particular way we work out our call to lead as a faithful steward. For that reason, I have purposely "**docked the ship**" to ensure that we remain focused on this great work of being transformed into faithful stewards on all four levels, and the high calling of the steward leader.

From steps to trajectories.

Sunday school teachers and CEOs of major ministries are leaders. Megachurch pastors and volunteer coordinators of small ministries are leaders. Parliamentarians and Senators, parents and presidents, school teachers and grandparents are leaders.

Imagine trying to write the defining "Ten Steps to Becoming an Effective Steward Leader" that covered every vocation in every setting with every people group pursuing every mission in every country? If we cannot arrive at a standard set of traits of an effective leader, we certainly cannot establish the steps such a leader must take to lead effectively.

This is not a cause for sorrow but for celebration. Moses did not lead like David or Esther or Nehemiah. Yet they all served God faithfully and effectively. They stood in their time with their skills, and the Holy Spirit worked through them to accomplish what God intended. The same is true for you and me. God starts with our hearts, and from there he works through us to achieve his good purposes. You don't have to worry that you have only six of the ten traits of a steward leader. **God wants your heart, and the rest is up to how the Spirit chooses to work within you.**

So I start with the heart of the godly steward. However, I do not want to set aside all discussion of what it might look like when godly stewards lead. Therefore, I will carefully present what I will call "trajectories" or "paths". I will suggest some ways in which steward leaders might serve their people and lead their organizations. **The term *trajectory* indicates that we can only know the general direction this leadership might take, and we make a guess at its final destination.** But I will not be developing a formula or fall back into developing methods. I hope to keep the discussion at the level of trajectory, understanding that the Holy Spirit will always take us in directions that we could never have guessed or planned.

From model to Lord.

In making this final distinction, I will likely anger some of my colleagues but hear me out. I do not believe that Jesus came to show us how to be good leaders. I do not believe that he set himself up as a model for effective leadership or that he calls us to shape our leadership style according to the way he lived and served while on this earth.

Jesus came not to provide us a role model but to proclaim the coming of the kingdom of God to preach good news to the poor, release the captives, to restore sight to the blind and proclaim the year of the Lord's favor (**see Luke 4:18-19**). He came to be a sacrifice for the sins of all humanity, to rise triumphantly and to send his people out into the world to proclaim the message of hope and salvation. He completed in his life, death and resurrection everything we could not do, and now we are called to participate in that completed work as faithful and obedient followers. My point is that Jesus came to be the Lord of our life, not our example of good leadership.

The steward leader has been set free to live a life of joyful obedience in all he or she does. We need no model in order to do this. Jesus Christ is our one true Lord, and in the power of the Holy Spirit he lives in the leader and guides him or her day by day.

Luke 4:18-19 “The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.”

- it is often described as the transformation of the leader as a leader, not as a child of God who is then called to lead.
- This outside-in movement is in sharp distinction to the development of a steward leader.
- The term trajectory indicates that we can only know the general direction this leadership might take, and we make a guess at its final destination. Has your life ever gone in a different direction that wasn't expected but good?
- In making this final distinction, I will likely anger some of my colleagues but hear me out. I do not believe that Jesus came to show us how to be good leaders. What do you think about this?
- The steward leader has been set free to live a life of joyful obedience in all he or she does. We need no model in order to do this. Jesus Christ is our one true Lord, and in the power of the Holy Spirit he lives in the leader and guides him or her day by day.