



LEADERS
RE:VISION



JIM SEYBERT



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Leadership RE:Vision

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When modern business-management theories collide with wisdom from the Bible, leader reputations feel the impact. Jim Seybert challenges and encourages you to wisely lead your enterprise *and* demonstrate your relationship with Christ to your employees, customers, and vendors.

—**PAUL MARTIN**, president of Advocace Media, LLC

With creative perspectives on well-known biblical stories and principles of leadership and marketing, this book lets you experience what Jim Seybert does for his clients: You get a different vision of your organization, your leadership, the world you seek to serve, and the future God has for you. Your leadership abilities, your time to lead, and the lives of those who follow you are priceless gifts that God has entrusted to you. *Leadership RE:Vision* gives you the insights and the practical action steps you can take to lead well in the Kingdom work God has given you.

—**RICHARD KRIEGBAUM**, author of *Leadership Prayers*

In *Leadership RE:Vision*, Jim Seybert challenges conventional leadership thinking, sets a fresh context for leaders' actions, and calls for a new direction of principled leadership!

—**BOB BROWER, PHD**, president of Point Loma Nazarene University, San Diego, California

To say this book is a breath of fresh air is an incalculable understatement. Jim's message is for leaders of all ages, in all stages of life, with all levels of experience.

I have come into contact with a considerable number of leadership books. Many I have given away, some I have kept and read carefully, and a few I have read over and over. I will do all three with this book, and it will become required reading for my executive MBAs.

—**DR. TOM A. BUCKLES**, professor of marketing at Biola University

Jim puts his leadership lenses on, dives into the Bible, and helps us refocus our vision around leadership that blesses people. I read what I endorse, and I really enjoyed Jim's work, especially his key insights into the biblical narrative.

—**REGGIE MCNEAL**, leadership consultant and author of *The Present Future*

Dedicated to the memory
of my grandmother Juana Coon,
who waited patiently for me to finish
writing before going home.

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INTRODUCTION

I GOT MY FIRST SET OF EYEGLASSES WHEN I was in the seventh grade. I still remember walking out of the doctor's office and saying to my mom, "Wow, I can actually see the leaves on those trees."

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I didn't know how bad my eyes were, so I hadn't been worried about not seeing the leafy detail. The thought that I was missing something never crossed my mind because it was outside my scope of experience and understanding. The new glasses—big dorky brown plastic frames and all—provided a revised perspective. They helped me see things I had never seen—had never even considered seeing—before.

My hope is that this little book can become that new pair of glasses for you.

Leadership RE:Vision isn't about changing your goals or objectives. It's about challenging the conventional wisdom and long-held premises of what it means to be a leader. It's about looking at your leadership habits from a new perspective and using a different set of standards to measure the success of your efforts.

- Are you too patient with people who waste your time? *Leadership RE:Vision*

will help you see the value of ignoring them.

- Are you trying hard to be a selfless leader? *Leadership RE:Vision* will encourage you to celebrate the *self* God intended you to be.
- Has a lack of experience held you back from stepping up and really leading? *Leadership RE:Vision* will suggest that past success can be a slippery slope to failure.

x

I intend to rattle your assumptions and challenge the status quo, but these aren't new ideas. In fact, the foundations for *Leadership RE:Vision* are as old as time itself. The Bible is packed with lessons on leadership. God filled the pages of his book with examples of leaders—good and bad. Somewhere along the line, our ideas of what it means to be an effective leader have been tweaked and disjointed into a style that is out of kilter with what I think God intended.

Leadership RE:Vision is my attempt to help you put on a new set of glasses and to really see the leaves.

—Jim Seybert

DON'T WASTE GOD'S TIME

A group of men whose hearts God had touched went with [Saul]. But there were some scoundrels who complained, "How can this man save us?" And they scorned him and refused to bring him gifts. But Saul ignored them.

I SAMUEL 10:26-27

ONE OF MY FAVORITE LEADERSHIP STORIES from the Bible happened when Saul was the newly appointed first king of Israel.

Saul had a mission to accomplish—God's mission. He was the person chosen to lead God's people. This was the next step in God's strategic plan to fulfill his promise to Abram that he would make Abram's descendants into a great nation and that through him "all the families on earth" would be blessed (Genesis 12:3).

The people of Israel had never been at this place. They'd never had a king. The status quo was changing. God didn't choose Saul to manage the people; he chose Saul to lead them.

Saul had a group of men around him who

were dialed into the mission. They weren't supporting Saul the man so much as they were supporting the mission he represented. These advisers certainly didn't agree with everything Saul suggested. (Counselors are worthless if they're merely yes-men.) But God had touched their hearts, and they provided Saul with valuable input as he began his reign as Israel's first king. They understood

COUNSELORS ARE
WORTHLESS IF
THEY'RE MERELY
YES-MEN.

what Saul was trying to do, and they gave him advice.

But there was a group of people who just wanted to get in the way. These naysayers didn't just have a different idea about how or why to *move forward*; their purpose—if indeed they even had a purpose—was to stop progress dead in its tracks.

LEADERS LEAD

If you've spent any time in a leadership role, you know about such people. You may even be thinking of some of them right now and could name them if I asked you to.

They ask the same questions and raise the same tired old flags at every meeting. They push personal agendas that are counter to the group's mission and goals. Even after decisions have been made and the organization

is poised to move ahead, these “scoundrels” (God’s description) stand in the way and impede forward momentum.

You might think Saul would try to negotiate a solution or find a way to compromise. But he doesn’t. He doesn’t try to reason with these men. He doesn’t change course to accommodate them. What *does* Saul do when these men get in the way? He ignores them. One Bible translation says he turned a deaf ear to them.

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Turn a Deaf Ear

When I was a kid, we had a family friend who had 100 percent hearing loss. Ben was, as he described it, “deaf as a fence post.” Ben read lips amazingly well. His eyes had become his ears, and if he could see you, he could “hear” what you were saying.

Ben and his wife clearly shared a deep love for each other, but they were also world-class arguers. When they argued, Ben would stare intently at his wife’s lips to hear what she was saying. They’d go on for great lengths, but when Ben was finished with the conversation, he would put up his hand and squeeze his eyes tightly shut. If he couldn’t see, he couldn’t hear. When Ben closed his eyes, the world around him ceased to exist.

Saul was God’s appointed leader, and when a mission-busting group of scoundrels tried

to steer him off course, Saul treated them as if he couldn't hear them, as if they didn't even exist. And here's the clincher: There's no evidence that God punished Saul for this behavior. In fact, there's good reason to believe that eventually listening to these people is what got Saul into hot water with God.

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LEADERSHIP RE:VISION

It's easy to confuse leadership and management. A manager's task is to maintain the status quo, follow established procedures, and evaluate performance based on accepted standards. Some managers are also leaders, and some leaders do a good job of managing. The two functions are often interchanged and combined, but they are not the same.

As the leader, you're the one who stands at the door and says, "Come and look outside. I've seen what's out there, and it's awesome," or "I know the policy manual says to follow *this* procedure, but I think we need to try something different."

Conventional wisdom suggests that effective leadership requires an open-door policy in which all complaints are heard and considered. But I don't see that described in Scripture. The apostle Paul says that people who are causing divisions aren't worth a third hearing (see Titus 3:10), and when it

comes to people who have ulterior motives, he accuses the Corinthian believers of finding pleasure in “putting up with fools” (see 2 Corinthians 11:19-20).

God is above time. He exists outside of time. He created it and has an endless supply of it. Yet even God shows us that he won't waste time on those who refuse to get with the program. Scripture is full of examples where in one way or another God says enough is enough.

SCRIPTURE IS FULL
OF EXAMPLES WHERE
GOD SAYS ENOUGH
IS ENOUGH.

If the One who has an endless supply of time draws a line in the sand, why are you allowing those people whose names you thought of just a few paragraphs ago to derail the mission you have to accomplish with your limited amount of time?

The next time you are facing a situation where these folks will have an opportunity to disrupt a meeting with their predictable behavior, take them aside beforehand and let them know that you will no longer tolerate their attempts to derail forward progress. Give them a chance to ask their questions in private, answer them to the best of your ability, and warn them that there is nothing to be gained by asking the same questions again.

Be gracious and speak lovingly, but don't give in to their agendas.

Do whatever you do in the name of the Lord. He's given you a job to do and a finite amount of time to do it. Don't let the scoundrels trip you up.

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AUTHOR'S NOTE

I love writing books because the process forces me to focus my thinking on a specific topic and explore ideas to greater depths than I normally would. This concept of revising one's leadership perspectives has been a learning experience for me. I haven't practiced to perfection every piece of advice in this book, and I probably never will. My claim is not one of "expert leader" but rather one of "willing conduit" for fresh ways of thinking and looking at the status quo.

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The two people who know more about my shortcomings than anyone else are my wife, Rhonda, and daughter, Noelle. They'll read these pages and wonder why I can't live up to the ideal, but they'll continue to forgive and to exhibit incredible patience with me. Writing a book is especially difficult on them because I am frequently "away," either literally or figuratively, during the process.

My friend and agent, Mark Sweeney, is the iron that sharpens my dull blade. Jon Farrar and Ron Beers at Tyndale gave me the freedom I needed to catch and share the ideas. Sue Taylor made the words sound so much better. Kathy McClelland helped get the word out.

Writing, for me, is a lonely profession, but there are a few who came alongside with suggestions, ideas, and support. Joe Brown, Andy Butcher, and John Seybert helped me get unstuck in a couple of places. Dana Ostby offered encouragement at exactly the right time. Bob Turner, Nigel Whitehead, Brian Farone, and a host of others never showed any signs of fatigue when I launched into a too-long recitation of my struggles with the manuscript. I need to acknowledge the vital role these folks played in the completion of this work.

And to the One who took great care in knitting me

together in my mother's womb, thank you for giving me the ability to string words along in such a fashion as will compel others to learn from what I've observed. I occasionally catch a glimpse of your plan to do me good, and I am amazed at the way you love me.

JIM SEYBERT

August 2008

Arroyo Grande, California

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Jim Seybert has worked with leaders of small and large organizations, helping them to think differently about what they do. His clients include entertainment and publishing giants, health-care providers, retailers, nonprofits, and real-estate developers.

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In Jim's free time, he likes to take deep breaths along the High Sierra trails of Yosemite National Park. Jim and his wife live in California.