

# Connecting with the Connected

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It is a truism that the more people you lead the more leaders you need. As the size of your group, organization, church or company grows, so does the need for more character-filled, competent leaders.

It is also true that a leader's ability to identify and develop new leaders will either make or break him/her as a leader. Some leaders seem to have an intuitive ability to make good choices. Some, looking back, realize they have made very poor choices in selecting and surrounding themselves with leaders—leaders who ultimately set back the entire operation to the place where it is now seriously hindered from being able to achieve its purpose. You find everything from small groups to multinational corporations in this dilemma. The one thing a leader does not want to do is spend their time cleaning up the messes left by leaders who should have never been chosen in the first place or who should have been released “a year ago.” I spend a good deal of time praying for wisdom for myself, and other leaders I work with, to make good choices in future leaders with whom to share the vision.

I am currently in touch with a church that is going through a very difficult time because a promising leader is choosing to do some things that have the potential of splitting the church right down the middle, causing great harm to numerous people. The “clean-up crew” is working overtime!

A while back I meditated on Acts 1:24, where we find the early church needing to make a choice about future leadership.

**“And they prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two you have chosen’ ” NKJ**

I personally struggle with how they went about their choice to pick a replacement for Judas, but I admire their acknowledgement that the sovereign God knows the hearts of all leaders and their dependence on Him for wisdom in making the right choice. Some would argue that they made the wrong choice because we never read anything about Matthias and it appears that Saul of Tarsus was the God-ordained replacement for Judas. Nevertheless, choosing and investing in future potential leaders is one of the most important tasks leaders face as a lot is at stake.

Here are a few thoughts about picking the right people. This is obviously not exhaustive, but can get the ball rolling.

You want to select people who are difference-makers; people who bring a different perspective to the table; people who are originals, not just carbon copies of the party line. We need leaders who are *voices* not *echoes*. We desperately need people with fresh

thinking and fresh perspective on old issues or issues which have us stuck in a rut. We don't need, or want, "yes" men/women who merely echo what others are saying or have said. You want people who are connected in at least three ways:

**1. Connected to the Leader.** They should be people with whom you share chemistry; people you trust; people who bring out the best in you as a leader; people you enjoy being with; people who like who you are and want to be around you (not in an "I-want-to-be-close-to-the-leader-to-make-myself-feel-important" sort of way, but connected to you in an "allow-me-to-travel-with-you-and-help-you-get-to-where-you-want-to go" sort of way); contributors not consumers; people with proven character.

**2. Connected to the Vision.** Chose people who share your passion for the direction you are headed; people who add to the existing team and bring a unique contribution that enhances the possibility of seeing that vision develop. You want vision-makers, not vision-breakers. Never invite people into the inner circle who have a serious question(s) about your direction, with the hope of helping them come around.

**3. Connected to others.** Chose people who are able to influence others; those connected to others who also want to make a difference.

In his excellent book, "The Tipping Point," Malcolm Gladwell devotes a chapter to "The Law of the Few" where he speaks of "connectors." Buy the book. It's worth the read. Much happens in the world through a few who are well connected to lots of others. On page 38 of the book, Gladwell says, "Connectors know lots of people. They are the kinds of people who know everyone. All of us know someone like this. But I don't think that we spend a lot of time thinking about the importance of these kinds of people. I'm not sure that most of us really believe that that kind of person who knows everyone *really* knows everyone. But they do."

Now, I don't think everything Gladwell says is "gospel truth," but there is enough truth here to get me thinking about the importance of influencing the influencers; connecting with the connected.

I am more prayerful and careful about choosing people to have around me than ever before. I have seen much mayhem and carnage and that prevents me from moving too quickly in the leadership selection process: elders, associate staff, executive team members, etc. As a life coach for pastors around the country, I am spending more and more time discussing the fine points of making prayerful choices; taking your time, doing your homework, not being in a big hurry. The wrong people have the potential of short circuiting your leadership effectiveness, providing migraines on a regular basis and aging you quickly. I have both experienced and witnessed it.

May your leadership circle be populated with good people who bring out the best in you and your leadership.