



Lesson 8: Leadership Lessons from the Word

The Big Idea:

“From Collaborating to Co-Creating.”

I Corinthians 3:5-9

Dr. T. Lynn Smith

The notion of working together seems simple but, it is complex. When you interact with individuals who do not know your personality or how you have worked to achieve what you have, the thought of that certainly leaves cause for concern. I remember as a little girl being asked by my best friend Janice if we could work together on her science project? (Mind you, I also had to do this science project). While we were not in the same class we were in the same grade. Science was one of those subjects I had to work on to make good grades. Unlike music, science was work! Her asking me to help her was no small thing. It was a big deal. After she made her request, I recall what felt like a long moment of silence. I am not sure if it was 30 seconds, one minute or two but it seemed endless. Then I began to reflect on our friendship. This was my best friend, and she wanted my help on a project that was forty percent of our grade. I was thinking, “I need to focus on my own science project”. However, being the loving child, I was, and not wanting to disappoint my friend, I said, “ok we can work together!” Working together was interesting. Janice came up with ideas and so did I. We did not always agree but together our idea pool expanded by fifty percent giving us many more options to explore.

It is amazing that at the tender age of ten we were collaborating, joining forces, teaming up, and coming together. Because of our decision to work together with her. We both received an A on our project, and yes, Janice Gail is still my friend. Now, some four decades later I realize that what we did back then was co-create. We were not trying to compete for the project we were working together. According to cicoach.com, Co-creating is hardwired into our DNA. Co-creating is working together with others and realizing mutual support and value. It is the basis for building strong community. Co-creating is sharing ideas, listening without judgment,

My Notes

A Question to Consider:

What is the relationship between competition and co-creating?



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and developing ideas together with others. According to Judith Glaser from the book, Conversational Intelligence, when we engage with others in conversations that influence our minds, hearts and spirits we are co-creating. Our leadership lesson from the word is taken from I Corinthians 3:5-9. This passage gives us great insight on what can be accomplished when we move from the “I” position to the “we” position. The bottom line is we need one another for we are co-workers in God’s service.

Partnering Through Competition

How does co-creation begin? It begins simply by recognizing our humanity and seeing our humanity as a case for the grace of God. When we recognize our need for God’s grace then we recognize our need for each other. And that helps us ready ourselves to use the spirit of competition to create positive partnerships. When we compete for common goals and those goals produce positive results that is healthy competition.

I would like to challenge you to see this lesson in a different light. I submit that this passage gives us a glimpse of healthy competition where our goal is the same but our means by getting there differs. You may arrive by boat, car or air but the important thing is that you get there and get the job done. Verse five makes this clear: "One says, 'I belong to Paul', and another, 'I belong to Apollos' ... What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you came to believe, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth ... The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose." The common purpose is to point souls to the cross. The method of pointing may be different, but the goal is the same.

No relationship that means anything is completely free from competitiveness. Neither the fifth-grade science projects nor the church of Jesus Christ is ever going to be free of competitiveness. We will never be past the Paul applause and the Apollos adoration. The goal is to turn all of the energy our differences highlight into a co-creating partnership. Take this one's skills and that one's gifts and blend them together so that the Kingdom is served. Then take this one's energy and that one's drive and co-create out of their differences something beautiful for God.

Who Are We?

Verse six and beyond goes on to say, "What is Paul?" Paul the planter, the founder. Some leadership styles are loyal to team Paul. They work because they don't mind getting their hands dirty. They don't mind picking up and lining up rows. Team Paul is willing to dig no matter how deep. Just get the ditch dug so the Kingdom can be advanced.

And "What is Apollos?" Apollos the waterer, Apollos the new kid on the block, who is changing everything and not a moment too soon. Some leaders compete on the basis of their affinity with Apollos. Some leadership styles need to be rising stars, noticed and affirmed for new ideas. As long as the change serves the Kingdom let's get her done? If what we do as a leader does not positively impact the kingdom then consider not doing it. We are called to be partners who work together for the cause of Christ.

◆ My Notes ◆



Partnership

Competition in most partnerships is normal, it is natural, it is leadership. It is a heady, delicious mix of old and new, tried and untried. But when leaders, clergy and laity, work together competitively, they co-create. Co-creating brings about growth in relationships, ideas, communities, and shared meaning.

In verse 7 we are reminded that it takes all the pieces working together. "Neither the one who plants nor the one who waters are anything, but only God who gives the growth. The one who plants and the one who waters have a common purpose." "For we are God's servants, working together". Or, in the language of the King James Version, "We are laborers together with God."

The Bottom Line

The bottom line is we are laborers, working out of our imperfections, struggling with our incompleteness. As we labor, God is laboring too. God is at work in us and through us in this relationship of leader and leadership.

We are laborers together, in a partnership that builds on our competitive natures. That is co-creating! The bottom line is that you and I are together and at work only because it is God who has been at work ahead of us, God who is at work in us, God who in Jesus Christ has gone before us into the world. That is co-creating! "And we are God's servants, working together" "We are laborers together with God."

What Difference Would It Make:

What benefits might you gain from co-creating?

In what way(s) have you allowed competition to hinder you?

What practice(s) can you implement to ensure a culture in your organization that that encourages co-creation?

How can your core leader or community hold you accountable during moments of competition?

Suggested Resources:

**Kingdom Collaborators: Eight Signature Practices of Leaders
Who Turn the World Upside Down**

by Reggie McNeil

◆ *My Notes* ◆