

## THE LEADER'S EDGE

*“Instruct a wise man and he will be wiser still; teach a righteous man and he will add to his learning.”  
(Proverbs 9:9)*

<p><b>Category:</b> Growing Leaders</p> <p><b>Rating:</b> Content: A- Style: B+</p> <p><b>Memorable Quotes:</b></p> <p><i>“How can I be changed so that others will find me worth following in mission?”</i></p> <p><i>“My best practice must be me. My generation (boomers) tend to look for a better tool, a better model, a better technology. We like to transform things technologically, thinking of ministry as instrumentality, ourselves as CEO, the Holy Spirit as a sort of power cell, and the church as an object we modify. In so doing, we risk creating not much more than a hipper version of irrelevance. A missional perspective springs from a transformed interior life that gives us moral authority to lead God’s people.”</i></p> <p><i>“Convert obsolescence anxiety into the motivation to learn.”</i></p> <p><i>“The evangelistic efforts of sincere Christians flirt with a mental model which reduces the gospel to mere ideas deserving assent and shrinks complicated human beings to invisible spirits,</i></p>	<p style="text-align: center;"><b><u>BOOK SUMMARY</u></b></p> <p><i>Off-Road Disciplines: Spiritual Adventures of Missional Leaders</i> by Earl Creps, Jossey-Bass, 2007.</p> <p><b>Core Content:</b> Creps provides a mental map of the changing ecclesiastical landscape in North America from the perspective of a boomer leader who is exploring the new world of the emergent church. He contends that becoming a missional leader is not so much about methodology as it is about allowing the Holy Spirit to transform one’s interior life through the practice of personal and organizational disciplines. The author argues that the “on road” disciplines of prayer and Bible study need to be supplemented by “off road” disciplines which take place in the context of daily living at the “sidewalk level.”</p> <p><b>PERSONAL DISCIPLINES</b></p> <p><b>1. Death: The Discipline of Personal Transformation</b> Creps challenges leaders to bring their COO (culture of origin) to the cross so as not to confuse their culture with Christ’s mission. We are urged to let go of cherished ministry paradigms and obsolete leadership assumptions in order to embrace the authentic work God’s Spirit wants to do in our souls.</p> <p><b>2. Truth: The Discipline of Sacred Realism</b> The author describes the culture shock many older leaders are experiencing when they come into contact Post-Modernism. He suggests that our response to shifting cultural values can express itself in the following ways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Denial</li><li>- Anger</li><li>- Depression</li><li>- Bargaining</li><li>- Acceptance</li></ul> <p><b>3. Perspective: The Discipline of POV (Point of View)</b> Creps claims we live in <i>tiempos mixtos</i>, mixed times, in which modern, premodern and postmodern expressions swirl together in the same social space, creating the “perfect storm.” Effective missional ministry in this context requires Spirit-engendered wisdom.</p> <p><b>4. Learning: The Discipline of Reverse Mentoring</b> If boomer leaders are to continue to be effective in an ever-changing environment, they must practice “planned dis-obsolescence” by allowing members of the emergent generation to mentor them. Paul</p>
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*radically de-emphasizing other aspects of God's mission such as compassion and justice."*

*Avoid the "folly of rewarding A while hoping for B."*

*"The real source of assessment for Christian leaders therefore becomes not the world's bottom line but the Kingdom's top line. . . The top line is the extent to which we are individually or corporately conformed to His image."*

*"Adopting a missionary approach will require changing the scorecard. Church scorecards currently reflect member values; how many show up, pay up and participate in club member activities. These are the numbers we use to compare one church with another and to establish a pecking order among clergy."*

*"The off-road pathway of repentance offers the potential to attain harmony among different brands of doing church. We must bring our preferences to the cross, allowing anything that stands in the way of a common adoration of Christ and common devotion to His mission to die—the greater the death, the greater the new life. The more of our nonessentials we offer as a living sacrifice, the more our essentials occupy an appropriate position. None is asked to change brands.*

now needs Timothy. This reverse mentoring will require the following steps:

- Check your attitude at the door.
- Ask questions, and then ask some more questions.
- Take notes.
- Don't limit yourself to one person or format.
- If it flops, let it go.
- Reciprocity: from protégé to partner.

### **5. Witness: The Discipline of Spiritual Friendship**

In order for missional leaders to become more effective witnesses, we need to adjust the way we think of people outside of a faith relationship with Jesus Christ. We need to leave behind caricatures such a "souls with ears" or "barbarians to civilize", cultivating a passion for seeing "the sought" (vs. lost) encountering the ultimate Seeker.

### **6. Humility: The Discipline of Decreasing**

The challenge here is to develop a trait we are not allowed to realize we have. Using John the Baptist as a model, Creps talks about Negative humility—"I am not the Christ" and Positive humility—"I am sent ahead of Him". Negative humility entails three things:

- I am not Omniscient, admitting "I don't know"
- I am not Omnipotent, confessing "I can't do it all"
- I am not Omnipresent, declaring "I am not indispensable"

## **ORGANIZATIONAL DISCIPLINES**

### **1. Assessment: The Discipline of Missional Efficiency**

The author prods us to ask ourselves: Are we counting what really counts? Can we find ways to measure genuine life transformation? Here are some questions Creps offers to begin to assess the church more missionally:

- What proportion of our largest meeting is present because of significant faith experience rather than transfer?
- What proportion of our leadership did we develop here by spiritual formation and leadership training?
- How many spiritual conversations have we had this month with unchurched people?
- What are the best stories we can tell about the things God has done among us since our last meeting?
- What have we done recently to help the marginalized people in our context?

### **2. Harmony: The Discipline of Blending Differences**

The author identifies three expressions of church in North America:

- **Gunsmoke Nation: Traditional Church (In the Box)**
- **Frasier Nation: The Contemporary Church (Outside the Box)**
- **Sienfeld Nation: The Experimental Church (Beyond the Box)**

He argues strongly that spiritual leaders need to seek to honour and affirm these differences for the sake of the end user (the Sought).

He believes we can accomplish this in these ways:

- Commonality: Focus on our common mission;

*None are asked to be what they are not. But everyone comes to the cross.”*

*“If we come to Scripture with our minds made up and closed, we will never hear the thunderclap of his Word. All we will hear is what we want to hear, the soothing echoes of our own cultural prejudices.” (John Stott)*

*“The first recorded public statement of apostolic teaching takes place not in a seminary but in response to the curiosity of a throng meeting in the street. This is theology’s natural home.”*

*“Love needs an address. Without a specific location, it remains an abstract idea or sentimental impulse.”*

*“When properly understood, grace elicits more sacrificial service than the Law ever can.”*

*“The mission of Jesus extends to all generations in all times and places, so it requires the kind of community in which ‘your young men will see visions, and your old men will dream dreams.’ The mission happens only if everyone involved is willing to make concessions. For the old this often means releasing their grip on power and position so that their hands are free to open doors for the follow-on generation. For the young, the mission requires living with less than the fullness of*

- Conscience: Give freedom in areas of nonessentials;
- Cultivation: Seek harmony from the middle out, not from the edges in;
- Concentration: Emphasize the positive features of each expression;
- Contribution: Empower each form of church to contribute to the good of the whole from the stance of its strengths.

### **3. Reflection: The Discipline of Discernment**

While appreciating the contribution of formal theologians, Creps urges missional leaders to become practical theologians, contextualizing God’s truth for the common man on the sidewalk. This process will require prioritizing *why* (mission) and *who* (Christology) questions, rather than fixating on *how* (technique) issues. Making our theology alive today requires reflecting on God’s work in all of life and discerning His voice in our historical setting.

### **4. Opportunity: The Discipline of Making Room**

The author refers to “spatial evangelism” which entails making room for the Spirit to draw “the sought” into a saving encounter with the Seeker through a three-dimensional process:

- **The Heart Dimension:** Enlarging our capacity to be lovingly inclusive toward all our neighbours.
- **The Venue Dimension:** Creating a relational environment in which Christ followers and “the sought” can interact meaningfully. This could include “third places”, a variety of public places that host regular, voluntary and informal gatherings of individuals beyond the realms of home and work.
- **The Spirit Dimension:** The infusion of God’s presence and power into the venues in which the Church interacts with “the sought”.

### **5. Sacrifice: The Discipline of Surrendering Preferences**

The author sees Timothy’s submission to undergo circumcision as a pre-requisite to joining Paul in ministry to the Gentiles as a model of younger and older generations partnering in ministry. In order for this kind of mutual ministry to work today, older leaders will need to surrender power and younger leaders will need to lay down personal preferences for the sake of accomplishing the common mission of Christ.

### **6. Legacy: The Discipline of Passing the Baton**

Boomers seem obsessed with the illusion of remaining “forever young.” In order for Christ’s mission to advance, older leaders must become more intentional about building bridges to the next generation of emerging leaders and cultivating more cooperative relationships. “Passing the baton begins in the heart with loving the hand off more than the holding on.” This critical hand off will require that boomer leaders place as much faith in the next runner as they place in themselves. They must also make sure they own something worth passing on as they seek to finish well.

*their preferences for the sake of synergy with their elders, in the certain knowledge that only God leads eternally; the rest of us have to let go eventually.”*

**Discussion Starters**

1. Which of these disciplines are most relevant to you at this stage in your leadership journey?
2. What are some next steps you could take to apply the most pertinent disciplines to your own life and ministry?
3. What relationship with a younger or older leader could have great potential for mutual growth? What would you be willing to do to initiate or deepen this relationship?