I. A LEADERSHIP SLUMP

A. Not long ago Bill found himself in a leadership slump, as leaders do once in a while.

B. There were a half a dozen challenges that he couldn’t seem to solve, despite having meetings with all the right people around the table.

C. About that time, his assistant gave him some new leadership books.
   1. Looking at the stack of books, and looking at his unsolved leadership challenges, he started losing a little confidence. He thought maybe he’d come to the end of his run.
   2. These books were written by brilliant people with lots of initials behind their names, but there are no initials behind Bill’s name.

D. Then a friend wanted him to conduct his wedding.
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1. Bill thought maybe it would be a little booster for him, because he knows he can do weddings.
2. Bill hadn’t had time for the rehearsal, so someone gave him a sheet of how it was supposed to go.
3. It all went as planned until the end, when he realized that there was one last song: “The Lord’s Prayer.”
4. He announced that they were going to be treated by a song, and then he gave the soloist the nod—and she just shook her head no.
5. Bill tried again in case she hadn’t understood, but she kept shaking her head.
6. So, Bill just recited the Lord’s Prayer.
7. He felt like he couldn’t even do a wedding right.

E. The next morning, he got his journal out and was writing about how frustrated he was, and how he was wondering if he knows anything anymore.

F. He felt the Spirit start speaking to him that he did know some things.

II. FROM HERE TO THERE

A. The first thing that came to mind was the idea that leaders move people from here to there.

B. If you’re a leader, you must be able to stand in front of a group of three, thirty, three hundred or thirty thousand and say, “We are here, but someday, by God’s grace, if we link arms, if we focus and sacrifice, if we work and persevere, we are going to wind up there.”

C. It may sound like this is just about vision, about the need to stand in front of people and paint a picture of the future that produces passion in people.
   1. Bill used to think that the very first step in moving people from here to there was simply describing how wonderful life would be if we were all there.
   2. He would cast as hot a vision as he could about what being there would look like, taste like, feel like, and smell like, and then within twenty-four hours he would get an alarming number of e-mails from good people saying, “We like it here.”
   3. So then he would crank up the heat of the vision and stand up the following week, emphasizing how fantastic it would be when we get there.
   4. Then, the next day, the e-mails would roll in: “Nope, we’re staying here.”

D. Bill has learned in the last eighteen to twenty-four months is that the first play is not to make there sound wonderful but to make here sound awful.
   1. Willow Creek Community Church has a food pantry that serves thousands of people every month and a cars ministry in which volunteer mechanics fix up donated cars for single moms.
   2. Both ministries have been housed in leased facilities off the main church campus.
   3. In recent months, God has been speaking to the elders, staff and volunteers about relocating both ministries back on campus, and Bill had to cast the vision for this in front of thousands of Willow’s participating members.
4. As he was preparing that vision talk, he realized that the average member was likely to just cross their arms and ask a legitimate question, “Why can’t both those ministries just stay where they are?” (translated, “We want to stay here”).

5. So, Bill’s first move was to list all the reasons why letting them stay in their current locations was unacceptable:
   a. If the ministries aren’t moved, they will never be able to expand.
      i. In the winter, before the food pantry opens, hundreds of people stand outside in the bitter cold waiting to get in, and many of them don’t have adequate winter coats.
      ii. The cars ministry is crowded, and in an economic recession, they need to serve more single moms, not less.
   b. Because the ministries operate off campus, the recipients don’t make the connection that this generosity is being brought to them by a church, because it’s so far removed from the church.
      i. They’re certainly meeting their physical needs, but we all know that these folks ultimately need God in their lives, and a church home and fellowship.
      ii. If they received help on campus, they would make the association that this love and generosity was coming from a church.
   c. Only a limited number of Willow volunteers even know where these wonderful ministries are. They’re out of sight, out of mind, and many potential volunteers will probably never wind up serving there because it’s just too far away.

6. Then after Bill had built that case, he could talk about what cool things would happen if the ministries were relocated.
   a. At the end of weekend services, Bill could tell people who were worried about feeding their families the next week, that before they leave the campus they could meet with some volunteers and get groceries for a week.
   b. Single moms who heard a bad noise in the car on the way to church could get help from volunteers standing by to fix it.

7. On and on Bill cast that vision, and several times people broke into applause. They understood that they couldn’t stay here for reasons Bill mentioned, and they could see clearly the day when they could be there.

E. Long before Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., the great civil rights leader in the U.S., gave his famous “I Have a Dream” speech, he gave hundreds of speeches that could have been entitled “We Can’t Stay Here” speeches.
   1. Hundreds of times he stood in front of groups of people and said that there’s too much injustice for us to stay here.
   2. Then one day, he turned the corner and gave the speech, “I Have a Dream.”
   3. People were ready for the there speech because they had heard several “We Can’t Stay Here” speeches.

F. Bob Pierce, the founder of World Vision, used to take donors to underdeveloped countries and have them stand in the food lines with little kids who were starving to death.
   1. Bob would say to the donors, “We can’t stay here. This is unconscionable. But with your help, we could go there and feed millions of starving children.”
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2. Bob’s famous line was “We must let our hearts be broken by what breaks the heart of God.” What he was really saying is that staying here breaks the heart of God.

G. Your God-given job is not merely to preside over something, not to pontificate to your underlings how smart you are, not merely to preserve something from its gradual demise; it’s to figure out what God wants to get done in this world, figure out what role you play in that, and then to move something or someone from here to there.

III. FANTASTIC PEOPLE

A. God also reminded Bill that he knew something else: it takes fantastic people if you’re going to move an organization or church from here to there.

1. Recently Bill was in an airport in Asia and rode a sleek, modern train that was completely automated—no driver, no engineer, no safety attendants needed.

2. He thought to himself, “I want to buy one of these things, because every time Willow has to go from here to anywhere all I got to do is load the Creekers up, hit the send button on my laptop and they wind up there. There’s no staff involved, no elders, no deacons, no leadership team, no payroll, no hirings, no firings. How slick is that?”

3. He doesn’t really want it, because one of the greatest joys of leadership is assembling and knitting together teams of fantastic people, who become the catalyst for moving an organization from here to there.

B. Bill has probably been spending more time on that than on almost any other thing in leadership for the last two-and-a-half years since he stepped back into his operational role at Willow and he’s had to put a bunch of new teams together.

C. When Bill is building teams, he looks for the 3 C’s: character, competence and chemistry.

D. In recent months, he has been playing with the idea of adding another C: culture.

1. By that he means: “What kind of person flourishes on our unique team? What kind of person feels at home on our team, and what kind of person is never going to catch stride?”

2. This has been rigorous work, as they’ve had to slow down and ask themselves some questions:
   a. What do we value here on our staff team?
   b. How do we work?
   c. What’s our style?
   d. What matters to us and what doesn’t in the work environment?

3. They’ve put those things in writing so they’re clear about their culture and so when they’re thinking of hiring someone they can consider if the person will fit in their unique culture, or if the person might be better off in another church environment.

4. The Willow culture is high-challenge, fast-changing, results-oriented, and sacrificial to the core.

5. So if someone is looking for a low-challenge, status quo, emotionally coddling, rarely sacrificing culture, they should walk away. They’ll never be happy at Willow.
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SURVEY YOUR SITUATION  [1 HOUR 55 MINUTES]

› As your leadership edge is sharpened during each session, we believe the Holy Spirit is connecting with and speaking to your heart. Therefore, we have provided suggested questions for you to use as discussion starters with your team. (If you’re working through this tool on your own, you can use them for reflection and journaling.) Our hope is that these questions serve God’s purposes in growing you and your team.

› If your team has more than eight people, we suggest dividing into groups of four to seven people so that everyone has an opportunity to participate.

1. Share your initial thoughts and reactions to the content of this session.

2. Bill talked about how leaders move people from here to there, and how your first step should be making staying here seem awful, before casting the vision for moving there.

   a. What are some areas that your team is trying to move people from here to there?

   b. Choose one of those areas and take fifteen minutes to identify the reasons that staying here is unacceptable. Capture your ideas on a flipchart or whiteboard.

   c. Review the reasons you listed and vote on the top three reasons you need to be sure to communicate when you try to get people on board with the change.
d. Once you’ve established that you can’t stay here, you can start talking about how great it will be there. Take another ten minutes to identify the key elements of your vision for moving there.

e. Again, review the reasons you listed and vote on the top three that you should communicate when casting the vision for moving there.

f. Wrap up your discussion by identifying if there are any changes you need to make in your plans or communication about the change from here to there, in light of what you discussed.

3. Bill said that “one of the unspeakable privileges of leading is the holy challenge of assembling, developing and inspiring a team of fantastic people.” Your team may or may not have responsibility for leading a group of people other than yourselves. If you do, respond to the questions for Option A. If you don’t, respond to the questions for Option B.

**Option A:** Bill talked about the various reactions you might have if a staff member resigned. You might feel relieved about some and utterly sickened by others. An important task for you as leaders is to identify both groups of people and act accordingly. You may not be prepared to do a full evaluation of your staff or volunteers right now, so use this time to talk about if and how you might want to do that in the future. The following are some questions you might consider.

- □ How do we want to evaluate who the fantastic people are on our team? (You might consider Bill’s C’s: character, competency, chemistry and culture.)
- □ How will we ensure that the fantastic people are developed and inspired?
- □ How should we handle the not fantastic people on our team?
- □ Can we develop any of the not fantastic people into fantastic people by working on their character, competency or chemistry or on our culture?
- □ What are the elements of our culture that make people thrive there?