

LEADERSHIP BY MAGICAL THINKING

THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF A NEW TOMORROW IS NECESSARY TO BEGIN THE JOURNEY TO THE FUTURE.

But it is just the beginning. The vision must not only be widely understood and passionately embraced. If it is to be genuinely transforming, it must be effectively executed and powerfully sustained.

There is the leadership work of conceiving and giving birth to the vision. And there is the leadership work of raising the vision to maturity. These are very different challenges. The first involves generating and communicating a picture of the future. While this is hard work indeed, the amount of effort required pales in comparison to the challenge of raising the vision to maturity.

A transforming vision effectively communicated initiates personal and collective movement toward the future. But this movement must be embraced in ever-widening circles of ownership.

THIS MOVEMENT TOWARD THE FUTURE MUST BE POWERFULLY SUSTAINED IF IT IS TO MAKE A LASTING DIFFERENCE IN A WORLD SET AGAINST THE REALIZATION OF THE VISION.

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LEADERSHIP BY MAGICAL THINKING HAPPENS MORE THAN YOU THINK, ESPECIALLY AMONG LEADERS IN BIBLICAL COMMUNITIES WHO ARE GIFTED AT CASTING A VISION.

It plays out like this. The “magical leader” believes that somehow the mere saying of the God-given vision is all that is necessary to bring it forth in the real world.

In other words, it is the thinking that the possession of will and the expression of words are enough to fulfill one’s leadership obligations to the organization or community.

BUT, THE SAYING OF THE VISION IS NOT A MAGICAL INCANTATION. LEADERS CAN SPEAK FORTH A VISION ALL DAY BUT NOTHING ACTUALLY HAPPENS SOLELY AND ONLY BECAUSE THE LEADER HAS SPOKEN.

This is not to undermine the power of casting a compelling vision. But it is to say that words must be combined with deeds if things are to change. Spiritual leaders are not telekinetic. If they were, the vision would already be a reality and we could all go home.

Consider this strange-but-true story. The Miami Hurricanes men's basketball team called a time out with an 84-82 lead and 18 seconds left in a 1993 college basketball game against the Pittsburgh Panthers. Miami was so intent on discussing what play to run during the time out that players and coaches failed to hear the warning horns signaling the resumption of play. With Miami still in its huddle, the refs gave the ball to Pittsburgh who scored an uncontested lay-up to tie the game and went on to win 86-84. The play may indeed have been brilliant, but they never ran it and lost the game.

ASPIRATION IS NOT ACTION. INTENTION IS NOT EXECUTION. HOPE IS NOT A PLAN. READINESS IS NOT A RESULT. BRILLIANT IDEAS, PERSUASIVE WORDS MUST BE TRANSLATED INTO CONCRETE DEEDS TO CHANGE A WORLD RESOLUTELY COMMITTED TO THE STATUS QUO.

So, every leader must ask the question, "What are we actually doing to pursue a better future?"

Work with us
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