

THE LEADING EDGE
leaders worth following
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Earl Creps' monthly leadership newsletter
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FasTrak: from MA to D.Min. eligibility in half the time

Thinking about a D.Min., but not sure how to get there? Our new pre-doctoral program can take a qualified MA holder in full-time ministry to academic eligibility for the D.Min. (M.Div. Equivalency) in half the time using a specially designed course format available in dozens of courses taught in a number of locations around the country. <http://www.agts.edu/fastrak/index.html>

New D.Min. cohort begins June 20-24, 2005 @ AGTS

- Leadership focus
 - Pentecostal perspective
 - In-service convenience
 - Cohort experience
 - Customizable program
 - Contact: lodea@agts.edu
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Impact player: Chuck Haavik

University of Minnesota-Duluth Chi Alpha pastor Chuck Haavik is a member of D.Min. Cohort 7. Chuck's leadership in mission to the Duluth campus is having wide-ranging implications. I spoke with him recently at a Chi Alpha conference, and learned that the student ministry on campus, which has been thriving, is now networking with believers in Europe. Chuck is working with these networks to train student teams for a growing mission to several countries on the continent. Go, cohort 7!

Internet resources : *Encounter Journal* leadership issue

The current issue of *Encounter*, the AGTS journal of practical theology is available online. The theme of the issue is "Leadership," with articles "The Leadership Style of Jesus," "Making Meetings Work," "Servant Leadership" and several other very useful themes. Check it out at: <http://www.encounterjournal.com/current.html>

Statistics: Internet church a hit

The Methodist Church of Great Britain has started the internet's first virtual church (<http://www.churchoffools.com>). In an effort to reach people as church attendance has continued to decline, the church has created a virtual world in which users take on an "avatar" computer character and can enter a computerized worship service. The Church of England will launch its

own "i-church" next month. The Church of Fools received 68,000 hits in its first two days.
--*Newsweek* May 31, 2004, p.10, in *Ivy Jungle Newsletter*, June 2004.

Read this book: *The Character of Organizations*

William Bridges has updated his book, *The Character of Organizations* (Davies-Black Publishing) using Personality Type in Organization Development, based on the MBTI assessment. The book is useful in helping an organization or group self-assess its culture and operating styles and includes an Organizational Character Index assessment.

http://www.amazon.com/exec/obidos/tg/detail/-/0891061495/qid=1106006750/sr=1-1/ref=sr_1_1/103-3588251-9715806?v=glance&s=books

Quotable: Failure

"Failure should be our teacher, not our undertaker. Failure is delay, not defeat. It is a temporary detour, not a dead end. Failure is something we can avoid only by saying nothing, doing nothing, and being nothing."

--Denis Waitley

LeaderLife: "Forgive me, Bob"

Bill Easum writes that, "Vision is often determined by who you spend most of your time with. Consider Paul's call to the Gentiles in Asia Minor. Paul was in Antioch working among Gentiles when he had the vision of the man asking him to come over to Macedonia. So the question might be for some of us, with whom are we spending most of our time? If it is among church people, then our vision is focused on them. If it is among the unwashed, non-Christian, pagan gentiles, it is most likely for them."

Yesterday I was in a coffee house for lunch with a pastor and a subsequent meeting with a friend and prospective student. I noticed that an owner of the establishment (I'll call him Bob) was behind the counter taking orders. This is a person with whom I talked several times a week when I first started frequenting the coffee house during my days as a pastor in Springfield. He and I had become friends, and even spoken of spiritual matters more than once.

Then my life and my job changed, and I found myself in an office or on the road, or just generally with Christians almost all the time. No amount of confession or hand-wringing ever seemed to cure this condition. It is the lot of parachurch professionals like me. But Bob's life changed, too. He opened some new "franchises" for his business and began spending some time there. Somehow, a couple years passed without us talking or even seeing each other.

Until yesterday. When I walked up to the counter with my friend Greg to order rice & bean soup + half a turkey wrap sandwich, there he was--Bob. We were a little nervous at first, playing eye tag for a moment or so. I imagine neither of us was sure where our relationship stood or wanted to presume on the other. Then, our eye contact trajectories finally crossed for the appropriate number of seconds and we said "hello." It felt right, like no time had passed at all.

Later, Bob brought our lunches to the table personally. I hadn't seen that in a long time, so I started talking to him, inquiring about the success of the new businesses and expressing regret for not having spoken to him for so long. I also assured Bob that his coffee house was still my "home" no matter how many others he (or anyone else) opened.

Bob replied that he had seen me at the coffee house several times recently and had wanted to stop by, "but you seem so busy."

Those five words cut me. My friends were still talking, but I really didn't hear anything they said for the next minute or so. Then I regained my composure and pretended that I was OK until I had to move on to my next meeting—with a Christian.

I can't get this off my mind for three reasons:

1. *Vision Drift*: If Easum is right, my almost exclusive relationship with Christians will eventually transform the missional vision that was ignited in me by the revivals of the mid-90's into an "insider" vision that doesn't even serve insiders well! Don't get me wrong: I love the Church, I love God's people, and I enjoyed being a pastor. But Easum's comments just make too much sense to be ignored. Vision does have a context. I cannot let this kind of vision drift happen, and I will not.

2. *Ministry Drift*: If Bob is right, spiritual seekers view me as unapproachably busy, making the ministry the thing that deters them from relationship with me, rather than the thing that attracts them. It's amazing what can happen when it's you, the Holy Spirit, people who need Christ, and some really good coffee. God is just so very capable without my help, but I must not let ministry activity become more important than the people that the ministry is supposed to reach. When this kind of drift happens, the means have become the end.

3. *Schedule Drift*: Without realizing it, I had assumed during the earlier part of my friendship with Bob that our regular contact would continue unabated. It never occurred to me, as mid-life males, both of us would experience lots of changes. When we did, I had no fallback position, no plan for continuing the relationship in a different format or with a new schedule. This was a crucial error on the practical side of things. If I'm going to be serious about personal evangelism, I must be ready to roll with the punches, adapting the relationship to new circumstances, not as a strategy, but because I love this person and care about their welfare.

I don't write these words because my experience is somehow extraordinary. On the contrary, the average leader I know would give almost anything for this kind of contact with people who are alienated from God, but feels trapped by the machinery of ministry. I have profound admiration for ministers who maintain an evangelistic edge in their personal lives. God help us all to receive his grace in this regard.

Part of Jesus' amazing impact on people was that he grew up among them, spent time with them, and touched them when they needed it. Perhaps it is no accident, then, that one of the first things the Church did after the Spirit came upon them in Acts 2 was to pour out of the upper room and into the streets where some brave soul asked, "What meaneth this?" If my life is provoking spiritual questions among people who haven't experienced God's love in Christ, then the right things are happening.

How long has it been since, prompted by your life, an unbeliever asked you a spiritual question?

Forgive me, Bob.

Be a leader worth following,

Earl

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D.Min. program mission: transforming leaders to transform their organizations

D.Min. program vision: leaders worth following

D.Min. program values:

- **the extra mile**—others before ourselves
- **the personal touch**—everyone counts
- **the cutting edge**—we get there first
- **the real deal**—authenticity in everything
- **the better way**—listen to improve
- **the positive word**—choose to encourage

- **the unique person**—enjoy diversity
- **the X factor**—synergy through trust and truth

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