

THE LEADING EDGE
Leaders Worth Following
October 2005

Earl Creps' Monthly Leadership Newsletter
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In This Issue:

- *Impact Player:* Gary Denbow (Cohort 2)
- *New! 4 D.Min. Concentrations*
- *FasTrak:* From MA to M.Div. Equivalency in Half the Time
- *Internet Resources:* SBC Young Leaders Listening Project & Leadership Potential
- *Statistics:* Free Agents in California
- *Read This Book:* Preaching Re-Imagined
- *Quotable:* Still Crazy
- *LeaderLife:* N-2

Impact Player: Gary Denbow (Cohort 2)

Having recently installed Dr. Gary Denbow as president, Central Bible College in Springfield, Missouri becomes the 5th institution of higher education in the Assemblies of God to be led by a graduate of the AGTS D.Min. program. Congratulations, Mr. President!

New! 4 D.Min. Concentrations

Beginning with the February 2006 cohort, the AGTS Doctor of Ministry program will feature concentrations in Missional Leadership, Biblical Preaching, Military Chaplaincy, and Self-Designed Study. Following three Core courses, participants will be able to choose the concentration that is optimal for their ministry setting. For more information contact the D.Min. office (lodea@agts.edu).

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 many locations around the country. Check it out on the web at: <http://www.agts.edu/fastrak/index.html>.

Internet Resources: SBC Young Leaders Listening Project & Leadership Potential

- <http://www.lifeway.com/lwc/mainpage/0%2C1701%2CM%3D200456%2C00.html>
Check out the Southern Baptist Convention's listening project among its younger leaders, a significant effort to connect with under-35 leaders by a major denomination.
- <http://eric.uoregon.edu/publications/digests/digest115.html>
This outstanding article has some really helpful insights on "Measuring Leadership Potential," especially in regard to the limits of tests and surveys. Worth a read. (Also: the ERIC database where this article is posted has a lot of useful information on leadership—it would pay to surf around after reading this piece.)

Statistics: Free Agents in California

"How many California residents hold conventional, full-time, 40-hour-a-week jobs? One-third. Hmmm ... has California ever led the nation in any trend before?"

-- [Dan Pink](#), contributing editor, Fast Company and author, *Free Agent Nation*

Read This Book: *Preaching Re-Imagined*

Doug Pagitt's book deconstructs virtually everything most of us have been taught about the methods and purpose of preaching. You may not agree with his notion of replacing "speaching" with "progressional dialogue," but the challenge Doug offers is a healthy one to engage. Not for those who are unwilling to re-think their assumptions. Check it out at:

<http://www.amazon.com/gp/product/0310263638/102-5394960-3289727?v=glance&n=283155&s=books&v=glance>.

Quotable: Still Crazy

"A leader is a fellow who refuses to be crazy the way everybody else is crazy and tries to be crazy in his own crazy way."

--Peter Maurin, in *CT*

LeaderLife: N-2

I'm in a departure lounge at Seatac (the Seattle-Tacoma airport) waiting to board a plane just minutes before writing this column. Across the narrow aisle from me is a thirtyish man sitting on a veined, black vinyl chair just like mine. But his situation couldn't be more different. He is speaking in hushed, earnest tones to two children, a boy and a girl, who look to be in their early elementary years. The man, whom I will call Tom (I overheard his real name when he made a too-loud cell phone call), is using adult words like "closure" in his monologue with the kids.

Tom is explaining to these two squirmy youngsters why another child won't be around any more. Kurt is dead. (another pseudonym)

Pretending to read just four feet away, overhearing the entire conversation is not something I can avoid. At first I am angry: why on earth is this young father explaining a child's death at gate N-2 instead of at home in private. A small wave of compassion tells me that he probably has no choice. I mean who would have this conversation at gate N-2 if they had any other option? But as the conversation gets more and more intense and detailed, I get more and more embarrassed, wishing I could close down my auditory nerves, temporarily putting my ears on "mute." It's all too private, too painful for N-2.

Tom's eyes are rimmed in red, as he sends the stunned children off to the newsstand, carefully coaching them never to be more than one arm's length from each other. Kurt is much farther away. The break gives Tom the chance to place the cell phone call—which only makes things worse for me. Now Tom is pouring his heart out to someone on the other end, venting anger and confusion about the gaping wound in his heart, saying things he doesn't want the kids to overhear. He seems to have no problem with me overhearing them. I'm wishing I was one of the kids just now—off at the newsstand.

The shame begins to rise inside me. Why am I not helping Tom? He is only three paces away. Aren't I supposed to be a minister? Don't I give brave speeches about evangelism and being "missional" all over the country? Why can't I take those three paces?

Maybe my own baggage is too heavy? I'm thinking more about my reaction to Tom's pain than about the pain itself. Or it could be the shock of having something like this in my path so

suddenly. Maybe it's just the fact that there is no opportunity to speak to Tom that doesn't seem so intrusive as to do more harm than good. But that's an awfully convenient explanation.

I'm on the airplane now, typing this, and drinking tomato juice with ice and a lemon wedge. Tom and the kids are seated somewhere behind me. They are on a grim pilgrimage to Colorado. I'm just passing through on the way home. My biggest trauma will be filing travel reports.

Didn't John the Baptist and Jesus both preach that the kingdom of heaven was near? (Matt. 3:2; 4:17) Almost-meeting Tom tells me that it still is, as near as someone else's pain. That's the site where the Spirit is always wanting to draw close to people (Is. 57:15), and the place that Jesus said he was anointed to bring healing (Lk. 4:18).

The opportunity for the kingdom to break out is a lot closer than I thought. The opportunity to live a witness to someone is as close as Tom is to me right this second. In fact, everyone on this 757 has a place in his or her life where the kingdom is near. Could evangelism be as simple as discerning that place and touching it with love?

We're only half-way to Denver, so let's pray: "Father, in Jesus name, let your grace free me (us) from all the baggage that holds us back from being agents of your kingdom. Make me (us) more sensitive to your Spirit's leading, trusting you the same way 1:1 that we would in a large group service. Put your hand on Tom's life and on the lives of all the "Tom's" I (we) will meet in the days ahead. Comfort him, and draw him into marvelous light so he can see your face in Jesus. Give me grace in Denver. Amen."

I haven't done anything to help Tom. His conversations are public; his pain is private. But there is always Denver...

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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