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Gibbs, Eddie. *Leadership Next: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture*. Downers Grove, Illinois: InterVarsity Press, 2005. 229 pp. \$16.00

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*Leadership Next: Changing Leaders in a Changing Culture* by Eddie Gibbs is an overview of the challenges, transitions, and cultural changes impacting leaders and the organizations that they govern. Gibbs explores both observable changes within culture and the subtle influential trends that impact the efficacy of current and emerging leaders. Gibbs challenges leaders in the church with the need to move beyond the methodologies or paradigms that shape traditional approaches of ministry. This emphasis is particularly vital, not merely for the survival of a given organization or congregation, but more importantly for the fulfilling of the mandate of the Great Commission.

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The opening chapters address how leadership style is fostered within the ministry, suggesting that the context to which a particular person has been exposed plays a profound impact upon how they will lead. Specifically, leadership is many times shaped by “inherited patterns of hierarchy.” Thus, many older leaders continue to present their paradigms to emerging leaders, who in turn continue such patterns of leadership. When such is the model, Gibbs suggests that dysfunctional and inhibited environments and paradigms are formed. The outcome of such structures then leads to congregations that are unable to contextually embrace the ministry opportunities that are presented in the twenty-first century.

With the unpredictability of today's culture, Gibbs shares that there is a necessity for alternative approaches. These alternatives include: discernment of the culture and its current influences, reconnecting to the mission given to the church in Matthew 28:19, a missional responsiveness, the decentralization of leadership, and the building of teams within the organization. He shares that such considerations are necessary in order to align effective strategies that develop training and methodologies that respond to the crisis in leadership.

Gibbs tackles the subject of the conceptual change that has imposed unprecedented difficulties in reaching today's under thirty-five crowd. The postmodern technological culture that most influences the lifestyle of this age demographic challenges leaders to move at a faster pace and connect on a different

level with those that are targeted by the church. The challenge now is to encourage and foster connectivity among others in order to experience compassionate, effective, and empowered communities, facilitating the ministry of discipleship. Ministry is now forced to raise its awareness and discernment as to pursue with intent the “conceptualizing” of the gospel, diminishing naïve perspectives, and recognizing that every culture, whether modern or postmodern, possesses good, neutral, and destructive elements.

Gibbs shares approaches and concepts that align with many business practices, such as the need to create “institutional culture.” The author provides these parameters as a means of facilitating clear and articulate vision and mission objectives. Though he clearly states the need for the leader to lead in this process, there is strong emphasis on the need for networking and input by others within this process. This is summarized in his belief that creativity, passion, and a pioneering spirit are only truly effective when as characteristic traits are partnered with others who come alongside the objective. Therefore, the idea of team development seems to provide a richer source of leadership and allows organizations to thrive.

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The writing gives careful evaluation toward some of the ideologies that serve to marginalize and dismantle Christendom. Such concepts as secularization and pluralism seek to undermine the traditional values and teachings of Scripture. Such societal propensities compete for the thoughts and belief systems of those whom the church seeks to reach with the gospel. Gibbs shares, “Such smorgasbord spirituality does not readily respond to traditional styles of Christian outreach. A come-to-us strategy of invitational evangelization is less and less effective” (49).

In critiquing the writing, Gibbs provides helpful observation concerning “top down” leadership to be well communicated. This is particularly observable and emphasized within church environments that not only embrace spirituality components, but also clearly retain unspoken cultural overtones. Such context is found most readily within the traditional African American church tradition. The typology of leadership that Gibbs presents is frequently observable by its strong, hierarchal structure and the belief that the senior pastor is the embodiment of all spiritual and social matters within the local congregation and community as a whole. Certainly, this must be evaluated with an historical perspective that even Gibbs acknowledges such criteria cannot be overlooked or underestimated. However, such inherited patterns of hierarchy, status, and perceived indispensable mores result in an environment that is dependent and very often dysfunctional. Furthermore, the more desired relational and empowered community is nonexistent due to the enabling boundaries that pose as supportive concepts. The ability for true community (utilizing the resources of people ministering to people)

is diminished, and emphasis of ministry is placed upon the priest versus the priesthood of the believer. Gibbs strongly proposes that such forms of leadership undermine and disconnect the leader and the church from those in which the church has been called to evangelize through apostolic ministry.

The writing firmly presents the importance of connecting people directly to the mandate of the Great Commission given by the Lord Jesus Christ. Many leaders, and specifically pastors, struggle with the integration process that facilitates the growth and development of disciples versus mere pastoral care and support methodologies. The work of making disciples (as supported by the writer's views) is best grasped when other disciples are sharing in the multiplication process. He very thoughtfully provides the account of the early church and its impact globally. Here lies the strength of the book. Gibbs clearly notes not only the importance of people being a part of the team, but he also relates the necessary element of faith and "divine convergence" within the overall influential factor. The idea that God is partnering with us to reach others is clear and further affirmed by virtue that such biblical emphasis facilitates effective communal ministry versus enabling concepts of individualism and isolation.

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One area that I initially disagreed with Gibbs was in his definition of vision, and subsequently how vision and mission are implemented. He shares that the mission is that which identifies an organization's central, abiding, and nonnegotiable task (149). Furthermore, the mission is our responsive obedience to the Great Commission. He further contrasts his definition of mission with that of vision. Vision, as presented by Gibbs, is the interpretation and application of mission into a specific context. Generally, I have viewed the vision of an organization as being the abiding and nonnegotiable task identifiable within any organization. It has been my belief that such presentation allows the mission to serve the vision with definable, measurable, and interpretative applications. However, in summary, the author's point is well stated in that it demonstrates that the vision may evolve as cultural and contextual dynamics change. The mission stays consistent in its objective and priorities, providing foundation and direction to the leader.

Gibbs' pragmatic review and advice are refreshing. He shares leadership perspectives that many times are overlooked or kept quiet from the general populace. It is possible that a leader may guard or downplay the areas of ministry that are not so pleasant or that may be viewed by others as reasons to not engage in ministry leadership. But, it is clear that these challenges and realities are better observed from a forthright perspective than merely from a problem-solving, retrospective posture. Though Gibbs is an academician, he asserts that not

everything can be learned in seminary. Emerging leaders must seek to secure a generic approach toward personal, church, and para-church organizational growth. He further echoes his agreement with other proponents that even the subject of church growth must now move more to an understanding of church health. The combination of biblical mandate, cultural understanding, and healthy leadership development will subsequently aid the development of healthy churches.

*Leadership Next* serves as an informative and comprehensive tool for pastors, seminarians, and lay persons that are intentional in regard to their pursuit of fresh perspectives of church growth. Principles presented in the writing will not fare well within egocentric, self-gratifying, or performance-driven constructs. However, those who are prayerfully contemplative and serious about providing resources of ministry that are identifiably transformational, will find this writing to be enlightening, reinforcing, and relevant to the discussion of church health. The author does not skirt the issues based upon the comfort level of the reader; but rather, he shares well-proven, contextualized, contemporary, leadership traits that have their foundation within historic church principles. The author encourages ongoing evaluation and exploration of the processes that secure, prepare, and develop leadership. He remains optimistic in his belief that the world is in need of more leaders groomed within such context. These emerging leaders will not merely retain theory, but will pursue avenues of connectivity with the emerging culture, quite possibly experiencing results that affirm that God is yet adding to His church daily.

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Dwight J. Friesen. *Thy Kingdom Connected: What the Church Can Learn from Facebook, the Internet, and Other Networks*. Grand Rapids: Baker, 2009. pp. 192. \$14.99.

Reviewed by Doug Wilson. Doug is the Associate Professor of Old Testament and Intercultural Studies at the University of Mobile in Alabama. His ministry focus is to equip university students to be global disciple makers for Christ.

Canadian Dwight J. Friesen has deep roots in Washington State. He served as the founding pastor of Quest in Bellevue, and now he is a faculty member at Mars Hill Graduate School in Seattle. *Thy Kingdom Connected* is the tenth in the *ēmerision*: series published by Baker Books.

*Thy Kingdom Connected* is pithy and to the point. Friesen's chapters are concise, always less than fifteen pages. He understands the concept of verbal ecology. Get to the point. Waste nothing.