

MAXWELL LEADERSHIP AND BLIND SPOTS REFLECTION

1

Maxwell Leadership and Blind Spots Reflection

Student: Athaley Albania

albaniaa@allianceu.edu

Program: Master of Arts – Intercultural Studies

Alliance Theological Seminary

March 6, 2023

Maxwell Leadership and Blind Spots Reflection

**Current level of leadership and reflection:**

My current level of leadership is barely at a level 1 according to the leadership assessment from John Maxwell (Maxwell, 2011). Part of the reason why I assessed my level to be low is because I am new in the ministry context which I am leading in, but also in previous leadership opportunities I have served as a member of the team and not as the primary, go to leader. I tried to assess myself as accurately and honestly as possible. Honestly speaking, I feel uncomfortable thinking of myself in a “position” of leadership, as I somewhat shy away from holding titles that would cause me to be “ranked” above others. I would rather people value my character and follow me because I have something to offer and not because of a position or a title that I hold. On the flip side of that argument, the reason that one is holding a certain position or title would be because they are qualified for it in the first place.

Reflecting on this level 1 assessment, I now realize that I can take more ownership of the leadership opportunities that I have been given and that some of the boundaries that I have created, such as not being flexible outside of working hours, are keeping me back from growing in leading others better and holding me back from increasing my capacity. In the ministry maturing process I find myself in a cycle of continually surrendering to the Lord and trying to be faithful with what I have been given, then when I become comfortable in where I am the Lord brings me back to surrender again. I am grateful for how God has provided for me, specifically throughout my time at ATS, and He continues to prove how faithful He is in my life. I recognize I still could be a better steward, especially with my time and my finances. I can spend more time developing my intimacy with Jesus, making space for Him to speak to me personally, socially, and refine how I hear Him and to obey where He is calling me to.

One strength I have is in the way that I can connect with others. I am naturally extroverted and so I am friendly in most cases and show genuine interest in others. This is a strength in leadership because it is important for people to feel comfortable approaching their leader. A weakness that I have is in planning and preparation. I often like to go with the flow and do things spontaneously, but others do need more of a solid schedule to provide guidance for where they are meant to be and a solid timeline to follow. I see my leadership style as more egalitarian (Van Vugt, 2008), wanting to include every individual in some way when there are decisions that need to be made. This is different from democratic leadership because I do not feel that voting is always a good way to make decisions, as it can create an “us versus them” scenario and create division in a group.

**Describe your significant blind spots:**

I asked my former co-leaders and ministry team members about my blind spots both in soul and leadership. For those who I have known growing up in my home church, one of the main blind spots was in how I can come off as harsh to others. I tend to joke around in situations, and I like to tease as well to lighten the mood, but there are times when I might take things too far without realizing that it is hurtful for the other person and they may grow uncomfortable being around me. I can be more aware of how my words are affecting others in those scenarios rather than assuming right away that they already know that I am the type of person who doesn't take things too seriously.

Another blind spot that was revealed was that I need to commit to things more head on and confident in my decisions. I feel as though this was something that I have already worked on a lot, considering that I made the commitment to pursue a degree at ATS and uproot my life in the process. I do see now though that in smaller, daily commitments or even decisions that might require some planning instead of “being spontaneous,” I leave things until the last minute before

making a choice because it feels like too much pressure and I try to expand on the different opinions and perspectives on what the right route for me is, as I am afraid to make a mistake.

This leads into the third blind spot of mine which was shared with me by the person who I have gotten to know the most recently out of those who responded to me. This person said that I need confidence in my calling, and to “make decisions without getting an ok from anyone else but the Lord.” I asked if she could clarify if that means I need to just trust God rather than asking others, but she voiced that this was where I need to think about it more on my own and with the Lord.

**What were the most significant lessons you learned from your experience?**

There was somewhat of an overlap between the different feedback that I was given about blind spots, although not direct overlap necessarily. Since moving to the East Coast, I was not connected to a church community or serving in any ministry context until the last few months. Because of this, some of those who I asked about blind spots were from a version of myself from 3 years ago. Though I feel that it is still helpful to know about what their experience was like from that time, I felt that it was not an accurate representation of who I am now. Nonetheless, it still allowed for me to see a perspective that I had not seen before and so I can be aware of how I treat others moving forward.

One major overlap was related to the way I interact with people can be misunderstood and be taken negatively. More than one person said that I can be rather blunt when correcting others, to that point where it comes off as being insensitive. This was not as big of a shock to me to hear, but I think in a context where I feel very comfortable with those around me, or I feel that people know me well, I won't hold back my opinion about a situation.

Another lesson that I learned from this exercise was that covering my insecurities or

avoiding them does not get rid of them. It sounds obvious, and though I do see that I've improved over the years, there are still hurts that I

This exercise was painful for me, but I see that it is necessary. I felt that as I was hearing feedback, it was revealing more of my insecurities that I cover by overcompensating with a false confidence or using humor to cover up the ways I feel uncomfortable or try to avoid conflict. I was deeply humbled hearing the blind spots from those who I have known for a long time, and from those who I am more newly acquainted with. I realize that it can also be a positive thing that people are willing to be honest with me when asked, as they value my growth enough to be brutally honest, with love.

**How does this impact how you are currently doing ministry?**

Seeing that my blind spot of being unaware of when I'm taking jokes too far interacts with what I have viewed as a strength of making connections easily is allowing me to reconsider how I communicate with others. This impacts how I am currently doing ministry because I have to be more sensitive to others in how they might understand what I'm saying. I think it's important for me to be aware that others do not always share my sense of humor and that even those that are close to me can be hurt by my playfulness inadvertently. I have to stop using my defense mechanism of joking around or "not being so serious" to ease the tension of conflict, but choose to be uncomfortable in a situation and face conflict more head on. I want to find the balance of taking things seriously enough, but also providing that comic relief or lightening the mood.

In the need to take ownership of my leadership opportunities, I must find my confidence in Christ and not allow my insecurities to keep me from fully committing to the ministry that the Lord is calling me into. Recently, I have been having doubts about my abilities to serve in

specific ways because of a lack of experience, and to some extent what I feel might be a lack of passion too. I am reflecting more on my insecurities of rejection need to be surrendered to the Lord so that I can minister more fully. When I react from a place of my insecurity it prevents me from knowing those who I am in community with, and it creates a barrier of intimacy with my community and with God. When I allow God into my hurt, He can heal me and work me through the inner healing necessary, that I might love others and see them and love them as Christ loves them.

**What are the implications for doing leadership in the future?**

An implication for doing leadership in the future after knowing my leadership level, leadership style, blind spots for improvement and the insecurities that those blind spots stem from is that I need to allow myself to process my insecurity, open myself up to the pain that it comes with, and to walk in confidence in my decisions by trusting and obeying what is asked of me from the Lord. When I can walk in leadership from a place of confidence that is not prideful or used to cover insecurity, I will be a better representation of Christ and can love others well. I am currently at a crossroads in my life where I am trying to decide where I will be after graduation. Not just in terms of ministry position but considering organizational changes and whether to relocate once again, I am feeling the weight of the decisions that need to be made. I need to be okay with having a title and letting others come to me, and I need to be confident that I will be able to answer others' questions but also know when to be honest and say I don't know what to do. I want to be a leader who takes care of her team, and honors each team member's individual talents, gifts, abilities, and grow alongside them in the process of ministering to others.

**References:**

Maxwell, J. C. (2011). *The 5 Levels of Leadership: Proven Steps to Maximize Your Potential*. Hachette UK.

Van Vugt, M., Hogan, R., & Kaiser, R. B. (2008). Leadership, followership, and evolution: Some lessons from the past. *American Psychologist*, 63(3), 182–196.  
<https://doi.org/10.1037/0003-066x.63.3.182>