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Committed to Serve Leaders

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EDITORIAL

COMMITTED TO SERVE LEADERS

A few days ago I had an unexpected leadership lesson from an unlikely source. It happened on a safari in Nairobi National Park, near Nairobi, Kenya, where I spent a couple days at a Christian leadership summit with a group of world leaders who were gathered to discuss the leadership development needs in the different world fields of the church. We started just after sunrise in a small bus venturing into the territory of buffaloes, giraffes, gazelles, zebras and of course lions. After endless hours of reports and discussions, and even longer nights of emails and online courses, this was a welcome break. And we were lucky. After a couple of hours of crisscrossing the terrain, someone finally spotted her: a female lion at the bank of a water hole.

When the lion was pointed out, at first I saw nothing—just a rock formation in the grass. But then the shadows on the rock seemed to change too quickly and it became clear that this was indeed a female lion, lying in wait for the zebras she knew were scheduled to get a drink. What kept me spellbound was the focus of the lion. Even though our vehicle must have been annoyingly close and noisy, she rarely gave us a look. She continued to stare at the group of zebras beyond the water. Eventually the lion got up and crossed our path to get away from us. But she did that while never moving her eyes away from the zebras in the distance. Here was an animal with focus. I could not but be fascinated by this magnificent animal which knew but one goal: the zebras beyond the water hole. Eventually she disappeared into the grass, an undisturbed spot to keep watch over the zebras.

What made this picture of singular focus even more real was the fact that only 10 minutes later we came across a wounded zebra with a sizeable slash across its hind leg. This graceful animal was obviously limping as it moved with the others—a telltale sign that it had only narrowly escaped a lion's attack. As we drove home I could not get the picture of

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the lion—focused on her prey—out of my mind. Leaders need focus today more than ever. How often do we get sidetracked and lose our focus only to discover that we missed precious opportunities to make a difference?

Refocusing the Journal

If you are one of those readers who have been wondering if the *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* was still alive, I don't blame you. I actually owe you an explanation for why you had to wait so long for this issue. In two words: time and resources. Most of us working with the journal have many other responsibilities. During the last few months *JACL* has gone through a difficult period of struggling to find the resources to continue producing the high-quality journal you have become accustomed to. Still, many things have happened which have advanced the mission of the journal. First, we developed a very functional and helpful website which is one of the primary ways we communicate with our readership. Then, several months ago, the journal was accepted by the indexing services of EBSCO and ProQuest. This will make the journal available to thousands of students and teachers of leadership in institutions around the world who are subscribers to these outstanding services.

These new commitments also made it clear that we needed to expand the circle of those committed to producing a credible, high-quality, peer-reviewed academic journal two times a year. This process has taken longer than expected. But I am happy to announce three new members of our team: as of December 2011, Shirley Freed, the director of the Leadership Program at Andrews University, has become the Managing Editor of the journal. Her responsibilities include the timely production of the journal. The issue that you are holding in your hand is the first fruit of her outstanding leadership. Stan Patterson, the Director of the Christian Leadership Center, has taken over as Book Review Editor. Andrews University has also increased the resources available to the journal to support the administrative work and the scholarly processes that are vital to the flourishing of the journal. Jasmine Fraser, a doctoral student at Andrews University, has joined the editorial office. In addition, we have a growing number of professors teaching leadership in graduate programs who are cooperating with us in spotting good research to report, reviewing books important for Christian leaders, and alerting us to important research findings already published that should be summarized and made available to

Christian leaders. We thank you for these great services without which the journal could not exist.

This Issue

For years the Leadership Program at Andrews University has required those entering the program to write a narrative of their life and leadership vision before drawing up a detailed personal plan for the required and self-chosen competencies. Participants have often commented on how helpful this process of writing about their own lives has been. In the process of reading many of these narratives Sylvia Gonzalez, one of the faculty members of the Leadership Program, found that stories of difficulties and suffering were often used by participants to explain their development as Christian leaders. To better understand this potential connection between the formation of leadership capacity and hardship, Sylvia decided to interview a number of Christian leaders who are now serving in leading positions in Christian organizations. In this issue she reports the results of her research.

It is one thing to write a mission statement; it is another to live it out as an organization. In “Revisioning Mission in PostChristendom,” David Boshart, the Executive Conference Minister of the Central Plains Mennonite Conference, looks at how church planters and regional and national church leaders keep the commitment to mission alive in the church. Building on his dissertation research, which has recently been published by Wipf and Stock, David shares three core commitments essential to mission vitality, illustrating them with the story of *Missio Dei*, a new Mennonite church planted in Minneapolis.

Is there anything Christian executives can learn from the Biblical concepts of kingship? Stan Patterson looks at the first illegitimate king in Israel and concludes that God’s ideals take us beyond kingly power. But Michael Cafferky, who just recently published *Management: A Faith-Based Perspective* with Prentice Hall, argues that we might do well to reconsider our hesitance for looking at the Biblical material connected to God’s instructions for kings.

Leadership Conferences

We are excited to announce two leadership events that will be hosted at Andrews University, sponsored by the Christian Leadership Center and *JACL* together with the Department of Leadership. One is the Second Annual Leadership Conference at Andrews University. This

year's theme is the emerging field of Emotional, Social, and Spiritual Leadership. Speakers will be Daniel Goleman, bestselling author of *Emotional Intelligence*, and Richard Blackaby, the well-known author of *Spiritual Leadership*, a book that has been listed by pastors as one of the most influential books about how God develops and empowers spiritual leaders. Another event that has taken place at Andrews University is this year's Swallen Lectureship with Dr. Thom Wolf from New Delhi, India. He is one of the members of the Editorial Board of this journal and serves on the global faculty community of the Leadership Program. His theme was "The Global Conversation: Worship Virtues, World Views, and World Venues."

This issue is a promise that the *Journal of Applied Christian Leadership* is back to stay. Exciting new issues are planned and are being worked on as this issue is going to press. With your support, we are working hard to produce all scheduled issues for the years 2011 and 2012 within the next 12 months. We are doing this because we believe that the mission of this journal, namely to encourage a forward-looking dialogue about what it means to be a Christian leader in today's context, is more relevant now than ever before.