

TRUST AND INSPIRE: HOW TRULY GREAT LEADERS INSPIRE GREATNESS IN OTHERS

Stephen M.R. Covey (Simon & Schuster UK)

If you were asked to indicate whether you are a 'trust and inspire' leader, or a 'command and control' leader, very few of us would put our hands up for the latter.

In his book 'Trust and Inspire', Stephen M.R. Covey (son of Stephen R. Covey) sets up a deceptively simple contrast between the two. With scalpel-like precision, he slowly reveals the many ways in which command and control is still the dominant leadership culture in the majority of organisations.

He argues that even enlightened command and control leads, at best, to informed acquiescence and quiet compliance, but results in nobody having fun or performing at their best.

In contrast, he outlines the power of trust and inspire leadership. The components are simple:

1. **Trusting Leadership.** Trust = trustworthiness + extending trust. He explains that two trustworthy people can work together without trust if they are not prepared to extend trust to each other. We often ask others to trust us, without extending that trust to them. But if we are clear on expectations and treat people as trustworthy, it unlocks enormous potential.
2. **Inspirational Leadership.** This is not about charisma, or the ability to give motivational speeches. He roots true inspiration in modelling humility and courage, authenticity and vulnerability, empathy and performance (virtues that any follower of Jesus would aspire to). Inspiration results when authentic leaders connect with people and then connect people to purpose, which creates passion.

The book is a goldmine of leadership nuggets and quotations, including:

- A good leader inspires people to have confidence in the leader; a great leader inspires people to have confidence in themselves (Eleanor Roosevelt).
- I bring you the gift of these four words, 'I believe in you.' (Pascal).
- To know and not to do is not to know (Goethe).
- Most people judge themselves on their intent, but others on their actions.
- Manage things, lead people.
- People don't leave organisations; they leave bad bosses.

Packed with great examples from the corporate world, Covey's insights have application across all spheres of leadership. At a time when trust levels are low in the church, and a culture of compliance is on the rise, this is a much needed and bracing challenge to keep our leadership appropriately trusting and inspiring. Having marinated my mind in the Audible version over several weeks, I find myself constantly asking, 'How could I respond to this situation as a trust and inspire leader?' Or as Covey puts it, 'If I were my leader, would I want to follow me?'

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