



(raising leaders) "Fill Your Boots"



Exploration Essentials Values of the Atlantic District of The Wesleyan Church

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"Fill Your Boots"

Step into the boots God gave you

A true leader never stops learning as God raises up and sends out. We seek to empower, encourage, and equip our leaders as they sidestep the pressure of trying to fill someone else's shoes. This involves identifying, recruiting, training, and launching pastors and lay leaders into their God-given calling.

(raising leaders)

"Timothy, my dear son, be strong through the grace that God gives you in Christ Jesus. You have heard me teach things that have been confirmed by many reliable witnesses. Now teach these truths to other trustworthy people who will be able to pass them to others." (II Timothy 2:1-2, NLT)

When we're gone, who's going to fill our boots? Someone has to. But if we haven't been deliberate in raising up new leaders, there isn't some mysterious pastoral or lay leader pipeline from which we can recruit for Kingdom needs. The onus is on us to raise new leaders. At the end of the day, Christianity is only ever one generation away from extinction. If we don't do our part to hand off the keys to the people coming after us, who will drive our shared mission into the future?

It's not just important, it's urgent. Who's going to fill their leadership boots, so they can follow yours? This isn't just about raising up new pastors – just having pastors isn't enough by a long shot. We have 50+ churches on our district which have a combined total of about 180 pastors on staff. There are 3.1 million people who live across the Atlantic District. One hundred and eighty leaders aren't nearly enough. This isn't just about raising pastors, it's about making disciples. Every Christian should be asking themselves, "Who's going to fill my boots by maturing to fill their own to follow mine?" That's the Great Commission – go and make disciples. This idea of raising up new leaders in the church is found all throughout scripture.

When Nehemiah is tasked with rebuilding the wall, he realizes this monumental task is only going to happen if everyone plays a part – in chapter 4 we read that some of his workers are literally working on the building with a tool in one hand and a weapon in another hand. Soldiers became carpenters and carpenters became soldiers.

When Moses almost reaches the point of burnout in his ministry, he asks the Lord to help him; God's solution is to pour His Spirit over 70 new elders who will help him shoulder the load. He couldn't do it alone – so they raised up new leaders.

In the book of Acts, in those early days of the early Church, the apostles were overwhelmed by the all the responsibility and due to some other extenuating circumstances, there was a pocket of widows who were being neglected and left unfed. The apostles' response was, "We can't stop preaching to go wait on tables," – the solution wasn't to not to do it, the solution was to raise up seven new leaders who could make it happen.

What all of these leaders understood was that we've got an incredibly important mission, and it's just not going to happen if we try to carry the load ourselves. To paraphrase Andy Stanley, the greatest contribution you make to the kingdom might not be something you do, but someone you raise. That's the true mark of a leader. Maybe you've heard it said that good leaders create followers. Great leaders create leaders. But it's easier said than done. There are so many complexities and nuances which come into play when you choose to be a leader who raises up other leaders.



For instance, some of us really like being the leader. We like the title, we like the little bit of power it gives us, we like the perks that come with leadership, and the idea of handing it off is rarely the most appealing option. We like to be the one carrying the load. We like for people to see that we're carrying the load. We like to be needed. We like to be necessary. That's why it's such a challenge to create new leaders; it's not about keeping the power for yourself – it's about giving it away. It's not about hoarding the success for yourself – it's about sharing it with others.

King Saul was a leader that wanted followers, not a leader that wanted to raise up new, successful leaders. I Samuel 18:9 says he kept a jealous eye on David. Things changed in that moment. Saul goes from wanting David to succeed to wanting David dead. It's hard to be a leader who raises up leaders because it forces us to confront our inmost insecurities. As pastors and lay leaders and staff teams we need the daily reminder that Biblical leadership is service. It's not power. It's not attention. It's not about appearing successful. It's about serving others and raising them up to release them to be who God made them to be.

The disciples wrestled with this constantly. They argued about who was going to be the greatest and Jesus said, "*The greatest will become a servant. The leaders in the world lord power over the people, but you'll serve them.*" And then he washed their feet. So, according to the Bible, servant leadership isn't for everyone, only those who want to be great. Want to be a great leader who creates other leaders? We need to let go of our titles and pick up our towels.

Great leaders don't make themselves look better – they make others look better. Great leaders don't care who teaches the message as long as the message is being taught. Great leaders care more about the Kingdom than their reputation. Great leaders want the guy who comes behind them to be better than they were, not to see the whole thing come crumbling down without them. When anyone gets to a point in their ministry they can't celebrate someone who's better, then it's time to leave.

We've often confused rank with leadership. Having a rank doesn't make you a leader. Having a title doesn't make you a leader. *Raising leaders is what makes you a leader.* Raising a leader is what keeps the mission moving forward long after we're gone. We want every church on our district to outlive us all. That only happens if we raise up leaders to come alongside us to fill our boots. That's why our District Board of Ministerial Development is so important.

This is why our ordination service in the Beulah Camp Tabernacle is so powerful. We're saying, "Look – here's a new group of leaders ready to carry the torch as they learn to fill their boots." Ordination is the highest honour and the greatest statement of trust the Church can bestow on any woman or man. May God help us find them, invest in them, equip them, empower them, pray over them and send them out. Maybe the ones you find will replace you someday. That would be a privilege.

And finding new ways in new days of Kingdom effectiveness to unleash lay leaders is an equally important reflection of this value. Pastoral *and* lay leadership are not an either/or binary option in our Divine equation – they have *always been* and must **increasingly become** a both/and reality to maximize our Kingdom impact.

As a district, it's vital that we keep raising up new leaders. They don't need to fill our boots in the sense that they need to "fill our shoes" and become just like us; that's never the goal. We fill our leadership boots by helping them to fill **theirs**. Raising leaders is all about empowering and equipping women and men who will advance the message of Jesus Christ into the one place we'll never go – the future beyond us.