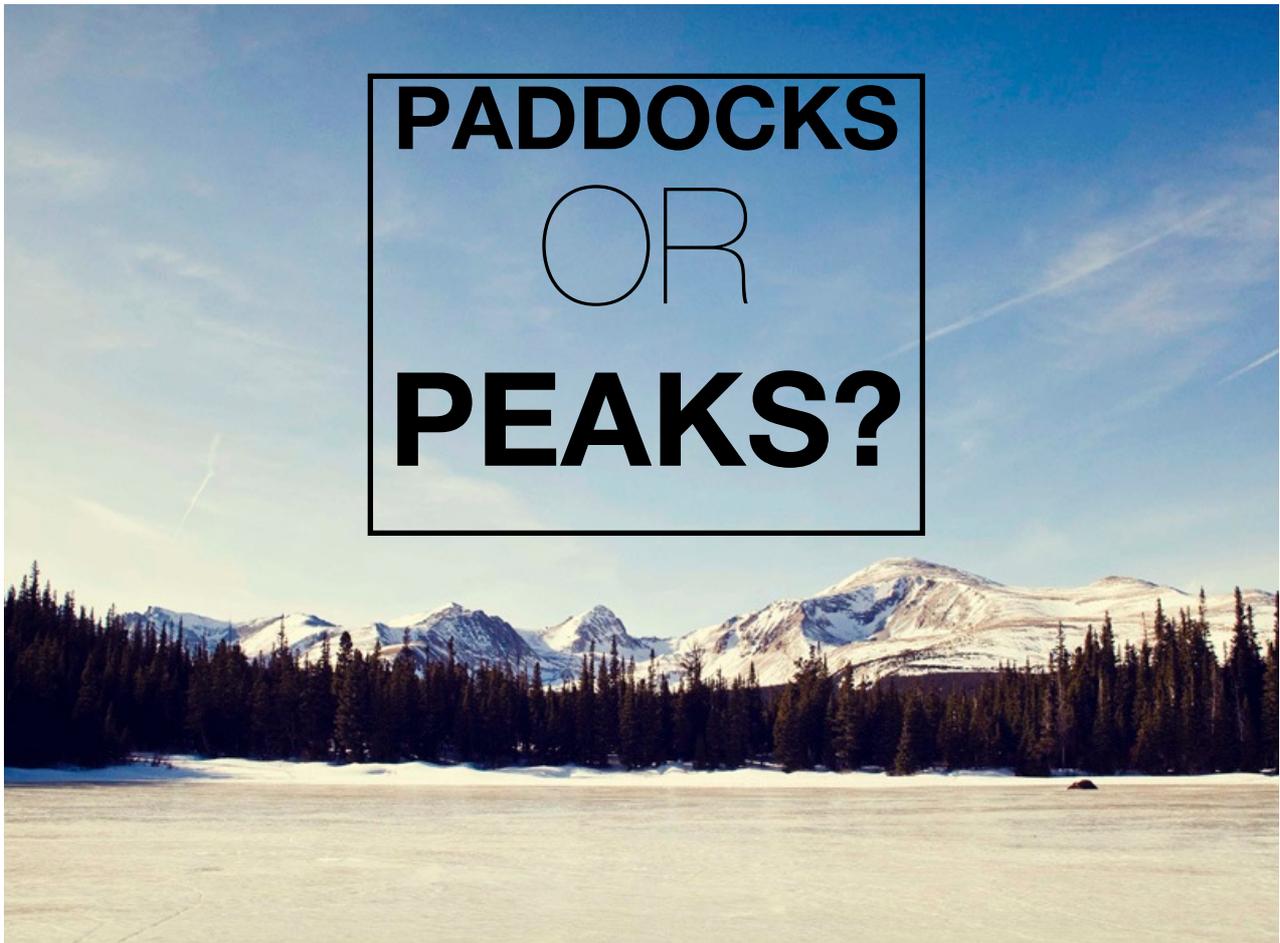


LEADERSHIP SHORT



When was the last time over 5000 people rocked up to your ministry event... or even 500? Could you imagine it? A crowd of over 5000 young people flocking to be a part of what you and your team are doing. For some of us it sounds like a nightmare, but if you're in ministry then you are probably wired to reach as many as possible. It's a common saying in youth ministry 'It's not about the numbers'. But what do we really mean by that? Is it simply an excuse for a lack of impact and influence? The reality for most leaders is that the lure of the crowd is incredibly attractive, yet the great moments of the crowd can easily distract us from the moments that truly bring transformation and lasting impact.

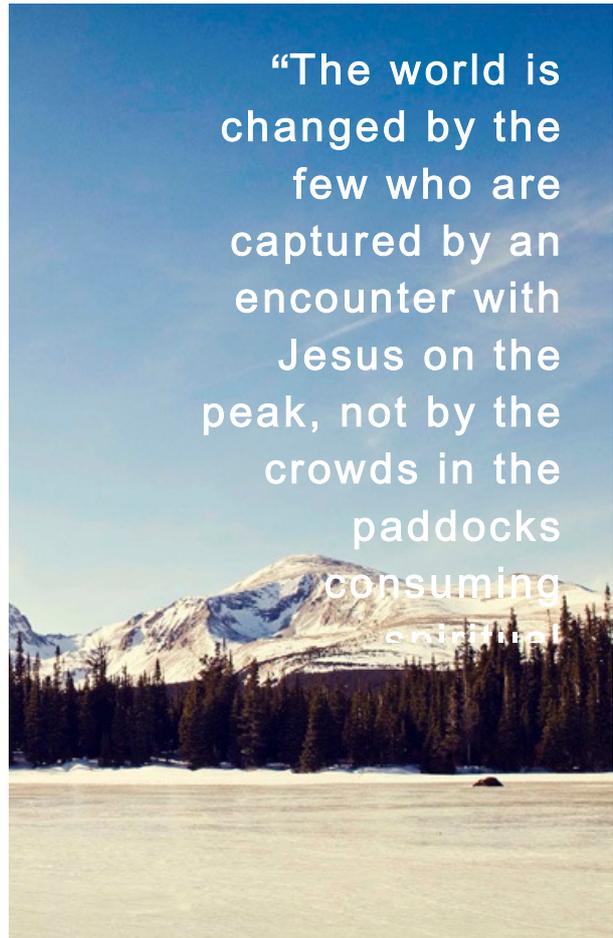
The gospel writers record the feeding of the 5000 on a grassy plain on the side of a mountain. It's a story that captures our imagination, that amazes us. It would seem like the 'Jesus Movement' was really hitting its stride, momentum was going his way and people were flocking to be a part of the action. Wherever Jesus was, that was the place to be. Surely this is what Jesus was working towards. After years of ministry, plowing the soil and planting seeds, finally things were starting to happen. It's not long after this that Jesus repeats the miracle feeding 4000 people. I can imagine the disciples' excitement. They are becoming the centre of attention of the whole of Judea and Galilee. A revolution is in the air- or in the language of youth ministry 'We are reaching an entire generation'.

What is surprising as we read the Gospel accounts is Jesus' seeming lack of excitement by all this. Rather than being incredibly impressed by what has just unfolded, he dismisses the crowd, sends his disciples out on the lake and takes some space to pray. Soon after he heads on a retreat to Caesarea Philippi- up north, away from the crowds. We might call it a momentum killing moment. Why would you leave when your fame is at its highest? Jesus has a far bigger vision in mind. It's in this place that His disciples confess their belief in him as Messiah. But that's not all he has planned. A few days later He takes with him only the closest 3 disciples- Peter, James and John. He climbs a mountain and there 'he was transfigured before them' (Matt 17:2). As John would later recall *"That which was from the beginning, which we have heard... seen... looked at... touched - This we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The Life appeared and we have seen it..."* (1 John 1:1-2).

For Jesus the greater kingdom impact occurred when those three disciples captured the true vision of who he was, not when the 5000 or 4000 flocked to see the excitement of what he would do next. The goal was not gaining and maintaining the fickle interest of the masses, but grabbing hold of a few with such a life transforming revelation of who He was that they would give their whole life to his cause. It's only through the lives of those who are captured by such a vision that His mission would continue.

Let me put it this way: The world is changed by the few who are captured by an encounter with the glory of Jesus on the peak, not by the crowds in the paddocks consuming spiritual experiences.

So where are you focused? Are you pandering to the consumer orientated desires of the crowds in the paddocks, trying desperately to keep them around, anxiously wondering what 'greater miracle' you will need to pull out of the hat to top the last? Or are you making enough space to journey to the peaks with the few who will encounter the glory of Jesus as Lord. As leaders who desire to reach a generation with the good news of Jesus, we need to make an intentional effort to find those who will take the tough walk up the mountain in order to truly encounter Jesus. It's from this place that transformation happens, and lives are changed. Enjoy the moments on the paddocks when the applause is loudest, but hold it loosely. Hunger most for the times of encounter with the few on the peak, that's what will fuel long-term Kingdom impact.



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