

Back seat driving and feedback – by Aaron Fozzard



1. INTRODUCTION - ABOUT FAM SLIDE

You may be thinking who is this guy up the front. So, let me introduce myself. My name is Aaron J Fozzard. I am married to Nikki, and we have a five-year-old son Ezra.

1.1 The Ah Ha moment with Ezra

Children are such a blessing. People are such a blessing. Being created by God, they are, we are special to Him. My family loves to get outside and see what creation or art strokes the Creator has made for us. From the plants we grow, the fruit they yield, and the beauty they supply. Creation is a big thing to us and is likely to you also. And for most of us in the room if not all we have a mandate to care, nurture and encourage other leaders – paid or volunteer. We have a huge task. One morning I was driving with the family to Bunnings and k-mart – the two always have to be together in

my household. I can't stand going to k-mart with Nikki, one items turns into hundreds, okay maybe not but you get the picture. So, to offset the occasion, Bunnings is the trade-off. We go to these places often, especially Bunnings, we have been at war with lawn grubs for the past 12 months. Ezra knows the route to Bunnings. And this particular day we were driving along and I decided to go a different way to avoid traffic. As soon as we went through a roundabout a voice came from behind me. "Dad, we are going the wrong way". Little did he know that the way we were going was the right way as it would avoid the hurdles of traffic and would still get us to the destination. This comment made me think back to when I was a kid. I did the same thing. It caused me to think that...

2. INTRODUCTION TO TEAM MINISTRY AND THE NEED FOR FEEDBACK FOR THEIR AND YOUR JOURNEY.

As a kid we want to drive. We learn by watching where our parent or guardian is driving. We learn to navigate through familiar streets and so in turn tell the driver where to go or ask curious questions when we go somewhere we weren't expecting. My son often tells me where he thinks we should turn or tells me I am going the wrong way if he knows where

we are going. Something he doesn't always know is where we are going or how we are getting there.

When we were teenagers we couldn't wait to get our learners licence. When we got it and had our first few driving lessons we would bark orders at our parents when they drove. This time not about navigation, but about the "correct" way to drive. "You turned the corner too late", "you didn't indicate out of the round a bout" or the dreaded "you are going too fast to merge on the motorway, you are supposed to go 40 because that is what blocks the motorway and stops the flow of traffic". Well, that last one probably doesn't happen, but part of me thinks that is what some driving schools are teaching.

The backseat driver is a good analogy for starting a new job or starting out as a new leader in a ministry or business context. When we start a new job or enter a new leadership position we start in the back seat. We sit back and watch. And eventually start adding our two cents into the conversation. These two cents are based solely on our limited perspective, and therefore, at times, are unhelpful. As critical as that sounds, when we started out in our first job or leadership we had limited experience and hardly any wisdom and therefore some of the things said weren't helpful.

During this time, we got to observe and learn what it is to lead and make choices. We watched the people older than us lead and observe the direction they would take us, we watched them take us to places we weren't expecting or ways to the same place via a different route. During this time it is frustrating, however required for our formation. At that point in our leadership career we don't know what it is like to lead. We have no clue of the extra thought, strategy and prayer that goes on behind the scenes. Well, not until they invite us to the next place.

This brings us to the learners licence zone. When a leader or the leader we have observed for a time asks us to take the wheel and drive, the learning and observing help, but isn't everything. There are new things to learn. New things to think through. At this stage we really think we know about the programme, ministry or business and in turn we begin to add our comments. At this stage we become even more vocal about things. We even can harass the leader to bend to our will. But this is exactly what it is like having a learner driver sitting next to a seasoned driver making all types of unwise calls. Yes, at times the leader makes mistakes, but the back-seat drivers, regardless if they have L plates or no nothing still don't have the wisdom to make comments based solely on their own opinions

especially if what they say does not have substance or anything helpful for the success of the leader.

3. LACK OF FEEDBACK - CREATE THE NEED

Lack of quality feedback, regardless of who it comes from is unhelpful. It doesn't matter if you are a seasoned leader, pastor or professional. Bad feedback is just that unhelpful squealing noise that can be heard from a PA system. When I got the opportunity to sit, watch and learn youth ministry, I did just that, I watched. Oh, and said some dumb things. My input was my perspective and shallow. But, I learnt that I needed to give good feedback. I learnt it by observing one of the most frustrating events.

On the Gold Coast a group of churches got together to pull a collective youth group event. It became major event for the churches involved, and some of the greatest stories of my youth and young leadership days happened there. It was a great event, and all involved enjoyed what God was doing. We were seeing salvations, community between different denominations and pastors, and a pool of equipment and cash to keep the event running for years to come. These nights were evangelistic in

nature, but from my perspective something was wrong. I started to question why we stopped going to youth alive. Then the responses came. Well, actually, one response. The response was they never gave the Gospel. What? I thought. Well, maybe I just don't understand it enough I thought. Then I began the trend of bagging out ministries because they didn't tell the gospel in one specific way. I even went one step further, I began to question the salvation of the AOG movement, the movement that saw my parents saved. So, from my perspective smash was created so that we could have an event that the gospel could be articulated correctly in an ecumenical setting – ecumenical meaning multiple church denominations together. The team did it, and did it well. This event lasted quite a while. But one thing has stuck with me for years. The need for feedback or creating space where conversation can happen well, not just protests. You see the issue was we didn't speak with the youth alive crew or when we did they didn't want to listen. And hence, another event was born out of spite.

Good communication through feedback is needed so that ministry can happen better. We are human. Humans are sinful, we make mistakes and we need helpful feedback so that we can grow. As leaders of the next generation our job is to lead as best as we can. Senior manager at W.L.

Butler Construction, Eddie Tai... says giving regular feedback helps people self-correct and understand their respective role in the bigger picture. Setting goals without feedback on their achievement and performance towards these goals is woefully incomplete". One of Eddie's staff was asked what they thought about regular feedback, their response was simply, "receiving feedback is the most important thing in my growth because I take note and try to improve for the next time. Without making mistakes, it is hard to learn, and without a colleague who can point out your mistakes, they can sometimes be overlooked and not corrected" (p257) As we lead and invest into our team it is crucial, alongside advancing the kingdom, to give feedback along the way so that they can get better at what they do and feel encouraged doing it.

4. SCRIPTURE - WHAT DOES SCRIPTURE TEACH US ABOUT THE NEED FOR FEEDBACK, JESUS MINISTRY TO DISCIPLES, PAUL'S CONTINUATION OF THIS MINISTRY TO TIMOTHY

This notion of giving feedback is supported by scripture. Solomon knew the value of it in the midst of Proverbs 27 he tells the reader, "As iron

sharpens iron, so one person sharpens another. The one who guards a fig tree will eat its fruit, and whoever protects their master will be honoured. (Proverbs 27:17-18). This great wisdom of Solomon communicates the need for people to sharpen themselves on others. Solomon was not God, but God gave him a wise discerning heart (1 Kings 3:12). Paul Koptak commentates on the situations. He says, “[These] [t]wo proverbs speak about good relations with neighbors and employers. In verse 17, the point is clear enough; we all want friends who will keep us sharp through challenging conversation and personal feedback. The comparison with striking irons points out the need for two to hone the edge... The imagery of verse 18 is straightforward also, for it is common knowledge that those who tend a garden enjoy its produce. Bringing the two proverbs together and setting them in context, readers learn that it is by serving well and keeping the employer sharp that servants receive the honour that so many seek”.

Giving feedback helps everyone. Yourself, your neighbour and your boss. As servants, our job is to serve those around us. Feedback serves people by helping them see the short comings they don't see and encouraging good things they don't realise they are doing.

As servant leaders our job is to help our team members and staff become more like Jesus. Serving up feedback contributes to this. So, let's look at Jesus' ministry for a brief moment. One instance Jesus gives feedback he is brutal, Matthew 17:17-21 states, "17 And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly. 19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, "Why could we not cast it out?" 20 He said to them, "Because of your little faith. For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you." Jesus sees an issue and speaks straight into it. But because He has such a great relationship with His disciples they come to later and ask why. This invitation for change that the disciples gave created the opportunity to learn and grow from the feedback that Jesus had for them. Jesus could have just said, "you had no chance", but instead He says "you need faith". He went on to clarify what He meant. His disciples were with Him all the time, they saw what He could do, and they were sent out to do likewise. So, the challenge was to have faith and for them to not lose sight of what they had seen was possible. This is just a glimpse of Jesus' feedback into His disciples.

5. INVITATION / CHALLENGE MATRIX - A TOOL TO HELP IDENTIFY HOW PEOPLE GIVE FEEDBACK SO THEY CAN FIND WHERE THEY NEED TO WORK ON.

Feedback is a big deal. Feedback is something we need to get better at. So this morning I want to give you a tool to help you start thinking it through or get better at it.

5.1 Two key words are invitation and challenge.

“Invitation is about being invited into a relationship where you have access to a person’s life and all the vibrancy, safety, love, and encouragement that resides there”. This is a space where the person inviting someone into their life can pass on what Jesus has done in their life and gives opportunity for the invited person to be invested in by the inviter and visa versa. **“Invitation** has to do with the sense of being included in the community, welcomed, and valued – not for what a person can do but for who they are. It is about knowing and feeling that they belong, that they are loved and are wanted, and ultimately that they are valued and claimed by God as his own”.

This relationship like all relationships is a two-way street. As we heard before, iron sharpens iron. This relationship gives space for challenge to happen. Challenge brings about change or getting sharper. “**Challenge** has to do with being needed for the community, having a vital role to play in terms of achieving the overall goals and purposes. It is about knowing that your contributions are valuable, important and necessary. Ultimately, it is about being involved in advancing God’s kingdom”. I assume we are all leaders of teams, and that gives us a unique job. Our job is to advance the kingdom of God with people from all types of backgrounds, ages, giftings, competencies and capacities. This is a daunting task.

However, though aware we can give good feedback that helps our teams get better at what they do.

Assuming you give feedback, we all naturally err to be either invitational or challenging, unless we are Jesus and can do both really well. Are you naturally invitational, “lets catch up and hang out over coffee or some xbox” type of person. Or are you “hey, your on the data this week make sure you are there at 7” type of person. Are you someone that errs more on the relational side or challenging side?

[Draw Matrix]

Where do you fit in the invitational or challenging space?

[Personal Reflection and group time]

5.2 JESUS COULD DO BOTH WELL. HE IS GOD, SO OF COURSE HE COULD.

- Jesus said, “Come and follow me...” (Invitation, Matthew 4:19a)
- “...and I will send you out to fish for people.” (Challenge, Matthew 4:19b)
- “The time has come. The kingdom of God is at hand...” (Invitation, Mark 1:15a)
- “...Therefore repent and believe the good news of the gospel.” (Challenge, Mark 1:15b)

We aren't Jesus, but by Holy Spirit we are becoming more like Him (Rom 8:28-29).

Now that we have an idea of where we sit on the invitation challenge spectrum. What do you need to work on? If you need to work on being more challenging you are going to have to think through how and who you can practice being challenging with. If you need to work on being invitational you are going to have to think through how and who you can practice being invitational with.

This matrix helps us identify where we are. We want to become empowering leaders. So that our cultures can be more effective in the locations we exist. Empowering leaders give feedback and are able to take feedback. With the invitation/challenge matrix in mind, Professor Adam Grant gives a basic script for feedback. He says, Explain Why you are giving feedback. So be invitational. Then help them want to hear your feedback by inviting them in with a quick story of how feedback has helped you. And then ask if they would like to hear your feedback, this challenge them and gives them the opportunity to take ownership and due to both the challenge and invitation they will be less defensive and more likely to hear what you must say.

For instance, a young leader is running a game and they do not articulate the instructions well. You might say, “Hey there, have you got a sec for a

quick chat? I am really thankful for you and who God has created you to be. I want to help you get better at running games. You did a good job but I think you can get better. Just this week I was chatting with a friend and they were able to help me see something in my life that I couldn't see and it has helped me get better. Can I help you get better through some feedback? Thanks for the opportunity. I noticed that you didn't have a clear idea of the game you lead this week. Next time could you have the game written out so you can instruct people better? Let me know if I can help you. I know you can get better at this.

[Personal Reflection and group time]

For me that sort of thing is hard. I am a challenging person mostly, and it has taken a bunch of time to get better at giving helpful feedback.

6. CONCLUDE

But it is worth doing. I'm not sure of your context but if you haven't got a feedback system in place, please work on it. It will only help you serve your teams and the generations to come. Feedback is a big deal.