



CHAPTER ONE
WHO MOVED *MY* LADDER?

I'M A VISIONARY; you probably are too.
That's why you're reading this book.

We are visionaries because we have a dream. We're willing to throw everything into fulfilling that desire. It's our driving force. We pray fervently, think constantly, daydream frequently, and regularly envision what life will be like up ahead. We may not know where we'll end up, but we know the direction we're headed.

**If the ladder is the vision,
we are the climbers;
we are the ones with
a burning zeal.**

In my previous book, *Who's Holding Your Ladder*, I used the symbol of a ladder to explain the vision. If the ladder is the vision, we are the climbers; we are the ones with a burning zeal. Ladder holders are those who support and help to implement our vision. We never want to forget that our success as a

WHO MOVED YOUR LADDER?

visionary greatly depends on the quality of our ladder holders. We also need different holders as our ladder (vision) extends higher.

When I used that symbol, I referred to what we believe we're called to do and a way to look ahead and see where we're going. Climbing the ladder is our onward pursuit of that as-yet-unfulfilled dream.

**Climbing the ladder
is our onward
pursuit of that
as-yet-unfulfilled dream.**

In this book, I want to use the same symbols, but now we'll look at the ladder differently. We had the

vision—we knew where we wanted to go and we climbed faithfully and finally reached most or all of our goals.

After we've reached the top of the ladder, we reach the time of transition. After all, in life nothing is permanent. For example, one day I realized I had climbed the ladder of success as the president of a growing Bible College. For fourteen years,

**"Who moved my ladder?
This isn't where I
want to stay."**

I had dreamed and worked hard as I ascended that golden ladder. I loved the people, the work, the challenges, and the excitement of going up each rung. One day, however, something changed. (I write "one day" but something had been going on for months until the day I became aware.)

"Who moved my ladder? This isn't where I want to stay," I said. As I was to learn, many leaders are or have been

WHO MOVED MY LADDER?

exactly where I stood that day. Who moved our ladders? Who changed things? Who took away the excitement? the joy? the challenge?

The truth is, where I stood on my ladder was exactly where I had wanted to go—at least it was when I started up that particular ladder. What I had to face—and so do many of us—is that it may appear as if someone has moved our ladder.

The excitement, joy, and challenge dissipate. We look over our shoulder and realize where we were when we first felt those giddy emotions and rushed up those rungs. Those were the days when we jumped out of bed every morning. Even at night when we put our weary bodies to bed, we felt as if we had accomplished something. *We knew* we were moving in the right direction; we had climbed a little higher on the ladder.

When that level of enthusiasm begins to drain, here's the reality we have to face: No one has moved our ladder. It's in exactly the same place where it has always been. We have changed.

When that level of enthusiasm begins to drain, here's the reality we have to face: No one has moved our ladder. It's in exactly the same place where it has always been. *We* have changed. We climbed the ladder—and it may have been the right one—but it's no longer the preferred or fulfilling one. At least, that was my experience.

Some may have climbed high on ladders and as they neared

WHO MOVED YOUR LADDER?

the top they said, “Oh, this isn’t really where I wanted to go.”

It makes me think of something the late Joseph Campbell said when he spoke of following our bliss—our passion. He said

—————
**Many times I’ve heard
Bishop Eddie Long
say, “More than failure, I’m
afraid of succeeding at
the wrong thing.”**
—————

that most of us follow the expedient way, what he calls the right-hand path and we climb the ladder in front of us. When we get to the top, we realize that we’ve had our ladder resting

against the wrong wall. The left-handed path is riskier, but that’s the path of bliss.

Many times I’ve heard Bishop Eddie Long say, “More than failure, I’m afraid of succeeding at the wrong thing.”

In my case, it hadn’t been the wrong wall; however, it would have been the wrong wall had I continued to stay. My ladder had moved. That is, my vision had changed.

Before I go any further, I want to tell you a little about climbing my ladder.

**

The year 1989 changed everything for me; that year I became president of Beulah Heights Bible College in Atlanta, Georgia. That position was the most exciting one I’d ever had. It was like climbing a dream ladder. It wasn’t quite like walking on streets of gold in the New Jerusalem—but it felt close.

As I started up the first rungs, I often paused to thank God for putting me in that situation, for giving me the

WHO MOVED MY LADDER?

opportunity to dream big, and to have the backing to put those dreams into effect. The school began to grow and I saw even greater potential for us. I frequently discovered new opportunities and began doing things that other schools hadn't even thought of. We not only trained Christian leaders, but we found ways to affect our community as well.

I went up one rung at a time and loved every step. The higher I ascended the more wonderful my life seemed. "I could keep this the rest of my life," I said with a smile. Every morning I awakened, eager to tackle the challenges. Everywhere I looked, I saw progress.

One day, however, I surveyed the world from my ladder. The passion had diminished. I didn't hate my ladder or what I was doing. It felt, well, a bit predictable, even a little boring. "I've done this before," I said.

"What's wrong with me?" That's the question most of us ask ourselves when the thrill of our jobs subsides. Surely, there was something wrong with me. If something had become defective, I had to figure out what part malfunctioned, fix it, and move on. As I pondered that question, I realized that I had

**I went up one rung
at a time and loved every
step. The higher
I ascended the more
wonderful my life seemed.
"I could keep this the rest
of my life," I said with a
smile...One day, however,
I surveyed the world from
my ladder. The passion
had diminished. I didn't
hate my ladder or what I
was doing..."I've done this
before," I said.**

WHO MOVED YOUR LADDER?

been standing in about the same place for several months. Activities had not stopped—I had set things up so that no one noticed my standing still. But I noticed.

More important, off and on for months I searched and beat up on myself for having lost my cutting-edge enthusiasm.

What's happened? Who had moved my golden ladder? Was it time to find a new ladder? Was it time to hang on, grit my teeth, and just keep doing what I'd been doing for more than a decade? Or was it time to climb off my ladder and find a new one?

Somewhere in the process, however, I slowly admitted that I wasn't the problem: The problem was the ladder.

What had happened to the beautiful, wonderful ladder I had been climbing? Where was the excitement I had felt as I slowly ascended? Where was the inner contentment and joy? Why was there no constant

excitement as I stared at the next rung?

What's happened? Who had moved my golden ladder? Was it time to find a new ladder? Was it time to hang on, grit my teeth, and just keep doing what I'd been doing for more than a decade? Or was it time to climb off my ladder and find a new one?

It was a time of transition—but it took me weeks to accept that fact.

That's the context in which I write.

This is a book about transitions—about moving from one position to another. Some people have to move. They're laid

WHO MOVED MY LADDER?

off, fired, or told, “Find a different job.” They’re forced to make changes. But how do we go about making transitions when...

- all is going well?
- when we’re successful?
- we’ve achieved more than we ever dreamed?
- our friends and critics still applaud our achievements?

I had climbed higher on the ladder than anyone had

expected. After I reached the top rung, I realized something: I had gone as far as I could on this ladder. I had to think about where I was and where I wanted to go next. If it was time to switch ladders, which one do

I had climbed higher on the ladder than anyone had expected. After I reached the top rung, I realized something: I had gone as far as I could on this ladder.

I climb? Was it time to relax, rest, stand and survey what I had done and enjoy it?

Most leaders face that situation sometime in their careers—and some more than once. It’s not a comfortable place in which to stand.

★★

I began my search for resources to assist me in my transitional decision making. Here are some of the issues I struggled with:

- What is going on?
- Why was I excited and scared at the same time?

WHO MOVED YOUR LADDER?

- What are the critical questions I need to ask?
- What are the essential ingredients?
- What about a successor?

To my amazement and dismay, I found little information available. That's the major reason I've written this book. I want to help others as they make their next bold move.