

Leadership for Christians – Part 4

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Developing Leaders

Years ago someone gave me a daily calendar of brief devotions for my desktop. It's entitled, "God's Wisdom for Men." The message for today, May 7th, begins, "God's wisdom helps me discover my potential." It then goes on to quote Charles Swindall, "Are you just growing old...or are you also growing up? As you 'number your days,' do you just count years – the grinding measurement of minutes – or can you find marks of wisdom, character traits that were not there when you were younger?"

It seems to me very appropriate to begin this class tonight with those words as we discuss how leaders may influence others to the extent of actually "developing leaders." The original purpose of this effort of presenting sermons and classes on "Leadership for Christians" was to finally implement a means, a beginning, to "Developing Leaders." As we have said many times, we need leaders in our congregation, men who are willing to step up and serve in roles that God has designed specifically for men. These include the offices of Pastor, missionary, and staff ministers. Women are also encouraged to pursue leadership in areas where they are sorely needed and appreciated. Last Sunday we noted and thanked God for the supremely important task that mothers perform in convincing their children of the truth and training them in it, and modeling it in their lives.

We've learned so far to develop in leadership that it is necessary to have some foundational qualities to build upon. Next we learned that learning is essential before we can make much of a difference. Learning never stops, but it is a life-long process. The next step was performing. Learning the ropes involves "hands-on" "doing" or "performing." Once we have achieved performing at a high level we can then begin to lead! Leading in and of itself, is a learned activity. That takes time to master. It also, like anything else, requires a degree of "trial and error."

Tonight we're getting into the next level of influence as Christian Leaders: Developing Leaders. John Maxwell noted an important truth about how we go about leading effectively, "Any leader who has only followers around him will be called upon to continually draw on his own resources to get things done. Without other leaders to carry the load, he will become fatigued and burn out." Noel Tricky, the author of "The Cycle of Leadership," writes also, "A company's success is directly tied to its ability to create leaders. The companies with the most leaders are the most successful." A leader who succeeds in finding and developing other leaders has ascended to this next level of influence.

The paradigm is seen in the way our Lord Jesus went about training and sending out those who were trained to take the gospel into the world. He personally tapped twelve individuals on the shoulder and invited them to be His "fishers of men" by learning intensely under Him. Meanwhile, as during the entire course of His earthly life, Jesus was busy teaching His followers by personal example. He preached the Word, fed the hungry, healed the sick, raised the dead, and loved people in ways that boggle the mind. He taught them that to be great in the kingdom of God a person will be the servant of all.

When these disciples had spent considerable time learning from the Master and performing the acts & tasks that He had sent them out to do, only then did they receive the commission to “go and do likewise.” Leaders are basically in the business of replacing themselves. Leaders take a godly pride in seeing others advance and become leaders in their own right. Teachers get to see this play out year after year in a school setting. Sometimes they’re fortunate enough to have a student return years later and recognize the role they played in their training with thanksgiving. This is no doubt, very satisfying. I know numerous young people whom I have been able to influence personally that have gone on to be pastors, or teachers, or other good and honest contributors to society. You also can look back and see them yourselves. Maybe they are your own children. Perhaps they are individuals who never actually formally tell you the degree of influence you have had on them, but the evidence is over-whelming.

Using the example of the football players in other sessions, that person has at this level become the head coach. His influence doesn’t stem from his position though. It comes, instead, from his ability to develop other player-leaders (team captain, etc.) and assistant coaches. These individuals seek their mentorship and guidance to aid them in growing their own abilities to lead. There is a physical equation that we can use to identify what we are trying to achieve here:

$$\text{Influence} = \text{Effort} \times \text{Scope}$$

When a leader can find and develop another leader who can perform up to their own level of leading others, it increases exponentially the scope of the original leader. The authors of “Launching a Leadership Revolution” put it this way, “Where a Level 3 Leader benefited from the concepts of leverage in terms of multiplication (coordinating the efforts of a unified team of performers), the Level 4 Leader gains the advantages of exponential growth (developing leaders who each deal in multiplication).

Ross Perot, the billionaire founder of EDS and Perot Systems, said, “Obviously, I was surrounding myself with people who were far more talented and gifted than I was. This was the secret to EDS’s success - the multiplier effect of all this talent.” Another way to say it is, “A Level 4 Leader is not concerned with being a star in the organization; he is concerned with developing other stars.”

The point of all of this for us is really to adapt ways that we can work together most effectively as members of the Body of Christ, the Church. Do we require more organists or instrumentalists, or choir members? Then it takes those present leaders to find and develop young talent to someday assist them or eventually take their place. Do we need effective people on our Boards and Committees? The same principles apply, getting the right people and then nurturing them into those roles and positions. We do that by having them observe us, question us, pick our brains. We do that by having them read and learn their “job” description in the constitution and by –laws of the congregation; by attending learning opportunities like “Church Leaders’ Workshop”, etc.

In the Church all growth begins with reading, hearing, and studying God’s Word. Instead of merely breaking it all down to individual workshops and Bible Classes on “how to be a better... (you fill in the blank, maybe it’s a mother, father, business person, teacher, farmer, accountant, etc) we learn best from being immersed in God’s Word. This is accomplished in worship services, sermons, Bible Classes, Bible Information Classes, reading “Meditations,” going to the congregation’s or the Synod’s websites, etc. Other examples are: reading the “Forward in Christ” magazines, the materials sent to parents of infants thru pre-schoolers which give great ideas, etc.

Maxwell’s “Law of the Lid” applies here also. We will never get those who follow us (at church, in the home, at work, etc) to advance spiritually without growing ourselves in the Word. The Word is everything. Leaders who are weak in seeking out opportunities to grow in and by the Word will be spiritually stunted

in their growth as leaders. Add those who attempt to emulate them will be as well, and will never arrive at anything near their potential. If a whole group or organization adopts this “who cares” philosophy then it will always remain ineffective and weak.

But leaders compel other leaders to get results. If you make it a priority to grow your faith, so will your children. If you study and talk about responsibility, honesty, fairness, etc., those you lead will start to do the same. It works with training VBS assistants. They learn to love working with the children and seeing them grow in their faith. One day these assistants become teachers themselves. Then, over the years the cycle repeats itself.

As we try to “pay it forward” as they say now-a-days, we can learn from George Barna in “A Fish Out of Water” as he advises leaders to look for people who are:

1. Teachable
2. Have spiritual maturity
3. Perceive leadership to be an act of servant-hood
4. Have passion for the vision and for leading people toward it
5. Have sufficient basic skills that would enable them to add value to the team

One of the key concepts involved at this level of influence is: Leaders Empower Other Leaders. It involves giving them control and decision-making authority. It also involves letting them lead their own people and make their own mistakes. It is simply “giving them the freedom to fail or fly.” We have to take a chance on good people or they will never reach their potential.

Paul David Tripp describes Level 4 Leaders:

1. Love people
2. Know people
3. Speak truth into their lives
4. And help them lead where God has called them to lead