

Learning Experience 1C:

The Most Important Factors in Selecting and Developing Leaders

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DML 813: Selecting and Developing Leaders

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Part A: Two Texts

While usually sceptical about these sorts of books, I set my mind to open and began reading. Within a few chapters, 1970s Canadian television came to mind. K-Tel was the industry leader of fast-talking demonstration style television commercials. I grew up with an aversion to anything that sounds like, “You can (fill in the blank) with the Veg-O-Matic II. Call the number on your screen now!” Both books have a K-Tel edge to them, but *Amplified* more so.

Amplified: (Note: my comments are how this book relates to church ministry)

- “long-term potential of a church or ministry largely depends on a minister’s ability to develop new and competent leaders.” I wonder about his assumption that the minister is key-holder of the potential and that church/ministry (as the author experiences it?) is the sum of all that is “the cause of Christ.” I think his view of the minister is too grand, his view of a leadership ring is too small, and his view of the Kingdom (and/or Kingdom work) is too narrow.
- While a relationally based process is most effective for developing new leaders, it is a huge challenge for a paid ministry leader to do this without it feeling relationally insincere by those on the receiving end. Everyone knows it is their job to be in mentoring relationships and to get ministry work done. He does say leaders need to genuinely care about the people they serve. It can quickly get blurred – this loving people and needing people to do tasks.
- I winced when I read, “I call this process *Amplified Leadership* because its purpose is to continually develop new leaders who will help increase and expand your ministry, resulting in more changed lives in Jesus’s name” (22). Sadly, the book’s premise sounds self-serving when applied to a church context, yet appropriate in a business setting. Corporate church?
- Terminology disclaimer re. volunteers (much like Pue’s disclaimer on not using inclusive language). In my context, the word volunteer describes an individual who freely gives time to benefit a group or organization. It is my understanding that in the body of Christ, people serve people – not programs, organizations, or results. And people, not organizations, are the beneficiaries. When the love of Christ compels me to selflessly serve another, it is so much more than giving my time for the benefit of my local church. The apostle Paul, though a tent-maker, would not self-describe as a volunteer, practically nor organizationally (24).
- Every morning ask the Holy Spirit to prompt relational connections that bring glory to God. Love this! But then he K-Tels it with “this practice in tandem with having a strategic plan to invest time with the right people will deliver strong results” (29).

- “Someone who is not a leader can be real and connect with people, but he will not necessarily add value to a person’s life. A leader connects, cares and adds value” (34). I would argue that *every* Christ-follower, by virtue of their spiritual DNA, is to connect, care and add value to other people, but he never equates leaders with Christ-followers. A two-tier system of church?
- Tangent warning: In my opinion, the leader/follower distinction has done more to sideline the cause of Christ in the Canadian church than any other thing. We already have a Leader/Mentor/Coach. Jesus said, “Follow me.” What could the church be if we all focused on leading less and collectively excel at following Him more? As we all listen to his Spirit, maybe we will connect with, care for, and add value to our neighbours and co-workers.
- “make all your lengthy conversations purposeful” (57). Yes!! Why waste time?
- Choosing and selecting people (61) – he told people he “saw something special—a spark, something unique about them, something God could use” which may be great for the ones chosen, but what about all the other who hear of this and are not invited into this elite group? Dull? Common? Of no use to God? Did I mention a two-tiered system? Are some of us outside the scope of God’s use? Did I miss the parable of the one with zero talents?
- While I agree with many of the developing leader principles in this this book, my affirmation and endorsement of them is limited to a corporate, business setting. I am opposed to this method of selecting and developing leaders in the church, primarily because I am not convinced that following someone’s vision is the purpose of the body of Christ (99), nor am I convinced that the body of Christ is supposed to be a group of leaders telling/inspiring the (non-leader) followers where they fit into their plan to achieve their vision (100).
- “In the church, our goal is to accomplish a kingdom cause and develop lasting relationships. But leaders do close deals [when recruiting volunteers], or we’d get nothing done” (112). “The tension to have enough workers for the ministry to function at maximum capacity will never go away. ...One of the great challenges for ministry leaders is to remember that the people God gives us to lead are not there to get a job done” (114). “Recruiting volunteers is one of the most common pressures in the local church. No matter how big the congregation, the church always needs more people to serve on ministry teams” (171). Doublespeak. Build the church ministry machine based on the leader’s vision and then fill the gaps with people to “move the ball down the field” (115). Chapter Five reads like a door-to-door sales textbook. Ouch. But true. Even if the grand vision is outward, the energy/time is focused inward.
- “Who is rising to the top [I didn’t know there was a top? Are there bottom dwellers too?] in your church or on your ministry team? ... My number one priority and passion is to see more people following Jesus. But second to that, I’m most fired up about developing new leaders.

... The real reason for investing so much time and effort into developing new leaders is so we can reach more people for Christ!” (149). I wish these statements did not sound like he is trying to convince me. It sounds like he doth protest too much. The success of his executive pastor job hangs on a system that develops new leaders to expand his vision. “This is what the process of leadership development is all about—building the church” (152).

- “You don’t see a lot of donkeys in leadership. So let me be blunt; great leaders are smart people” (161). This reinforces the leader/follower, inside/outside, upper echelon/lower common masses dichotomy that permeates this approach to developing leaders in the church.
- Discipleship builds the *Church*. Christian leadership development books, such as *Amplified*, seem to prioritize building my/our *church*, as evidenced by the look-at-me and do-what-I’m-doing books. Pretty sure Jesus said he would build his Church.
- Art of Empowerment (210) – trust with responsibility, train for competency, unleash with authority (not merely responsibilities), communicate clear expectations, affirm and believe in others to get the job done. Absolutely! 100% that this applies in the workplace and in parenting, but it is faulty thinking for the church. According to the early church, no one in the church should be disempowered – all are one in Christ. No class/category divisions. Yet some (visible minorities, poor, fringe, women, those who don’t/can’t/won’t rise to the top, etc.) are not empowered in the Canadian church. Why is unleashing with authority even a thing?! Only someone holding power/control (by virtue of a job description or title) would say that in a church context. Jesus freely gives us all HIS authority in and through HIS name. Who holds the leash that does the unleashing? Okay, I should stop now...
- “Always bring something to the table” - always add value in every context. One of my parenting slogans was, “how can we help?” My kids still ask this of themselves whenever they walk into a room because there is a distinction between strengths of interest and productive strengths – which ALL Christ-follower have = we call them spiritual gifts.

Exponential: (Note: my comments are how this book relates to church ministry)

- Mission: helping people find their way back to God, is outward and not at all proprietary. The two numbers, 67 and 20, narrows their mission to those far from God and those living in poverty – both numbers represent people who are primarily outside of the church. Yay!
- Reproducing is about God’s kingdom (37). Again, yay! Non partisan.
- The apprentice model of selection, expectation, preparation and graduation is not new to this book. And I agree with the four phases of growth, but only IF everyone is selected/invited.

- Significantly, the apprentice model changes not only what people can do, but it redefines who they are (45). Life transformation Acts 17:6. New life and new life habits/patterns of relating.
- While it sounds ambitious, I have a concern with the directional flow of the path from individual to Network Leader (59). It seems to indicate that bigger is better. More responsibilities and influence = desirable. Onwards and upwards. Promotion is the result of successful progress and spiritual maturity. After Network Leader, the next step is ...across the threshold, and home to Glory! This path seems open to any Christ-follower, which is great, but does all faithful following Jesus end up in fulltime (usually paid in their model) ministry leading a network?
- “Jesus wants you and your friends to be a part of his movement. And that happens when you, as an apprentice of Jesus, commit to reproducing your life at every level of influence that God gives to you.... The basic principles are the same at every level: listen to God’s Spirit, take risks for the sake of mission, and commit to apprenticing others” (82). So much I love about this statement. It is joining Jesus in what/where he is already moving and working. It is grounded in my following hard after Jesus. It requires that I be in relationship with people who are not yet following hard after Jesus. And I am only responsible for the spheres of influence that Jesus brings me into. Nothing contrived. Nothing forced. Eyes to see. Ears to hear. Choosing daily obedience to Jesus while in relationship with others. It is a shoulder-to-shoulder approach rather than top down. One comment on the phrase “reproducing your life”... I don’t want to reproduce Spirit-filled, apprentice-of-Jesus Carole. I want Jesus to be incarnate by his Spirit in someone else.
- They affirm that everyone is a leader (influencer) but often we choose to sidestep our leadership responsibilities (84). Truth.
- Carl George – vision, huddle, skill == this can become elitist unless there is an easy way to include anyone who wants training and development etc. Needs to be accessible to all.
- What is it with Chapter 5s?! This one has its challenges as well. Their two essentials for spreading a missional movement of reproducing churches are: reproduce more and better leaders and reproduce more and better artists (103). There is a huge assumption made that the missional GOAL LINE is a missional movement of reproducing churches that look and sound like large group gatherings of worship we see in every big-box church on every corner. COVID-19 makes this sort of goal line too specific and places too much onus and emphasis on one slice of corporate church life. Rather than saying we need to attract artists to see vitality in our churches, perhaps we need to see who is already contributing to human flourishing in our cities and start shoulder-to-shouldering with them. Life breeds life.

- Big fan of their power of community section: “people in these groups intentionally encourage one another to grow in their relationships with God, with each other, and the world around them. ... Three core values: connecting the unconnected, developing 3C Christ followers, and reproducing groups and leaders” (126).
- Small groups make or break a large church. It is the place where people become known – experiencing love, acceptance and forgiveness. Essential. When done well, these groups are a local expression of the family of God. Essential in a mid/post-covid world.
- Obviously, I cheered when I read about the open-hand support of the “I accidentally planted a church” kingdom growth (151). WE go to the not-yet WE ones. Ordain every Christ follower to start a church (161). Yup. Because the point is to help people find their way back to God. And ALL Christ followers know people AND they know God.
- Relational driven care. Always put people first. Coaches help equip, recruit, and give care.
- Parts Three and Four move away from developing leaders (reproducing influencers) into a discussion on how and where the church gathers. Much of which I disagree with from a philosophy of ministry standpoint. ... perhaps best that I push the pause button for now.
- Cause-created community = *Communitas*. Working towards a common cause creates community (277). 100% true and “normative for pilgrim people of God” – Hirsh

Part B: Biblical Theology of Leadership Development

Why does God want us to develop leaders? Before answering why, I wonder *if* God wants us to develop leaders? (And yes, I do realize that I am almost done a DMin in Christian Leadership. But let’s be honest, DMin, based on the Romans 12 list of serving, teaching, encouraging, contributing to the needs of others, and showing mercy, are harder to find.) Leader and leadership are not neutral words. We tend to use the words leader, disciple-maker, and influencer interchangeably, which, in my opinion, does a disservice to the discussion in a church context because often leader, as mentioned above, assumes a tiered system of followers. I see no place for this in the body of Christ (1Cor. 12, Galatians 3, Eph. 4). Christ is our Head, our Leader (Col. 1:15-20). So, for the sake of clarity, allow me to define what I mean by a leader.

A leader, according to the tree planting definition, is the vertical stem at the top of the tree, *the growing tip that naturally directs new growth upward*. I love this definition – growing and directing other new growth upward. Ultimately, Christ is our Leader. While discussing unity in the church, Paul says,

to each one of us grace has been given as Christ apportioned it. ... It was he who gave some to be apostles [starters], some to be prophets [messengers], some to be evangelists [expanders], and some to be pastors and teachers [instructing shepherds], so that the body of Christ may ... become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ. ... we will in all things grow up into him who is the Head [Leader], that is, Christ. From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work (Eph. 4:7-16).

Christ is the source of our growth, leading us as we grow and build our collective selves upwards in love. On a human level, what does it mean for us to lead? I think it means to be growing upwards, and, because of our intentional proximity to others, we (super)naturally cause others to grow upwards as well. Life on life. Day by day.

So, why does God want us to develop leaders? Because one of the distinct characteristics of a living organism is the capacity to grow. All life grows. A Christ follower is a new creation and thus will exhibit ongoing new growth in an upward direction. Samuel grew in stature and in favour with God. John and Jesus did likewise. Peter urges us to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord. One never retires from growing, flourishing, and bearing fruit well into old age.

Three children were conceived in my womb. Two of them survived birth and have grown to become adult men. My responsibility to them was two-fold. I was to learn and grow up in Christ as their mom, and I was to help them learn and grow up in Christ as young men. This is parenting. This is discipleship. This is leading – shoulder to shoulder growth in the same direction. Life on life. Day by day.

In age appropriate ways, I encouraged them to grow in their relationships with God, with each other, and the world around them. Everything from food to friends, discipline to daydreaming, and laughter to laundry was for their growth and maturation. Mums keep growing because our children keep growing. And as they look to us, we point to the One who fuels and sustains our growth. Because of family proximity, mums know and mums love, and our littles know they are known and they are loved. So, I think mums are leaders. And mums raise leaders. And dads are leaders. And friends and coworkers are leaders. Neighbours are leaders. And their friends and their children can become leaders, too. Because anyone who is growing in Christlikeness and causing others to grow towards Christ is a leader. In this sense, all Christ followers are leaders, they cannot help it! Life on life. Day by day. (I still think we would be wise to use a different word. Something other than leader, unless speaking about trees. I feel like I ought to apologize for all my tree metaphors...but tis the season, and, I think best in pictures.)

Part C: Personal Evaluation

My track record for developing leaders is inconsistent. I co-parented two exceptional leaders and I have led ministry teams that failed to continue due to a lack of leadership when I left. The difference between these two extremes is the level of my personal commitment to the team above the tasks. As I have already discussed previously, my approach to ministry teams was likeminded people working together to achieve a goal. We prayed for ministry outcomes, but I was rarely stretched past my abilities. I was all about the task – summed up as meeting the needs of the participants. I was not interested in developing people as leaders and did not see that as my mandate. Conversely, I took my parenting responsibility (developing my little people) seriously. I was always aware that I was in uncharted waters with each age and stage and needed the Spirit to lead me as I led them. I was growing and they were also growing and transitioning

from depending on me to depending on God. Both of their gap years confirmed what we had joyfully suspected, they had become free-growing influencers in their own contexts.

Arrow Leadership has given me an opportunity to intentionally develop leaders and, in this environment, I am entirely dependent on God. It is a formal arrangement, and I am taking my responsibility seriously. They are invested and my level of committed matches their own willingness to grow and change. I've learned that I work best with people who are self-motivated, open to change and want to be challenged. In this COVID season, I am hungry to grow. I am learning and changing and this naturally flows out in conversation and activities with those I am intentionally life-on-life with (not a great phrase, but it will have to do until I find a better one. I am intentionally avoiding using the terms mentoring, coaching, developing, etc.).

Back to my leader definition of the growing tip that naturally directs new growth upward. I can be more intentional in my directing of new growth. I can slow down and say more than, "I'm heading this way, join me if you want, or not." I can invite, challenge, and help others find their way upwards – especially with those who are asking me to do so. I was told that someone saw me as a mother of Israel. Ugh! I instantly rolled the eyes of my heart. Then she said, before you dismiss this, what I mean by mother is a Deborah – a woman who speaks wisdom and courageously cared for Israel. Hmmm. I am paying attention to how and when and with whom this naturally occurs. So, what are some of the important factors for me when selecting and developing others? I can work with anyone who has a willingness to grow and a desire to move outwardly forward.