Learning Experience 1C:

The Most Important Factors in Selecting and Developing Leaders

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DML813: Selecting and Developing Leaders

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Not since Rick Warren's **Purpose Driven Church** have I found a book on Church Development so compelling. In **Exponential** Dave and Jon Ferguson find a way to be both logical and inspirational in their approach to church growth and leadership development; providing methodology and reasoning each step of the way. They also present the fundamental missional vision at the heart of their movement. The missional vision drives **Exponential** through each phase. Dan Reiland's book **Amplified** is also a logical approach to leadership development, however, he relies less on systems and places his trust in a set of relational skills. For Reiland leadership is very human endeavor: "developing people is far more art than science…significant impact comes when you connect at a heart level."[i] They tackle the challenge of leadership with different approaches; based on different premises but often come to similar conclusions for the best approach leadership development.

Reiland engages the task of leadership development to cultivate leadership resiliency. This is accomplished through a set of practices and skills to enable leaders to "go the distance".[ii] While Reiland has a relational focus, the Ferguson's present leadership as an answer to a problem: specifically the mandate given by Jesus to his disciples in Acts 1:8: "Jesus has given the church the problem of rapid reproduction." [iii] Although I do not agree entirely with their approach to the text I am profoundly moved by their viewpoint. Specifically, that leadership is necessary to solve problems. Managers manage, but leaders are present to solve great problems, and navigate crisis. Challenges and problems are the impetus to inspired leadership. What develops from their approach to the Acts 1:8 mandate is a relentless development of a system and dedication to a set of principles to church planting and leadership development. The developmental process begins on the individual level and subsequently evolves into something larger in each progressive phase—but it all begins with an initial focus on an individual leader. Reiland

focuses on the journey of leadership, while the Ferguson's focus on the challenges. I find myself much more attracted to the **Exponential** approach.

To be sure both sets of writers appreciate the need continue leadership development. However, a key insight of **Exponential** is the awareness for the need to make reproduction an indispensable component of the process. They begin with reproducing in mind. Although they admit that parting with leaders and planting new churches is a difficult moment of separation. Yet, because reproduction is a core value, they are able to commit to this objective. The Ferguson's unique missional vision can be potentially interrupted by conflicting values. However, the reproducing church begins with the understanding that their best leaders, and artist will likely move on to create "new small groups, teams, services, campus…"[iv]

I was inspired by the discussion of a movement that is reliant upon the creative class. "Wherever the creative class gravitates, there will be the creating of culture. These will be the physical and philosophical places where new communities of faith emerge."[v] The creating of culture in many ways is the responsibility of the leader. The idea that a leader would allow culture to organically develop through the use of arts—music, graphic arts—and the recruiting of artist, in addition to ministers and seminarians is both challenging and intriguing.

The authors also share a dedication to two key roles in leadership development: the apprentice and coach. When they use the word apprentice however, they mean two different things. What the Fergusons mean by apprentice, Reiland terms a follower. Regardless of the term they all appreciate the significance of genuine discipleship. Making a case that discipleship is at the heart of church multiplication. Therefore, intentionality is crucial for spiritual and leadership formation of believers at the basic levels of their faith. Parenthetically, the Ferguson's intentional about the language they use to describe their processes, functions, and concepts.

They introduce new language as a "crucial step in reshaping paradigms and getting people to think differently about the movement of Jesus."[vi] For example, they are keen not to use the word discipleship—a ruined word—in their estimation; they constantly use the term "Jesus movement" to describe the church. Frequently, while reading **Exponential**, I paused several times to reflect on the vernacular used within my church context to consider which words in our lexicon have become "ruined".

A second term that received much attention by both parties was coaching. Reiland puts much more focus on the person being coached; He looks deeply into the character of the potential leader asking several questions around the character and abilities of the "apprentice". The Fergusons place much more focus on the actual coaches and their capabilities. One reason for the difference in coaching focus may derive from the fact that Reiland encourages emerging leaders to be coached while the Fergusons argue that establish leaders need a lifetime of coaching. Here I agree with the Fergusons, emerging leaders need mentoring—and they have a five-step approach to developing emerging leaders that centers around a praxis of "doing", "watching", and "talking". However, the Ferguson's coaching model focuses on four key areas of accountability and encouragement. Coaching established leaders is a better investment, and they benefit more from the time spent.

Although the Ferguson's deal briefly with incarnational ministry I would have like them to spend some more time on the subject. There is potential for a more robust appreciation for the Acts 1:8 mandate. To be sure, there is an important missional focus on the need to Go and be sent. In fact, I appreciated the attention they placed on renewing Apostolic ministry. However, the Acts 1:8 scripture places equal importance on Christ followers need to bear witness in the context in which they take the Jesus movement. This is especially important in communities of color and

among emerging generations that are becoming increasingly skeptical of a gospel of proclamation without the corresponding work of Christian praxis. Again, they discuss this briefly several times but it was referenced more as an outgrowth of small groups and church planting—the term used was "Contribution".

This may be corny but I call my paradigm for discipleship and leadership development a 3-D model of growth-Discover, Develop, Display. Individuals are required to "discover" the purpose for the burden of leadership. Almost all spiritual[vii] leaders in the bible go through a revelatory call motif where they receive the burden of leadership. This paradigm is often highlighted by the voice of God and an apocalyptic vision of some kind—Isaiah, Moses, Paul, and the 12 disciples have all experienced the multi-sensory manifestation of the divine. In this motif the leader receives a mandate like those found in Matthew 28: 19, 20; Acts 1:8 or Isaiah 6:8. However, it is always preceded by the revelation of God. It is this revelation that provides the resilience necessary for enduring Christian leadership. Most call narratives in the bible take place during especially difficult times (slavery, exile, persecution, and moral decline). Those whom God calls to leadership will rely on the initial vision which informs us of God's sovereignty and power. The leader will need to reference this moment many times in life. Once the discovery of the burden has been established the leader will focus on two responsibilities.

The leaders first responsibility is "developing" himself and others. This development takes place through spiritual disciplines, mentoring relationships, and educational pursuits. A well-developed leader will help others to develop as well. In order to help others develop it requires the leader to identify and create sacred space for others to grow. I agree with Ferguson and others that the best space for development is in small groups. In addition to discipleship, this space also makes room for the next generation of leaders to learn, participate, and grow.

The second responsibility of the leader is to put on "display" the model of the deeply spiritual Christian life. At this stage the leader is not only growing in the spiritual disciplines but he is displaying it for others so that they will come to a deeper faith in Christ. Again, other disciples and emerging leaders are invited in to a redemptive community bearing witness to the countervailing values of the kingdom of God. In this community the gifts, talents, and spiritual growth that God makes available are made manifest. This is the lifetime pursuit of the spiritual leaders to be in a repeating cycle of discovery, development, and display in their personal life as well as leading others in this process.

Throughout my time in ministry, in every setting, I endeavored to develop leaders around me. I "display" aptitude at this function in two areas. First, I am good at replacing myself. In the different ministry roles, I have participated in I am good at finding someone to walk alongside me in order to (1) assist me in some capacity so that I can focus on my strengths and (2) learn the dynamics of the role I pursue. If someone gets the opportunity to work that closely with me, I am usually in the place where I am willing to place enormous trust in their integrity and faithfulness. As Paul stated in his first letter to the Corinthians faithfulness is the cardinal requirement of those who serve in a leadership capacity. Skills can be taught once someone has proven them themselves faithful in discipleship. Whenever I have been elevated in leadership or simply move into another role, I usually leave the position and ministry in good hands because I am able to mentor the individuals who work alongside me.

I also bear fruit in the area of team building and developing those leaders who participate with me in leadership. In a team everyone has a specific roles and functions. When I know an individual's responsibility, I am capable of equipping them with resources, encouragement, a training suited for their function and personality. One of the things I also do well is allow the

leaders around me to hear from God for themselves; they direct their leadership path. Leadership development should be tailored to the individual's strengths and weaknesses as much as it should be tailored to the context.

I am better working with emerging leaders and those working in support roles than I am with already established leaders. I have served in support roles throughout my ministry and I am well aware of the challenges one faces and the opportunities that are present when someone works as an administrative assistant or associate pastor. I have a well of knowledge from which to draw. I have also been successful developing people from the role of discipleship to roles of leadership. One of the areas of difficulty for me is coaching. Especially, when coaching is focused on those leaders withing the ministry context who are in well-defined leadership roles. It is my experience that well establish leaders are more difficult to teach and I am a teacher at heart—this is probably my core spiritual gifting. I have not experienced the level of success I would like in retraining established leaders for the type of leadership required in a post-Christian reality. According to my wife, there is a second reason for my short comings in this area: it is difficult for me to remain focused on ministries that I am not directly involved in. So, when it comes to supporting and equipping individuals who lead in areas that do not directly impact my ministry, I lose focus. Therefore, as it pertains to coaching, I need to develop better skills. I have to be more intentional about dedicating the time to equip, serve, and recruit, especially when the coaching may not bring a definitive benefit within the context of my ministry. In addition, I need to be mindful to ask the right question. Ferguson says coaches ask six specific question that help leaders in the area of relational, physical, spiritual, and mental health. I am a good teacher I can become a better coach.

Ultimately, the answer to the issue of leadership development for me is to create my own system and process from the "ground up" like the authors of these books. It is clear that these leaders are successful because they have built their own movements. Whether the organization is 12Stone Church or Community Christian Church building a movement allows a leader to cultivate the type of culture conducive to developing leaders. I have found it most difficult to develop leaders in established church cultures where there is resistance to innovation. One of the things I have to pray about in this season is if my gifts and leadership skill sets are more suited for a brand-new environment or an already established ministry context. As I continue to develop ministry paradigms and theologies it becomes clearer that I have an apostolic anointing suited for establishing works and not necessarily a prophetic anointing for reforming a ministry.

[i] Reiland, Dan. Amplified Leadership, 5 Practices to Establish Influence, Build People, and Impact Others for a Lifetime. (Lake Mary, FL: Charisma House, 2011), 178
[ii] Ibid, xxiii
[iii] Ferguson, Dave & Jon Ferguson. Exponential, How You and Your Friends Can Start a Missional Church Movement. (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan), 14
[iv] Ibid, 68
[v] Ibid, 73
[vi] Ibid, 45
[vii] Although I use the term spiritual here church leaders influence often goes beyond the confines of sacred domain. As a pastor I am often call to give advice and counsel on areas outside of spiritual matters—business decisions, college choice. The sacred and the secular intersect at every area of life.