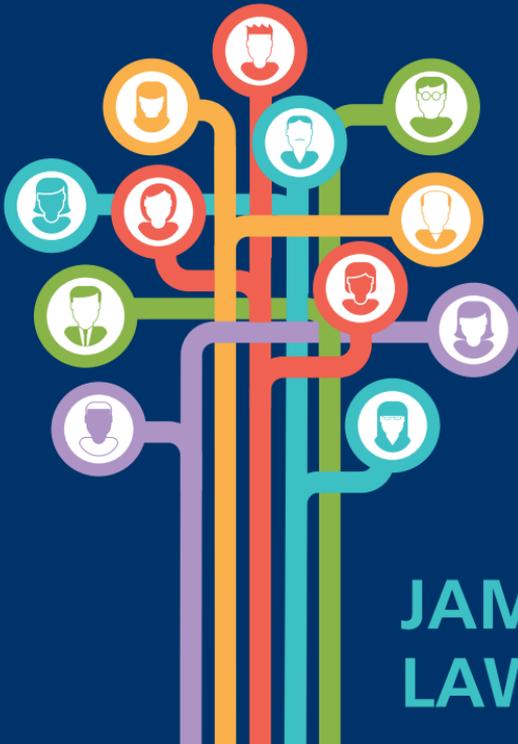


GROWING LEADERS

REFLECTIONS ON
LEADERSHIP,
LIFE AND JESUS



JAMES
LAWRENCE

FOREWORD BY
BISHOP GRAHAM CRAY



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LIFE AND JESUS

**JAMES
LAWRENCE**

Foreword by Bishop Graham Cray

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Commendations for *Growing Leaders*

This is probably the most thoughtful, rigorous and engaging study of Christian leadership that I have read. A 'must have' for anyone who is taking this subject seriously.

JILL GARRETT, FORMER MD OF GALLUP UK, DIRECTOR OF LEADERSHIP
DEVELOPMENT AT LT CONSULTING

*I am always looking for books to recommend to young ministry leaders. Now James Lawrence's *Growing Leaders* will be near the top of my list! It is authentic—written by a 'growing leader' who himself helps to grow other young leaders. It is both biblically solid and organisationally aware; holds in tension competence and character; and, out of the author's life experience, is rich in resources and practical help. It deserves a wide reading, and can help to meet one of the greatest needs of the global church—the forming of leaders who lead like and to and for Jesus!*

LEIGHTON FORD, FOUNDER OF THE ARROW LEADERSHIP PROGRAMME

*A comprehensive, practical and very readable analysis of the art of leadership. *Growing Leaders* is a book that anyone serious about leadership will have to read.*

J. JOHN, EVANGELIST

There are too many books on leadership, but this one I'll keep on my shelves. James combines a broad knowledge of the latest research and tested literature with an understanding of church (and especially Anglican) leadership, and won't let either run away from scripture. He has mixed them thoughtfully and humbly, enriched by the experience gained from life, ministry and the Arrow Leadership Program.

HUGH PALMER, RECTOR, ALL SOULS, LANGHAM PLACE

*To all those who have patiently grown me as a leader,
too many to list, but all known to Him.*

Thank you.

*To Rob, friend and companion on life's journey,
thanks for everything. You're a star!*

Acknowledgements

As with any writing project, this is a joint effort. So many people have influenced and shaped this book, many without even knowing it. I think of the man who, when I was 13 years old and scared witless about reading a lesson in church, came up afterwards and offered a dozen words of encouragement. Because of you I preach today. I think of a well-known Christian speaker who gave a precocious 19-year-old ten minutes to discuss some finer point of theology, and, despite my arrogance, encouraged me to think deeply about the issue. Because of you I am still thinking. I think of the teacher at school who carefully guided me through teenage years and gave me my first opportunity to lead. Because of you I am a leader. To all who have grown me in faith and leadership, I dedicate this book with my deepest gratitude.

More recently, special thanks go to the team I lead and to my colleagues at CPAS. I've learnt so much through you all. Thank you to Miranda Adderley, Gareth Callam, Penny Frank, Simon Heathfield, Johnny Juckes, Rory Keegan, Andy Piggott, Chris Rogers, Rod Street, and Andrew Watson for reading the first draft and making such helpful comments. Without your help I shudder to think what would have appeared. Thank you to Naomi Starkey for her careful editing and constant encouragement to keep going. Thank you to my wife and children for continually supporting me and praying for me while I slaved away at this book.

Finally, thank you to Leighton Ford who kindly invited me on the Arrow Leadership Programme and opened up a whole new way of seeing leadership. Because of you I've written this book.

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FOREWORD

This book is published at a challenging time for the Church in Britain. Loss of confidence in historic institutions, a consumer culture in which religious practice is treated as a leisure option, a competing range of therapies, spiritualities and religions, and an increasing ignorance about the Christian faith all combine to create a substantial new missionary challenge.

In response the very shape of the Church is changing. We are in a new context and are exploring new approaches. It is a critical moment of opportunity. Any adequate response will involve renewed imagination, clear vision and the mobilisation of the people of God. But under God, all of these are dependent on one supreme factor—the quality of leadership. A church that does not invest in developing leaders is incapable of responding to a changing culture.

As a result of the terrible decline in the numbers of young people in the church during the 1980s and 1990s, youth ministry had to reinvent itself or die! The extent to which it has been able to flourish again has been the extent to which it could change—not to adapt the gospel, but to restore contact with the everyday world of young people. The most significant change in the practice of youth ministry was this: we stopped providing programmes to educate and entertain young people and began to equip young people to take responsibility for their own ministry. The results were dramatic.

It is no longer adequate to teach the emerging generation to do what we, their leaders, have done. We need to train them to think, act and lead in ways we could not otherwise have imagined.

This is why I am delighted to commend James Lawrence's book. Much of this material arises out of James' experience of developing young leaders through the Arrow Leadership Programme, easily the best course of its type that I know. I value the emphasis on security in God, and on character and competence. This book will help the Church to identify, train and release the leaders we need.

Bishop Graham Cray

PREFACE

It was 2004 when *Growing Leaders* was first published, and my leadership journey continues. I have learnt much over the intervening years. Some of this learning has been in the study, through books read and websites visited; some of it has been engaging with other leaders in training sessions; but the vast majority has been at the coalface, leading with colleagues. I am so grateful for those who constantly sharpen my own thinking and encourage me in my personal development. I am also grateful to Naomi Starkey and BRF for asking me to update *Growing Leaders*. Adding new resources, changing certain sections and renewing the notes has been a helpful way of reflecting on these last years.

There are some new challenges that those in church leadership face today (for example, the rise of multi-parish responsibilities), but the principles outlined in *Growing Leaders* seem to stand the test of time. What is noticeable is the greater number of resources available today: more books, more conferences, more websites, more courses. More doesn't necessarily mean better leadership. The greatest challenge is to live out the things we are learning, not simply to be more informed, but to be growing in our leadership.

I think my more recent experiences have deepened in me a number of convictions.

- *Wisdom* is the heart of good leadership. Leadership isn't as important when everything is clear and easy. You need leadership when things are difficult, complex and unclear. Then leaders need wisdom to discern the best way forward. Thankfully the Judeo-Christian tradition offers much wisdom for those who are prepared to mine its resources. Dig deep and ask God for his wisdom.
- *Courage* is the backbone of good leadership. Leaders consistently face tough situations. Without courage they will fall at each one. Courage is developed over time through daily choices to tackle tough things and not to avoid the potentially painful path.

Courage is required and can be grown. Decide to face tough things, and start today.

- *Discipline* is the foundation of good leadership. The older I get, the more I realise that self-control, good old-fashioned discipline, is vital to consistency and caring in leadership. While it may not be popular or easy, discipline in discerning God's call, discipline in developing Christ-like character, discipline in growing in leadership abilities, and above all discipline in the spiritual life are all foundational to healthy and helpful leadership. Exercise self-control, and plead with God for grace to be a disciplined person.
- *Gratitude* is the fuel of good leadership. There are inherent dangers for those in leadership; they include cynicism, a critical spirit, a judgemental attitude, discouragement and weariness. Paul's injunctions not to 'lose heart' (2 Corinthians 4:1) or 'grow weary in doing good' (Galatians 6:9) are helpful reminders. My hunch is that gratitude is vital to keep ourselves in a good place over the long haul as leaders—gratitude to God for all he has given to us and continues to give to us; gratitude to people for their love and care, for their patience and long-suffering, for their service and help; gratitude to those closest to us, who put up with our failings and foibles, bear the brunt of our frustrations, and encourage us to keep on keeping on. Make it a daily discipline to be thankful.
- *Self-knowledge* is the core of good leadership. Those in the corporate world would call this emotional intelligence. I tend to think of it as healthy self-awareness—a leader who knows how people are responding to what they are doing; who is flexible enough to adjust their approach to suit different people; who understands their own strengths, gaps, limitations, weaknesses and flaws, and whose self-knowledge is rooted in their knowledge of God. Take time to stop, reflect and know yourself.

Wisdom, courage, discipline, gratitude and self-knowledge: these five things will serve us well as we seek to grow as leaders. I pray that God will grow you in these things, and that you will join in with all he is doing to shape you to be a leader more like Christ.

INTRODUCTION

'I am the vine; you are the branches. If a person remains in me and I in them, they will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.'

JOHN 15:5

Over the years before writing this book, four things fuelled my growing concern about leadership in the church. First, my own personal journey as a leader. I can't exactly remember when it started, but by the time I was a teenager I was leading a youth group in my home, completely untaught and without any real idea what I was doing. I longed for people to become Christians and, as there weren't many other Christian teenagers in the church I'd just started attending, it seemed the sensible thing to do. Then a couple of Christian school teachers began to mentor me, and by the time I was 24 I was ordained. I loved being a minister within a local church, made lots of mistakes and learnt loads. In my early 30s I joined CPAS as an evangelist and I couldn't have been happier. Over the next ten years I was to experience the highs and lows of leadership, and the main struggles were to do with things that needed attention within myself. *Growing Leaders* is a personal reflection on what went wrong and God's gracious work in my life.

Second, in my role as an evangelist within two Christian organisations, CPAS and Springboard,¹ I've worked with churches throughout the UK, and my experience has confirmed all the research I've read on church growth. One of the chief characteristics of healthy, growing churches is leadership. It isn't the only mark of a healthy church,² but it is a vital one. Leaders shape the church for good or bad. And sadly the initial research findings of the

Natural Church Development Network indicate that ‘empowering leadership’ is consistently the lowest-graded characteristic in English churches.³ It’s not that Christian leadership is an end in itself, or that good leadership will definitely lead to church growth, but leadership is a key factor in the spread of the gospel.

Third, as I started to read widely on the subject of leadership, I discovered authors saying similar things. Two examples will suffice. Leighton Ford, writing from a global perspective, says that ‘the world is undergoing a major leadership shift’ with a corresponding need for ‘a new kind of leadership’.⁴ Chris Edmondson ‘takes the temperature’ of the church and British society in his opening chapter of *Fit to Lead*, and concludes, ‘Fresh, imaginative leadership will be required and will need resourcing.’⁵ These conclusions resonate with many in leadership today. Models of leadership, church and evangelism that have worked well in the past are under question. Many are rethinking such models in order to engage with a rapidly changing world, particularly in contexts where ordained ministers have responsibility for anything up to 25 churches.

Fourth, I have had the privilege of working alongside younger leaders. In 1998 I attended a leadership development programme in the States called Arrow. It was a great experience. Arrow is an 18-month programme aimed at leaders aged 25 to 40, seeking to help them to be led more by Jesus, knowing him and understanding his will; to lead more like Jesus, enabling his people to be a reconciling community; and to lead more to Jesus, serving his redemptive purposes in our generation. Since then, we’ve started an Arrow Leadership Programme in the UK. We’ve completed three programmes and have discovered that many of those who attend are grappling with similar issues. How do committed Christian leaders sustain their relationship with God, without succumbing to cynicism and disillusionment? How do they handle the demands on their time? How do they continue to grow as a Christian while encouraging others to grow? Where do they find resources to help them make sense of a changing world and changing church?

As a result of these four things, I am convinced of the need

to resource leaders for what Chris Edmundson calls ‘fresh, imaginative leadership’ within the Church. *Growing Leaders* is one small contribution to that task.

Why growing leaders?

There are two main strands to my approach. The first is that we need to grow *more* leaders. As reflection on theology and financial restrictions affect the role of the ordained leader within the church, we will need more people to take on leadership responsibilities within local congregations. For this reason the book speaks of leaders rather than presbyters or priests, recognising the diversity of leadership positions within local churches and Christian organisations. I also use male and female pronouns interchangeably.

Part of growing more leaders is to liberate the people of God to embrace leadership at every level. One of the common phrases I hear is ‘I’m not a leader. I just... take the children’s group... run the youth club... coordinate the home meeting...’ When I point out that they are indeed in a leadership position, they normally struggle to accept the term ‘leader’. Why? Because the model of leadership reflected in the life of the local church is too limited, and not biblical enough. We need a church where people are helped to take up leadership roles, and equipped to carry them out with confidence and skill. We need a church where those in leadership in their Monday-to-Saturday lives don’t feel they have to leave all that behind when they enter the church building on Sunday. We need a church where we grow more leaders of every age—children, young people and adults.

The second strand is a conviction that for us to grow more leaders, we need more *growing* leaders. This is the primary focus of the book. Growing leaders tend to grow others into leadership.

Christian leadership can be tough,⁶ particularly at this time of change within society and church, when many leaders are unsure of their role and feel inadequately trained to fulfil it. Reports such as

*Affirmation and Accountability*⁷ and *Leaders Under Pressure*⁸ highlight some of the current pressures experienced by church leaders.

- 3 in 10 have felt for a prolonged period like leaving Christian service.
- 3 in 10 feel that their family suffers because of their work.
- 4 in 10 feel pressured by inadequate income.
- Only 2 in 10 have received training in management or team building.
- 7 in 10 feel heavily overworked.
- 200 church leaders miss Sunday activities each week as a result of stress-related illnesses.
- 1500 church leaders quit over a ten-year period.

Under these pressures it is easy to stagnate, opt out, or withdraw into what is familiar. I know from my own experience how easy it is to stop growing as a leader, and for that reason I've decided to be fairly personal in this book. This runs the risk of somehow suggesting that my way of coping with particular experiences is the only way of coping with them. I know that this is not the case. Each person is wired up in a different way, with different gifts, experiences, and passions. Each reader of *Growing Leaders* will need to interpret it through his or her own personality and experience. There are places in the book where I think we are dealing with principles that cross cultures, personalities and times, and there are places when I am simply sharing something of my own story. When I do the latter, my intention is to be illustrative, not prescriptive.

An overview

The book is divided into six parts, based on the model for developing leaders at the heart of the Arrow Leadership Programme and the Growing Leaders courses.

Part 1: Leadership today explores the context for growing leaders today. Chapter 1 examines how we define leaders and leadership, with a particular look at the characteristics of *Christian* leadership. Chapter 2 considers some specific challenges for leaders today, and identifies a model for developing leaders that provides the framework for the rest of the book.

Part 2: Growing leaders know they're chosen considers the starting point for any Christian leader—discipleship. Unless we know we are chosen, the children of a loving God, we will lead from an insecure place, constantly twisting the privilege of a leadership position to meet our own needs. In this chapter we consider the cycles of grief and grace and how Jesus' life models for us the security of knowing who we are in him.

Part 3: Growing leaders discern God's call focuses on knowing what God wants for our lives. Chapter 4 introduces the concept of living in the 'red zone', where we constantly overstretch ourselves, damaging our relationships, health and effectiveness. Chapter 5 considers how God's call affects not simply the big picture of what he wants us to do with our lives, but also our daily decisions, thus helping us to move out of a 'red zone' lifestyle.

Part 4: Growing leaders develop Christ-like character reflects on the place of character in the leader's life. Chapter 6 acknowledges that who we are communicates as clearly as what we do. Many of the problems in leadership do not come from a lack of skills or knowledge in a particular area, but from the underlying character issues that affect how we relate to people. Chapter 7 asks how we can grow more like Christ. How much change can we expect this side of heaven? What tools can help us avoid stagnation and disillusionment?

Part 5: Growing leaders cultivate competence looks at four essential areas of leadership competence: leaders lead themselves and those closest to them (Chapter 8), embody kingdom values (Chapter 9), discern, articulate and implement God's vision (Chapter 10), and develop people (Chapter 11). The first two are mainly inward-focused. Leading ourselves is one of the toughest challenges most of

us face. Plenty of leaders pay lip service to certain values but then don't live them out; effective leaders embody their values. Without this, a leader lacks integrity, a fundamental quality of healthy leadership. The second two areas are mainly outward-focused. If we are to lead, we need to know where we are going, and ensure we get there. How do we discern God's way ahead with a group of people so that we can lead them well? Finally, the role of the leader isn't simply to achieve a task, but also to develop people. Taking Jesus as our example, we examine mentoring as a process in the life of the leader.

Part 6: Growing leaders lead in community considers the context for Christian leadership, the community of the people of God. Reflecting on the nature of God and his Church, we explore the corporate nature of leadership and look at the place of team as a reflection of this community.

As you read the book, you'll notice that each part varies in length. This doesn't reflect the level of importance of any one part, for each part builds on the previous one, with areas of overlap and distinctiveness. Each chapter starts with a scenario or poem, and ends with some questions or exercises for personal reflection. Questions within the chapters and a resources section at the end of the book provide additional material for discussion and reflection. You may like to use the questions in conversation with someone else. The difficulty with answering them on your own is that many of us are either overly negative or naively optimistic about ourselves; few of us are good at objective reflection. Leaders often struggle to find a mentor, so here is a simple way to establish an informal mentoring-type relationship. Invite a colleague or friend to read the book, and then meet after every chapter to chat over the content, using the questions as a starting point for your conversation.

A personal comment

Any book that considers Jesus' leadership as a model for those who lead his people is going to be challenging. I want to stress at the

outset that I can handle that challenge only by clearly understanding that God's call on my life as a leader is within the context of a number of theological truths. First, my baptism. Baptism is the ordination of God's people into a lifetime of service for Jesus. In baptism I am assured that I am a child of God, and that my life in Christ is dependent on grace. If I am called to lead, it is as a child of God committed to serving Jesus, totally dependent on his amazing grace.

Second, the cross, which makes clear that sin and failure can be forgiven. I've made so many mistakes as a leader and struggle with many internal issues, yet at the cross I know the one who loves, forgives and offers a new start. The cross also reminds us of the place of suffering within the Christian life. The apostle Paul, reflecting on his faith, wrote, 'I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead' (Philippians 3:10-11). Christ suffered; we are called to share in the fellowship of his suffering.

Third, the resurrection and the coming of the Spirit. I am not left on my own. Jesus is present with me through his Spirit, bringing about his transformation of my life. The process of change is not dependent solely on me, but on my willingness to be open to what God wants to do in my life. The good news is that he's been taking inadequate and ordinary people and using them in leadership for a long time. He is pretty good at it.

Fourth, Christ's return. This is the hope I have as a leader, that one day all will be well, that the tragedy and suffering of this life is not the end. 'For the Lamb at the centre of the throne will be their shepherd; he will lead them to springs of living water. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes' (Revelation 7:17). God is sovereign of his world; he will return. Alleluia! Until then I seek to be faithful to God's calling on my life as best I can.

These four things keep me going. If I stray too far from any of them I collapse at the enormity of the task and the weakness of my character. Thank God that he is the one on whom I can depend, and thank God that he hasn't left me in this race on my own.

Let's run the race together

A story is told of an event at the Paralympic Games. It was late in the day, and the 400 metres sprint was about to start. Two young men lined up on the starting grid, as all the other competitors had dropped out. A hard-bitten *Time* magazine reporter gave his commentary on the radio, describing the scene as 'painful to watch'. The gun went off. The two men, both with cerebral palsy, lurched off the line. One of the coaches ran beside the track, coaxing his athlete on. 'Come on, Joey, you can win.' At the first corner Joey was leading by 25 metres. A subtle chant came from the crowd: 'Joey. Joey. Joey.' Going into the last turn, Joey's lead had stretched to 40 metres. The other competitor was weary and losing heart. Twenty-five metres from the finish, Joey suddenly stopped. He turned to his coach and smiled, acknowledged the crowd, and then turned back to the other young man and said, 'Come on, buddy.' Joey held out his hand until the man was alongside him, and then they ran across the line together. The crowd went berserk. The reporter was heard to utter, 'Make me more like Joey.' The coach was heard to stammer through his tear-lined face, 'Attaboy, Joey, you're a real winner.'

As a leader, I am only half way through the race, so *Growing Leaders* is written looking ahead to those further on in the race, who will encourage me not simply to keep going but to develop and thrive in Christian leadership. It is written looking sideways at colleagues and companions, wanting to share the heady highs, the painful lows and the day-by-day endurance of Christian leadership. It is written looking back to those further down the track seeking to run the race set before them, offering a hand to help them run with verve, imagination and freshness. It is written looking around to the crowd who fill the heavenly stadium and cheer us all on the way; those who have completed their race, and have now received their crowns.

Above all, *Growing Leaders* is written looking up to Jesus, the one who is 'the author and perfecter of our faith' (Hebrews 12:2) who

alone is 'able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy' (Jude 24). My desire is that this book may help you to keep growing as a leader, to be led more by Jesus, to lead more like Jesus, and to lead more to Jesus.

For reflection

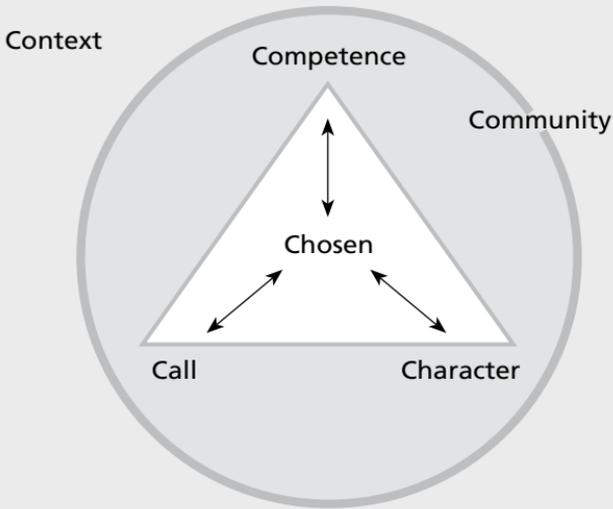
*Father,
I abandon myself into your hands.
Do with me what you will.
Whatever you may do, I thank you.
I am ready for all, I accept all.
Let only your will be done in me,
and in all your creatures.
I wish no more than this, O Lord.
Into your hands I commend my soul.
I offer it to you
with all the love of my heart,
for I love you, Lord,
and so need to give myself,
to surrender myself into your hands,
without reserve and with boundless confidence,
for you are my Father.*

Amen

CHARLES DE FOUCAULD

PART ONE

LEADERSHIP TODAY



Part One explores the context for growing leaders today. Chapter 1 tries to untangle the web of how we define leaders and leadership, with a particular look at the distinctive characteristics of *Christian* leadership. Chapter 2 considers some specific challenges for leaders today, and identifies a model (see the diagram above) for developing leaders that provides the framework for the rest of the book.

Nick (18), writing to his godfather

Dear Joe

Wow! Great Christmas pressie or what? Thanks! Exactly right. Thank you too for asking about what I'm doing when I finish school. It is all a bit scary. Only six months to go and then what? Not a clue. Except for something interesting that happened a few days ago.

In the Sunday service there was a quiet bit during the prayers. I kind of sensed God speaking to me. Nothing has ever happened like this before. But it was as if God spoke, not with a voice, but it came across like that. He said, 'I want you to be a leader in my church.' Then, after the service, Dad came up to me and said he'd been thinking about my future and wondered if I'd thought about doing something in the church. It was kind of spooky. What if it was really God? What if he really wants me to lead in his church? What do you think, Joe? I hope you don't mind me telling you all this.

My mate Carol and I were chatting last night about the future. She thinks I should take up an offer with Youth for Christ, and get some more experience of youth work. A year on one of their teams sounds fun. I've learnt a stack of stuff from leading the junior youth group here, but I've also got loads of questions. Like, God may be asking me to be a leader—but, hey, what *is* a leader, anyway? And how do you become one? I feel a little on my own with all this. Carol is a good mate, but we're both at the same stage asking the same questions. Who's going to help me think this through? Any advice?

Anyway, gotta shift. Stay cool. Thanks for the top prez—and for praying for me.

Nick

WHAT IS CHRISTIAN LEADERSHIP?

Leadership for Christians is about God, not about us... We centre our soul in the hand of God—only then are we ready for leadership.

WALTER WRIGHT¹

There is no shortage of ideas about leadership and images of leaders. Occasionally when I am exploring Christian leadership with a group, I'll start a session by asking them to draw a picture of a leader. The results are fascinating. Inevitably what they draw depends on their experience of being led and their understanding of leadership.

Some draw a picture of the typical 'strong natural leader'. We know the sort—jutting jaw, focused stare, determined brow. They walk with purpose, they talk with enthusiasm, and they thrive on action. Nothing seems to shake their resolve; problems are always opportunities. No one stands in their way; people are a means to a greater end. They have endless energy; sleep is for wimps. Yes, a caricature admittedly, but one that often comes to mind when people are asked to draw a leader. And... they are normally male. Such a caricature leads us to perceive leadership in a monochrome way. For if this is our predominant image or experience of leadership, we assume all leaders must look like, even sound like, this type of 'strong natural leader'.

Others draw pictures of ineffectual leaders. The media is very adept at caricaturing such Christian leaders. I was TV channel-hopping the other night and stopped to watch a clergyperson on

screen. I have no idea what the programme was, or the storyline, but those two minutes once again reinforced the image so many have of ministers—weak, ineffectual, out of touch with reality, ‘nice’, and unlikely to lead anyone anywhere. Those with this sort of image of church leaders often despair at what they perceive as the lack of leadership within the Church, and are in danger of looking for the stereotypical ‘strong natural leader’ to fill the vacuum.

Other group members struggle to draw anything at all, sometimes because their experience is too painful. Again the media provide the caricature of the minister who leaves his wife and runs off with the choir mistress, or embezzles church funds for personal gain. High-profile cases of child abuse have heightened concern about those in leadership within the Church. When Christian leaders abuse their power, they not only damage those they lead, they destroy trust in leaders on a broader level.

Thankfully, others avoid the caricatures and draw a wonderful variety of people, all ages, both genders, different social and cultural backgrounds, leaders lay and ordained who’ve had a positive influence, shaping people’s lives and providing support, inspiration and encouragement in the Christian life.

A mixed response to the exercise is fairly typical. The ensuing discussion tends to highlight a number of common themes. If we recognise that the caricatures are unhelpful, what is an appropriate model for a Christian leader? How do we respond to the challenges of leadership within a changing world and church? How do we help those in leadership grow and develop in a Christ-like way? How can we encourage more people to take up leadership within the Christian community and help them grow in confidence as leaders? These are the issues that Part 1 of *Growing Leaders* addresses.

Widely recognised leadership definitions

Who or what is a leader? This is the proverbial \$64,000,000 question, but I would like to suggest that it is the wrong one. It

immediately limits the answer to a narrow definition that doesn't reflect the complexities of leadership. Instead, let's ask the question, 'How might we define *leadership*?' Here are five categories, three of which are broadly recognised by writers on leadership, and two of which reflect a specifically Christian answer to the question.

1. Leadership is a function

Leadership is exercised whenever anyone influences another person. In this sense, nearly everyone exercises leadership, for good or bad. The older sibling who influences the younger one to do something naughty, the parent who helps a child to overcome a problem, the friend who encourages us to face a fear, are all exercising leadership. The employee who helps the employer to see a situation differently is exercising leadership, and so is the child who persuades the parent to tell the truth. Whenever and wherever we influence another person, we are exercising leadership. This simple approach to leadership challenges many of the assumptions behind caricatures of leaders. It highlights the importance of recognising the huge impact our lives have on other people. Defining leadership as a function addresses the question 'Am I a leader?' with another question: 'Are you influencing other people?' But on its own, defining leadership as a function is insufficient.

2. Leadership is a position

Leadership is a position of responsibility given to an individual. Every organisation, from businesses to social clubs, appoints people to positions of leadership.² Some of these positions are salaried, with clear job descriptions, limits of authority and lines of accountability—like the businesswoman with a job in a multi-national consultancy firm. Others are voluntary, but with clear expectations and lots of support—like the Sunday club leader overseeing 14 three- and four-year-olds. Still others are unclear and unsupported—like the coordinator of a local social group who didn't really want the role,

and isn't sure what it is, but took it on out of a sense of loyalty to the group and gratitude for all that the group has meant for him over the last year. Each of these people is in a position of leadership, but with very different expectations.

Holding a leadership position doesn't guarantee the ability to fulfil the role. In industry there is something called the 'Peter principle'—promotion to the point of incompetence. Someone who makes a wonderful salesperson doesn't necessarily make a great manager of salespeople. When the person accepts promotion to a new position of leadership, they flounder because they simply don't have the talent or skills for the new role. In the Church it could be called the 'recruitment syndrome'. It is not unusual to find someone in a position of leadership that they accepted out of a sense of duty, or due to massive pressure brought to bear by the minister desperate to fill a leadership vacancy. I remember a children's group leader who'd faithfully led a group for five years. On getting to know me, he confessed that he didn't even like children. Every week it was a miserable experience for him, and it wasn't brilliant for the kids either. Just because a person has a position of leadership, it doesn't mean they are either competent for that role or called to that position.

3. Leadership is an ability

Leadership as an ability is made up of a number of different things. Research by the Gallup organisation on leadership makes a distinction between knowledge, skill and talent.³ *Knowledge* is something you can acquire, be it factual or experiential knowledge. For example, I gain more knowledge about the people I lead by asking good questions and listening carefully to their responses. A *skill* is something you can learn through training. For example, you can be taught the skill of good agenda setting. *Talent* is defined by Gallup as 'a recurring pattern of thought, feeling, or behaviour that can be productively applied'.⁴ It is not the same as skills or knowledge. Skills and knowledge are transferable from person to

person, but they tend to be specific to the situation. Talents are transferable from situation to situation, but they are specific to the person. Talents are naturally developed in our early years and are not dependent on gender, colour or background.

Gallup's research identifies 20 common leadership talents among exceptional leaders, but helpfully points out that no one individual has all 20 talents. Talents aren't just what you can do, but what you can't help yourself doing.

Lurking in the murky depths of leadership theory is a question we now need to address. Are leaders born or made? At a time when 'genes' are found for every aspect of life, many believe there is a 'leadership gene'. You've either got it or you haven't, and if you haven't, you shouldn't waste your time trying to get it. Such 'gene' theories have gained popular acceptance in a range of areas, but leadership research places them under question. 'There is as much proof that the leadership gene exists, as compelling evidence supporting belief in the unicorn,' writes Paul Simpson.⁵ Part of the difficulty is in the breadth of characteristics that make up leadership. Attaching the full range of leadership skills to one gene is stretching the scientific theory to breaking point.

If there is a consensus, it is that leaders are born *and* made—born, because there are certain leadership traits that can be identified from an early age; made, because context and opportunity influence how a person develops. Talent is a combination of both. It is in the complex interaction of who we are (given to us through our gene code) and how we develop (given to us through our context and experiences) that leadership talents develop.

Each of these three aspects of leadership—function, position, ability—are like interlocking circles. When an individual has a leadership position that is aligned with their leadership ability, they will function best as a leader. Someone who leads well as a small group leader may not function as well at a different level of leadership. John Adair suggests that there are three levels of leadership within most organisations.⁶

- *Team/small group leader*: normally accountable for up to 16 people—for example, home group/cell leader, youth group leader, children’s group leader.
- *Area leader*: looks after significant parts or major functions of an organisation or church—for example youth/children’s coordinator, evangelism coordinator, associate minister, worship coordinator.
- *Overall leader*: the person who has ultimate responsibility for steering an organisation or church—for example, minister, General Director of a Christian society.

Adair suggests that more people can lead well at the level of team/small group leader than overall leader. There are some who grow through the leadership levels, and others for whom this isn’t appropriate. Bob was an excellent small group leader but, when asked to oversee the work of all the small groups in his local church, he said no. Slightly taken aback, the minister asked why. Bob replied, ‘The talents required to coordinate the groups are the very ones I don’t have. My talents are ideal for what I do.’ He was right. Joan, also a small group leader, wasn’t even thought of for the role. She was slightly shy, and rarely noticed. In fact, her talents were ideal for the role. She made a better coordinator than small group leader. What she needed help with was confidence, not competence.

Additional perspectives on leadership definitions

For Christians, however, even this doesn’t reflect the whole picture. We need to add two further insights into a description of leadership from the biblical tradition.

1. God gives a gift of leadership

In Romans 12:6–8, Paul writes, ‘We have different gifts, according to the grace given us. If a person’s gift... is leadership, let them govern

diligently.’ Listed among a variety of other gifts, leadership is one of those that Paul identifies as part of God’s gifts to his people. The Greek word used can mean both ‘to lead’ and ‘to care’. This gift of ‘caring leadership’ is not a trophy for the mantelpiece, but a tool for the job. Gifts aren’t intended to build a person up and make them look great, but are given through God’s grace for the building of the body and the witness of the Church in the world. These gifts are given in the context of ongoing transformation into Christ-likeness (Romans 12:1–2), genuine humility about ourselves (Romans 12:3), and recognition that we belong to the body and therefore need each other (Romans 12:4). Paul urges Christians to use God’s gifts with wisdom, a servant heart, and a desire for the common good.

The language of gift encourages us humbly to receive something rather than proudly boast that we have achieved something (1 Corinthians 4:7). This attitude is crucial to the way we use the gift of leadership. ‘Let them govern diligently’ (Romans 12:3). The gift of leadership will benefit from hard work (zeal), ongoing reflection (earnestness), training (diligence) and maturity. As with all the gifts, disobedience, unresolved personal issues and immaturity will stifle it.

We need to be wary of building a comprehensive edifice on the foundation of a single verse that mentions leadership. What we know, however, is that leadership was exercised in the early Church, and that Paul speaks elsewhere of the gifts of the Spirit in terms of grace (1 Corinthians 12:4), service (12:5), workings (12:6), manifestations of the Spirit (12:7), and varieties (12:4–6). All these gifts are acts of God’s power achieving his purposes and are the ‘tangible expression of the active leadership of the Lord Jesus in a congregation’.⁷ This is great news for the Church, for, unlike other contexts where leadership is dependent on natural talents, Christians recognise that leadership does not depend solely on the natural talent of a few exceptional individuals. God can give the gift of leadership to anyone. It is the expression of God’s grace in ordinary people’s lives. Often this is through the natural talents of an individual,⁸ sometimes it is despite them, but always it is a sign of grace, so that no one may boast (1 Corinthians 4:7).

2. God calls people to leadership roles

The Bible shows us that God calls people into leadership and his choice is sometimes surprising. The disciples were a mixed bunch of ordinary men, many of whom wouldn't have passed the psychological profiles and assessment inventories of our day. Yet despite their obvious weaknesses, Jesus called these men to be with him and then to lead his Church. When God calls, the Christian's responsibility is to obey, however surprised we may be by his choice, trusting that he provides all that is needed for us to fulfil the role to which he has called us. This calling may be for a particular situation or for a lifetime's ministry.

As we've identified, God can call people and gift them for particular things he wants them to do, despite their background and experience as well as because of it. Unlike the behavioural psychologists and evolutionary biologists, we cannot close the 'born or made' circle without reference to God. God does seem to work with who we are and how we've grown, but he also works despite these things. God's calling and equipping are as important as natural ability (born) or positive development (made), and all these things bring Christian leaders to a sense of gratitude, humility and dependence on God.

Leadership is therefore about function, position, talent, gift and call. When we restrict our understanding of leadership to just one of these areas, we automatically elevate one aspect of leadership above others, and create an unhealthy environment for leadership to grow. The five aspects of leadership need to be held in creative tension with one another. When you meet someone who is a naturally talented leader, with a clear call from God to a particular position, gifted by God with spiritual gifts to fulfil the call, and the maturity in personal development to continue growing in Christ-likeness, it is a wonderful combination. There are leaders like that around, but not many. To grow leaders, we need to reflect a breadth of leadership understanding so people can see where they fit in, and identify how to move on in

their leadership development. We need to release people to accept their leadership role at whatever level that is expressed, and through that grow more people into leadership at every level, constantly aware that God is the one who calls and equips.

Distinctives of Christian leadership⁹

If these five aspects describe what leadership is, what makes the exercise of Christian leadership distinctive? I've been challenged by Steven Croft's¹⁰ work on how much our leadership thinking is genuinely from a reflection on the Scriptures, and how much is simply a baptising of secular theories within the Church. Of course there is much to learn from secular insights into leadership, but Croft is concerned about the tendency of the Church to respond to the latest fad or fashion. He suggests that truth is rarely found there, but rather in serious theological reflection. As the Church looks for ways both to grow the faith of those already Christian (deepening their 'roots' in Jesus) and to help those outside the faith come to know Jesus (through a variety of 'routes' to him), it is all too easy to abandon what the Christian tradition has to offer on leadership and embrace the latest 'new thing' without a critical analysis of what is appropriate and what isn't.

Many ordained church leaders have an instinctive reaction to the word 'leader'. They sense that their calling was to be a priest, and are unsure how the roles of priest and leader tie up. So is interest in 'leadership' just the next bandwagon to roll through the church, attracting its few followers who will quickly abandon it for the following bandwagon just round the corner? No. In a rapidly changing world and church, leadership is an important factor in helping the Church chart its way ahead.¹¹ It is also rightly reflected in the Christian world. The Church needs good leaders. The question is, what should shape the way Christians exercise leadership? I'd like to suggest several characteristics from the biblical tradition that mark out Christian leadership.

1. Christian leadership is founded in relationship with God as Trinity

Christian leadership depends on relationship with God as Trinity (see John 15). Without this fundamental relationship it isn't Christian leadership, yet it is easy to lose this relationship in the busyness and pressure of leadership. We'll explore this loss of relationship further in Chapter 3. Christian leadership is exercised out of the overflow of that relationship as an expression of the grace of Jesus, the love of God and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit.

It is a *result of grace*—Jesus' divine calling on our lives to follow him and lead others. We don't own this calling; we don't control where Jesus leads; we don't earn his blessing. He generously calls us out of love for people and a longing to fulfil his purposes in his world.

It is *shaped by God's love*—radical, risky, self-sacrificial, costly and forgiving. His love for us draws from us a love for him, and a love for people (1 John 4:7–12). This love goes the extra mile, takes a slap on the cheek, and gives away a garment (Matthew 5:38–42). It is prepared to listen to the thousandth person who isn't yet a Christian give their argument against Christianity, an argument we've heard so many times before we actually know it better than they do, yet genuinely engages with this person as if they were the first person to ask the question. This love receives unfair criticism or unjustified abuse and does not retaliate. It gives and keeps on giving, not demanding anything in return. This love aligns us with a young person who has just messed something up completely, rather than distancing ourselves through fear of looking bad.

Christian leadership is *dependent on the Holy Spirit* empowering and equipping individuals to play their part in the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11–13). In his body, no one individual has all that is necessary for the body to function, but each person has their part to play, and is a valuable and vital part of the body. We are all 'a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God' (1 Peter 2:9). It is the Holy Spirit who takes our strengths and weaknesses and transforms them, using them for God's purposes and for his glory.

2. Christian leadership is rooted in the Bible and directed by the Spirit

Christian leaders seek to be faithful to the Bible in all they do because it is God's word, 'useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that the godly person may be thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16–17). Christian leaders seek to be open to the Spirit because the Spirit of Jesus within guides and leads us into all truth (John 16:13–15). Faithfulness to the Bible and openness to the Spirit of God are like the two spotlights at a theatre. When they come together on one spot, they bring focused and brilliant illumination.

The Bible and the Spirit help us as leaders to *see our part in God's bigger story*, the salvation history of the world, the kingdom of God. This perspective prevents us from getting stuck in our own limited context. It reminds us of the wider world Church, and assures us that, no matter what we face, God is working his purposes out. The temptation to become cynical or disillusioned is countered by a healthy understanding of the bigger story of what God is doing, whose focus is on his kingdom. This will shape how we lead the local church, as an outpost of God's kingdom. If leaders focus anywhere else, they end up following something or someone other than Christ, and they end up serving an agenda other than the kingdom of God's agenda. Christian leaders are kingdom seekers, not empire builders.¹²

The Bible and the Spirit place a *willingness to follow* at the centre of Christian leadership, for a Christian leader's priority is to serve the king. Discipleship is the constant journey of the Christian leader. All leaders must be learners, submitted to serving the king, following wherever he may lead. A Christian leader's allegiance cannot afford to lie anywhere else. This is a challenge, as Jesus' teaching doesn't allow us to retreat to where we are comfortable and stay there. The focus of his gospel constantly calls us to a daily practice of repentance and faith, to a concern for those who don't know Christ, and to the place of dying to ourselves and daily taking up our cross (Mark 8:34–38).

The Bible and the Spirit also help us to *take seriously divine sovereignty and human responsibility*. We will not be surprised by the constant mess the world is in and the waywardness of people or, if we are honest, the tendency for ourselves to be wayward. As we daily confront the realities of a fallen world, we place ourselves in the hands of a sovereign God, who offers forgiveness and the possibility of change.

3. Christian leadership is marked by servanthood

Service is meant to be a normal part of Christian discipleship. Jesus expects those who lead to continue serving as a normal part of Christian leadership. This challenged everything about the accepted models of leadership in Jesus' day. It was utterly revolutionary, and I want to consider this particular distinctive in greater detail.

In Luke 22, Jesus shares the last supper with his closest friends. He has outlined his eagerness to spend these last hours with his friends before he suffers (v. 15) and then breaks bread and shares wine (vv. 19–20). He speaks honestly about his impending betrayal by one of those closest to him (v. 22). At this moment of intense significance and personal vulnerability, the disciples start having an argument about who is the greatest. It is hard to imagine how Jesus must have felt, but his response embodies the very value he longs for them to adopt: 'The kings of the Gentiles lord it over them; and those who exercise authority over them call themselves Benefactors. But you are not to be like that. Instead, the greatest among you should be like the youngest, and the one who rules like the one who serves' (vv. 25–26).

'*You are not to be like that.*' Don't 'lord it over them': don't make use of position or power to wield authority in an arrogant way. Don't think of yourself as a 'benefactor': don't decide when to give and when to keep back. '*You are not to be like that.*' The greatest should have an attitude of humility, a willingness to value others above themselves.¹³ The one who rules should be like the one who serves, willing to help others fulfil their dreams.

Jesus isn't saying, 'Avoid leadership.' He is saying that the way we lead needs to be marked by servanthood: 'But I am among you as one who serves' (Luke 22:27). Striving for greatness¹⁴ was a mark of leaders of the day. Striving to serve is to be the mark of Christian leaders. Jesus says that it isn't about status or position, 'For who is greater, the one at table or the one who serves? Is it not the one at table?' Yes, in the eyes of the people, those who sit at the table are 'greater', but we are to see things differently. Neither success nor status defines Christian leaders, service defines a Christian leader. We may do a nice job of deferring to others, but all too quickly we are like the disciples disputing about who is the greatest. We may not do it verbally, but we do it internally in a legion of subtle ways—concern with how we look, who we associate with, which jobs we get, who listens to us, who we know. *'You are not to be like that.'*

Many years ago, the minister and I were once again the last people putting chairs away late at night after yet another church meeting. I made some quip about needing to be trained by Pickfords, and he responded, with a smile, 'Once a deacon, always a deacon.' He was right. Steven Croft has developed this theme in *Ministry in Three Dimensions*, exploring the threefold nature of leadership in the early church: 'Diakonia, the ministry of a servant, is the most important of the three dimensions if ministry and leadership are to be truly Christian and Christ-like... the principles of diakonia ought therefore to be the controlling and guiding principles of all Christian ministry.'¹⁵

For many of us, this sets up a tension in our lives between being a servant and a leader. Obviously the word 'servant' does not imply grovelling servitude; nor does 'leader' mean dogmatic dictator. However, am I called to give up my own agenda to serve others in fulfilling theirs? I've heard people debate on both sides, and am unconvinced by either, for surely the question involves a false assumption, that either my or the other person's agenda is the priority. The servant leader is called first to serve Christ. His agenda must be preeminent over all other agendas. That's why there are

times when a servant leader must stand against the flow, prepared to challenge, confront and change things, because Christ's agenda is the priority. For example, if a congregation wants to maintain the church as an exclusive club for those who belong, the servant leader doesn't bow to their wishes and help them do a better job at excluding others. The servant leader knows that her first priority is to serve Christ. She goes before God before she goes before the people. But how she engages with the people will need to reflect a servant heart—a willingness to listen, a love for people, an ability to adapt, a humble attitude. The servant leader is a servant of God first, called to serve God's people in leadership. As Graham Cray reflects, 'The controlling principle of local church leadership is that Jesus is the active leader of each congregation.'¹⁶

External and internal expectations can easily undermine this fundamental priority. I was once in a rural context where the vicar told me that he constantly heard, 'Ah, vicar, but the last vicar...' I asked him how long he'd been there, expecting an answer of a few months. 'Twenty-five years' was the reply! External expectations can exert huge pressures, but many of us in leadership find the internal expectations even harder to handle. These can be fuelled by many factors, such as the need to be liked and therefore the tendency to try to please others. We'll explore this further in Chapter 4.

Rather than being moulded by external expectations or internal expectations, shaped by secular leadership models, and formed by inappropriate experiences of leadership in the past, we need to be transformed by the Spirit of Christ and the renewing of our minds so that we accept Jesus' words, 'You are not to be like that.'

Christ served people; Christian leadership is marked by servanthood. As Stacy Rhinehart comments in his thought-provoking book *Upside Down, The Paradox of Servant Leadership*, 'Servant leadership is not an impossible ideal in our day. Rather, it should be the foundational cornerstone of our thinking about spiritual leadership. Christ lived, taught and modelled it for us, and it is our true distinctive as believers.'¹⁷

4. Christian leadership is shaped by the cross and resurrection

The pattern of cross and resurrection, of suffering and new life, is the paradigm that will shape Christian leaders. I am amazed at how many younger leaders are surprised or even shocked when suffering comes as a result of leadership. Jesus teaches clearly that this will be the path for all who follow him (Matthew 5:11; Mark 10:38–39). This isn't suffering because we've been naïve or arrogant or plain stupid. This is suffering because we are engaged in 'gospel ministry', and the gospel is offensive; it does divide people. In 2 Timothy, Paul writes of suffering in a variety of ways because he wants Timothy to understand the inevitability of suffering in leadership.

- Gospel-specific suffering that comes as a result of faithfulness to the gospel message (2 Timothy 1:8, 11–12; 2:9–10).
- 'Hardship' of an ongoing nature (2 Timothy 2:3; 4:5).
- Suffering that comes at the hands of the church (2 Timothy 2:1–18).
- Suffering at the hands of Satan (2 Timothy 2:26).
- Suffering that comes from living in a fallen world (2 Timothy 3:1–9).
- Persecution from living a godly life (2 Timothy 3:12).

One of the keys to Christian leadership is therefore faithfulness rather than 'success', and this is often most clearly seen by the way we handle suffering. The cross is central to our experience of suffering, as the place of comfort, forgiveness, empathy, reconciliation and a new start.¹⁸

We will also experience resurrection—glorious new life in the midst of doubt, decay and despair. We will witness the new life of a child deciding to follow Jesus, a young person deciding to resist temptation, or an adult breaking a destructive habit; the new life of a church slowly growing in confidence in God's love for them and his love for others, a community gradually being changed by the

salt and light of God's people, a country discovering God's ways are best. We will experience the new life of personal transformation through death to self and resurrection to Christ. The reality of Christ's resurrection and return fuel hope in a world where hopelessness seems endemic. As I write, we are on the verge of a war. Standards in health provision and education seem to be on the decline. The suicide rate continues its relentless drive upwards, especially among young men, while church attendance continues its relentless drive downwards. Depravity is celebrated as freedom, consumerism as choice, self-fulfilment as spirituality. How does the Christian leader sustain a positive outlook at times such as this? Only through belief in the resurrection and placing our hope in God. Eschatology, the doctrine of the end times, reminds us that we live between the first and second coming of Jesus, in the 'now but not yet' times of God's kingdom. This fuels our hope for the future and sustains us through the long dark nights of apparent hopelessness, drawing from us the prayer 'Your will be done, on earth as in heaven.'

5. Christian leadership is sustained by prayer

Prayer is central to the Christian life, and therefore central to Christian leadership. Prayer expresses our dependence on God in response to what he is doing in our lives, and is the spiritual energy of our relationship with God. Without it we shrivel and begin to exercise leadership in our own strength, utilising only our own resources.

A healthy prayer life recognises the following ingredients: it is more than language, but includes language; it is always conducted within the context of the universal family of God; it manifests itself in growing from being childish to becoming childlike; and it involves a right balance between structure and spontaneity. Patterns of praying vary from person to person, but without prayerful dependence on God we risk losing intimacy based on relationship, humility based on gratitude, wisdom based on God's perception,

and courage based on his strength to keep going even when everything is against us. Other leaders may grit their teeth and keep going through sheer determination and self-belief, congratulating themselves when they succeed. Christian leaders will draw on God, and give him the glory for all that is good.

6. Christian leadership is lived out personally as part of the community of the church

One aspect of the incarnation that informs our understanding of leadership is the physical reality of Jesus entering time and space. We too are called to be fully incarnated in our context. We cannot operate as consultants for a people we don't know. Surely one of the great strengths of the Anglican parish system (and I know it has many weaknesses) is that it invites ministers within that denomination to live this principle out. Talking with a friend of mine working on a very rough estate, I asked him what was difficult for him about ministry there. He replied, 'Living here.' I could see why. I'd had to take my car off the road and park it behind locked gates in the middle of the day, otherwise it would have gone by the time we'd finished lunch. The streets were unsafe during the day, and positively threatening at night. The school was struggling to cope with huge social problems. The burnt-out cars and squalor on the street reflected a far greater level of poverty and squalor in some of the homes. It was very tough.

I went on to ask him what was good about ministry in that context. He replied, 'Living here'—for he was the only 'professional' who did. All the others commuted in from outside to do their 'jobs', returning home in the evening, whereas he shared something of the local life, and was present in his community. Ministry at a distance, be it physical or relational, is simply not an option for Christian leadership. Jesus became one of us; we are called to the costly work of integrating our lives with the people we lead.

It is possible to be physically present but relationally absent. When they were little, my kids recognised this all too well. My

middle one knew when I was not really present. When I was cooking and not really listening to what he was saying, he got himself between the kitchen cupboard and my legs. He placed his hands on my knees, his back against the cupboard and pushed with all his strength until I had to back up. He kept pushing until he saw me looking down at him. When he got eye contact he would stop, smile and continue what he was saying. Leaders too can be physically present but relationally absent. The constant knocks and carping criticism, the betrayed trust, broken promises and failed dreams, the draining pastoral situations, the shredding gossip, all become bricks in the wall of defence that gradually builds over the years. Eventually the Christian leader becomes insulated from further damage, but also isolated from others. Understandable as this position is, Christian leadership is about being relationally present, not allowing the wall of protection to grow to the point where we are cut off from the very people we are called to serve.

Another aspect of Christian leadership lived out personally is a healthy embracing of who we are and how God has made us. Each of us is unique, wired up in different and specific ways, working in different contexts. Both our unique shape and our unique context will influence how we lead in any one place. Two of the crippling diseases among those in leadership are comparison and competition. Both can lead to pride ('I'm doing better than them') or discouragement ('I'm not doing as well as them'). Peter's question of Jesus in John 21:21—'Lord, what about him?'—is a good example of someone looking over his shoulder. Jesus responds, 'What is that to you? You must follow me.' Christian leadership involves accepting our uniqueness and celebrating the uniqueness of others. This is where research into leadership styles is useful, identifying the strengths and weaknesses of varying leadership styles, allowing us to recognise the effect our leadership style has on others and the importance of building leadership teams that reflect a variety of styles.¹⁹

Although Christian leaders are to live out their leadership in a personal way, they are not meant to be solo operators but part of

a community. Not all the gifts are given to any one individual, so we need one another to exercise leadership within the Christian community. Accountability and vulnerability are a part of this process. For many of us, everything within us shies away from this type of leadership context. Pride says, 'I can do it on my own.' Protectionism says, 'I don't want to get hurt.' Power says, 'I want total control.' But the New Testament will not allow us this position; together we work for kingdom purposes, living out all those 'one another' verses of the New Testament.²⁰ Viv Thomas, director of leadership development for OM, captures this well: 'Great leaders are usually part of great communities.'²¹

The six characteristics outlined above are some of the distinctive marks of Christian leadership. It is a daunting list, and one that challenges us to a deeper life of prayer and godliness. Thankfully, the golden thread that runs throughout these characteristics is grace. Without it we would give up in despair, but because of God's grace we dare to believe that he continues to call and equip ordinary people like us to take up leadership within the Christian community. How do we grow in this sort of leadership in a situation of constant change? What are the challenges we face? What are the practical tools that can help us? That is the theme of our next chapter.

For reflection

- What does it mean for me to be loved by God?
- How do I see myself as a leader? How do others see me?
- In what ways does my leadership reflect the six distinctives of Christian leadership? What one thing could I do for each characteristic over the next few months that would make a difference?

Seven out of ten Christian leaders feel overworked, four in ten suffer financial pressures, only two in ten have had management training, and 1500 give up their job over a ten-year period. At the same time, as financial restrictions affect the deployment of full-time church ministers, more people than ever are needed for leadership roles in local congregations, involved in every area of church work.

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