

WISDOM

IN

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

CREATING A PIPELINE TO GROW LEADERS
AND MAKE MORE DISCIPLES



CRAIG HAMILTON

CHRISTIAN MINISTRIES WANT TO GROW—they rightly desire to see more and more people following the Lord Jesus as his faithful disciples.

And that's why leadership matters: good leaders *multiply disciple-making ministry*.

Yet so many churches and other ministries struggle with leadership, and poor leadership so often massively hinders their growth.

In his first book, *Wisdom in Leadership*, Craig Hamilton provided a treasure trove of helpful wisdom for leaders on a multitude of topics. Now, in *Wisdom in Leadership Development*, he sets out a leadership pipeline and framework that will help any ministry—big or small—to better understand the various layers of leadership required and to deploy leaders who, under God, will expand the quantity and effectiveness of the ministry being done.

This book is a must for all ministry leaders.

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AND MAKE MORE DISCIPLES

CRAIG HAMILTON

Wisdom in Leadership Development

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For Lyle Schaller
1923-2015

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NB Pipeline planning meetings have been highlighted with grey shading throughout the book so that they are easier to find.

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Introduction

Maybe some people pop out of the womb as leaders and it comes naturally. Effortlessly, even.

I was born middle of the pack, though towards the back, and you'd be lucky to find me facing the right way. If you were looking for leadership qualities, there were precious little to find. Everything about leadership was hard. If there's a fountain of crystal-clear leadership brilliance that gets dispensed into gifted individuals at birth, then my leadership brilliance was decanted from a brackish swamp.

I wasn't a born leader. I was helped. Forged. Developed.

Not a natural

When I was studying at theological college, the institution set a somewhat unrealistic amount of required reading. Every student knew it was physically impossible for a normal human to read what was 'required'. Many still made heroic efforts in the face of the unfeasible, while others gave up in frustration and despair.

In my second year there, I read a quote from John Stott where he said that a full-time church leader needs to read for an hour a day, a day a month and a week a year. Minimum.¹ Perhaps the college was trying to instil the same discipline, but at the time, putting aside those immense readings, it would have been a miracle if I read for an hour a month, let alone per day.

Now, I write hefty books, but I'm not a 'good' reader. I'm slow with a short attention span—however, I *am* consistent. So I decided, along with a custom of only sporadically turning up to lectures, to read a grand total

¹ John Stott, *Between Two Worlds*, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, MI, 1982, p. 204.

of zero required readings and instead try the John Stott approach. I never asked permission or told anyone; I just did it. No-one seemed to notice, and it didn't make any discernible difference—except now I had more time both for other activities and to allocate towards different reading.²

Around this same time, it also dawned on me that when I started working as an Anglican minister, I wouldn't be spending all day reading the Bible and teaching it; I would also have to deal with people in groups and help resolve conflicts. I would need to organize them, roster them, plan things with them, for them and around them. I'd need to do hospital visits, funerals and staff meetings, as well as deal with financial reports and budgets—none of which I felt even remotely prepared for or competent to be involved in, let alone to lead and drive.

This was no-one's fault. My church had trained and equipped me fantastically. The college was rightly focused on developing me theologically. But it was still a deficiency that existed. If it was going to be solved, I was going to have to figure it out myself.

So I decided to use the John Stott approach for this too, despite my slow pace and always-impending boredom. I resolved to read between 30 and 40 non-fiction books a year, a mixture of theology and leadership. And I did it. And again in third year. Then again in fourth year. By the time I finished college, I'd read 30 leadership books. Combined with all my mistakes made at the churches I worked at both before and during college, I thought "Surely I've got a leg up on this whole 'doing ministry' thing". And perhaps I had, but boy it didn't feel like it when I arrived in an actual parish as an actual minister in an actual church.

My first job out of theological college was at a growing church in western Sydney as the youth minister. I inherited an existing youth ministry and a team of amazing leaders. They were fun and faithful; they loved Jesus and loved the students. They welcomed me and my wife along with our six-week-old daughter, and we became friends and fellow workers in the ministry.

When I arrived, the youth ministry had three small teams of leaders

2 I'm not actually recommending this as a study plan for college students. Take it as descriptive rather than prescriptive.

each led by a team leader. I had a feeling deep in the cockles of my heart that I wanted these team leaders to do more than just organize and coordinate the team—but I couldn't put my finger on what exactly I needed them to do. They were all doing precisely and well what I had asked them to do, so I sensed I wasn't asking them to do the right things. But what were those things supposed to be?

By my third year there, I knew I needed to figure this team leader thing out. Developing leaders was going okay, but not great. My training wasn't intentional and predictable. I didn't really know *what* to do or *who* to do it with. I had an idea of some basics I wanted people to learn about—character as king and some specific ministry skills—but besides that, I was at a bit of a loss. I'd continued reading 30-odd non-fiction books a year, so I began looking for books on developing leaders. Then I stumbled upon *The Leadership Pipeline* by Charan, Drotter and Noel.

The Leadership Pipeline

The Leadership Pipeline was first published in 2001, but that wasn't where the concept started.

In the 1970s, Walter Mahler worked closely with the business juggernaut General Electric (GE) to understand and develop plans and practices for the replacement of key executives. This became known as 'succession planning', but what Mahler was doing at GE was actually an approach to leadership development that was spread throughout the whole organization, a series of feeder groups up and down the organization that focused on succession planning at every level.

Mahler, with William Wrightnour, first published his framework in 1973 as *Executive Continuity: how to build and retain an effective management team*, outlining what he called the "four critical career crossroads".³ Thirteen years later Mahler published another book, this time with Stephen Drotter, called *The Succession Planning Handbook for the Chief Executive*.⁴

3 Walter Mahler and William Wrightnour, *Executive Continuity: How to Build and Retain an Effective Management Team*, Dow Jones-Irwin, Homewood, IL, 1973, pp. 64-66.

4 Walter Mahler and Stephen Drotter, *The Succession Planning Handbook for the Chief Executive*, Mahler Publishing Co, Midland Park, NJ, 1986.

In this book Mahler and Drotter expanded the framework from four crossroads, or passages, to six.

This further-refined framework was then implemented in over 80 companies across the US. Drotter, along with fellow business consultants Ram Charan—who was heavily influenced by leadership guru Noel Tichy of the University of Michigan and former head of GE’s Crotonville Leadership Development Center⁵—and Jim Noel, then wrote the first version of *The Leadership Pipeline* in 2001. They’d taken Mahler’s framework and added their own insights gleaned from helping all those companies implement it. Ten years later they revised the book further, after observing both the changing global business landscape and the continual challenges companies encountered in implementing. It was at this point that I then stumbled upon the book.

How we got from there to here

The Leadership Pipeline is insightful but nigh impenetrable. If you’ve read and finished it: congratulations. I completed it due mostly to my borderline-pathological need to finish every book I start without skipping a word. The other challenge with the book is that it’s written for multinational business conglomerates, which is a vastly different context to the average local church. But I knew the pipeline framework was a crucial part of the answer to my leader development problem, so I started the work of transposing it to the world of church ministry.

In 2012 I began implementing version one in the ministries I led. As the years rolled on, I began to oversee more and more ministries and I kept on refining the pipeline architecture. As I taught and discussed the concept with hundreds of pastors across Australia and internationally I learned new things, made subtle tweaks to how it applied and should be implemented in various ministry contexts, made changes as I thought through the ways our theological assumptions impacted things and saw nuances that I hadn’t seen before. What you have here in this book is now version eight!

5 Noel M Tichy and Eli Cohen, *The Leadership Engine*, HarperCollins, New York, 1997.

In 2015 I published *Wisdom in Leadership*, which helps set the groundwork for leadership in the church context. Even clocking in at almost 500 pages, that book is still only about getting the fundamentals into place. This book you're reading now is about putting in place the next step, putting those pieces together into a broader system for developing leaders. Throughout this book, you'll notice plenty of footnotes linking back to various chapters in *Wisdom in Leadership* because these two books dovetail into each other. If you haven't read *Wisdom in Leadership* yet, you'll still be able to read this book on its own with no problems, however reading both will deepen your understanding.

How the book works

This book is split into two sections. Section one outlines the overall problem we face, in one form or another, in our churches and how the leadership development framework helps us to solve it. Section two then digs into the details, stepping through each piece of the framework up close to fully grasp it.

Elements like 'ministry grouping' and 'pipeline architecture' are discussed over multiple chapters since for many they will be the most foreign. Aspects like recruitment or assessment are covered more briefly, adding shading or a new perspective to practices that we are already familiar with and implementing to some extent. There were many companies who tried to superficially emulate GE and ended up as shallow copies; gaining a deep understanding will allow you to avoid some common mistakes.

The book also includes several narrative chapters. These aren't gripping stories with three-dimensional characters—I'm not expecting to see *Wisdom in Leadership Development: the movie* any time soon—but they will help us see the issues from a slightly different angle.

Leadership development is too broad and complicated for even a book this size to completely canvas, which is why I've also created a companion website: revcraighamilton.com. There you'll find plenty of free resources to download and use, such as role description templates, quizzes to help you find the right place to start, and training courses to help get you developing your leaders at every layer.

Section one



1

Setting the scene

“I just don’t have enough leaders”, Phil sighed as he sipped his coffee. “Maybe you’re doing things you shouldn’t really be doing, and you need to close some ministries and redeploy some leaders”, Luke said, half-teasing, half-serious.

Luke was the senior minister at St Luke’s—the church down the road from St Philip’s. Luke and Phil often sat at the local café to talk about life, God and ministry. They’d been friends for years, and since Luke was older and had been in ministry longer, Phil often went to him for help and advice. Neither church was the largest in the area, but Phil had watched St Luke’s grow healthier and bigger than St Philip’s. Phil was curious as to what had been happening there and what he could learn from Luke—although sometimes, deep down, Phil was also frustrated that his church wasn’t growing as fast.

“Oh, we probably do some things we shouldn’t or don’t need to”, Phil replied. “But it’s more than that. People are happy to serve, and when we call for helpers some step up. Not as many as we’d like, but there’s certainly people willing to be involved in ministry. But we can’t seem to develop those people into leaders—certainly not leaders who can lead other leaders.”

“Well, leading followers is one thing, and it’s tough enough, even if by definition they’re meant to be led. Leading leaders is even harder.”

“But at St Luke’s you guys seem to have figured it out”, Phil interrupted. “You have leaders everywhere. It looks like they sprout out of the ground like weeds: it just happens. What did you do to make it like that?”

Luke laughed. “Oh no, it doesn’t just happen, and it sure isn’t easy. In fact, it’s extraordinarily hard and takes relentless effort and attention. It’s not what *I did*, it’s what *we’re doing* that makes it happen. But just to clarify:

why do you think you should be growing the people of your church into higher-level leaders?”

“Why?” is always an important question and is often an excellent place to start. Going all the way back to first principles can feel difficult, but the resulting clarity is often hard to come by any other way. And Luke’s question of *why* we might think to grow and develop leaders in a church can be answered in several ways.

One answer is: “So I can get other people to do the things I don’t like doing”. This may indicate a selfishness and a ‘wrong fit’ of the person to the role, but it doesn’t *have* to be a negative indicator. We don’t all enjoy the same things and no matter how much we love a particular job, there will always be aspects we like and do better than others.

Another answer might be “It’s what the big churches are doing”, or at least “It’s what other churches are doing”. This isn’t a particularly strong reason for wanting to improve leadership development in a church. My mum taught me that just because the cool kids are doing it doesn’t mean you should do it too. Big churches do lots of things, but that doesn’t mean anything about whether or not they should be done. And other churches might be building and developing leaders, and that is *definitely* a good thing to do, but it’s not good *because* other churches are doing it. Plus, are you *sure* the big churches are doing this?

A third answer is the problem that Phil raised with Luke: “We don’t have enough leaders to staff the ministries we want to run and therefore we need more”. Like the first answer, there is something in this that is good and right. Raising more leaders means you can implement the plans that you have to reach more people with the message of Jesus and serve and love people. But raising more leaders to fill existing ministry positions might mask some issues at the foundational level of how you’re thinking about ministry.

‘Filling spots’ might indicate a bare minimum view of leadership, where what you’re after is really helpers, doers. Now there’s nothing wrong with wanting helpers, but it’s not the same thing as wanting to build leaders.

Needing more people to staff the current ministries might also mean

that, once all the current positions have been filled (and hence that presenting problem has been solved), the drive for leadership development will be over. There's no more motivation to pursue leadership development—until a new shortage occurs. It's an inherently reactive mode of engagement that will be unlikely to sustain leadership development long-term.

Lastly, the call for more leaders may also be masking a more subtle problem: we don't need more leaders; the leaders we have need to be developed so that more ministry can be done by the same, or sometimes even fewer, effective people. That is, *more* leaders may not be the solution because *not enough* leaders may not have been the actual problem. This could be a training and development challenge, though it may equally be a systems and structure issue.

Needing more leaders isn't always (or even often) a wrong motivation, but this need can sometimes mask more profound issues. As this book progresses, we'll come back to some of these issues and how to go about solving them, or at the very least minimize their impact.

Phil's answer

"I've thought a lot about *why* I want to grow the leadership of my people", Phil answered slowly, carefully organizing his thoughts, "and the answer is fundamentally theological. I'm a firm believer in the priesthood of all believers. While different people have different roles, and some of those roles are different offices—like the office of pastor—there is still a common status among all Christians. Every one of us, ordained or not, are equal in Christ by the Spirit. And while I may have the work of preaching and proclaiming as a pastor-teacher, we all have the responsibility to speak the word of God to one another and to those we meet.

"But more than that," Phil continued, "in 1 Corinthians 12, every piece of the body has a part to play and if people don't do theirs, not only are they impoverished but so are the rest of us. The body only grows and matures as every part does its work. It's not my job as 'the minister' to do all the work of ministry myself. Our job as a staff team is to equip and prepare the rest of God's people to do the ministry, their own works of mutual service, so that we all reach unity in Christ. Ephesians 4 is the

model to emulate, I think. And this is the fundamental reason I have for wanting to build leaders at St Philip's. I want to help them to use their gifts amongst the body because that's what God has designed them to do—expects them to do. It's my job to equip and prepare them for that; that's what God expects *me* to be doing.”

Luke sat quietly for several moments, then finished his last sip of coffee. “I don't think I could have said it better even with a week to prepare. So what do you do to equip and prepare them?”

Now it was Phil's turn to pause. He'd never thought much about that question and he was a bit embarrassed. He knew Luke wasn't trying to trap him, but he felt a little flustered because he was about to be much less impressive. “I preach the word of God as well and as clearly as I can, and I challenge people with and spell out its implications for their life. And I model, as best I can, what it looks like to serve with enthusiasm and humility.”

“And how's that working out for your church?”

“Well, people are being converted and growing in their knowledge and maturity as disciples”, Phil began, somewhat defensively. But then he slumped back in his chair and admitted, “But obviously it's not working out as well as I thought it would because here we are and I'm lamenting the lack of real leadership, even among those we'd call 'leaders'. People are happy to help, but there's a dearth of initiative and drive, and it's getting exhausting having to think of everything and solve every problem.”

“Just because you label a person a leader doesn't make them one”, Luke said. “Preaching and modelling are necessary components of discipleship, but they're not sufficient for the task by themselves. It's the same for building and growing leaders—preaching and modelling are vital but insufficient. There's more you need to do.”

When Phil heard “more you need to do”, he sank even lower in his chair. Phil hated those words.

Across town

“I just don't know what went wrong”, Andrew sighed from the passenger seat. “Dan is one of the best youth leaders I've ever seen. He's faithful and

reliable, loves Jesus and the students, and has good character. He's not perfect, but he's certainly above reproach. He's got energy and enthusiasm; he really connects with the students; he's a great Bible teacher; and there's no-one better at running fun, creative games."

"I'm almost tempted to try and steal him to join my kids' ministry team", Matt grinned behind the steering wheel. "Why is he such a problem?"

"Oh, there's no problem with *him*. The problem is all the other leaders. I really hoped they'd follow his lead and become more like him. I know classroom training is of some value, but on-the-job training is much more powerful. I figured if I made Dan the team leader for the ministry team leading the 12-to-15-year-olds, those leaders would flourish under his leadership, seeing it up close and all that. But it's just not happening."

Andrew was the youth minister at St Philip's. He and Matt, the children's minister from St Luke's, were on their way to a children's and youth gathering.

"What am I doing wrong? It's not just that the leaders aren't getting better with Dan as a team leader... They're getting worse!"

"Getting worse?"

Andrew explained, "Yeah, they're getting worse. I thought Dan would inspire them to be a little more reliable, enthusiastic, to get better at running games and small discussion groups. But all the leaders on his team are *worse* at all those things than they were before!"

"And how long has Dan been the team leader?"

"Not even five months!"

"Yeah, that is the power of leadership: the right person can help everyone improve, while the wrong one can make even good leaders perform less well", Matt said, pretty sure it wasn't going to get a good reception.

"But Dan is the best leader we have! It was you who taught me the five C's—character, convictions, chemistry, competencies and capacity. Dan's a five-C leader, so how can he be the wrong choice?"

Matt replied, "Well, the five C's are a good conceptual grid for thinking about people in terms of general recruitment onto a team, for ongoing development, and as a way to think about each leader as an individual. But when it comes to the move to being a leader who leads the team, there are other things to take into account." He paused for a few seconds. "But

first, can you describe how you saw the leaders on Dan's team getting worse? Worse in what way?"

"Well, I guess they just got worse as leaders. They're late more often, sometimes not even turning up at all. I mean, everyone's lives are full, and things come up unexpectedly, but before they were basically reliable or communicated if they couldn't come. And now they put less effort into running games, too. They're only semi-prepared. The rules are confusing and sometimes they don't even bring all the props they need. But you know what else?" Andrew continued, "I was talking to Dan about how his leaders are going, and he mentioned that they're hard to work with during group time."

"What does that mean?" asked Matt.

"I asked the same thing, and Dan said that sometimes he has to tell the leaders to be quiet just as much as he does the students. They're disruptive! He also said when the leaders turn up underprepared he then has to step in to salvage the game and make it work, or explain the rules again, or even actually run the game for the struggling leader. He said sometimes it feels like he's the only leader and the others are just older high schoolers."

"This is all very familiar", Matt sympathized. "This used to happen to me almost every time a new team leader took on the role. I was so frustrated and discouraged. I thought seriously about just giving up as a children's minister and going and doing something else. But there is an explanation for why this happens and a way to solve the problem as well. And it's a simple solution."

"Great! A simple and easy solution is my favourite kind of solution!"

Matt laughed at the enthusiasm of his friend. "Oh, no. The solution is definitely simple, but it's not easy. It's hard to implement consistently and takes a lot of skill and focus. Like a lot of simple things, it's actually quite hard to do."

Phil and Luke

"I hate those words, Luke. I hate having to do more. I already work way too many hours a week. I just don't have room for *more*."

"Yeah, I know what you mean. About five years ago, I was doing too

much and not resting properly—but also not leading properly. I asked a friend of mine pretty much the same questions you’re asking me, for the same reasons. I needed to relearn leadership—though in some areas, learn it for the first time.”

“I thought I was the only one who struggled”, sighed Phil, somewhat relieved.

Luke laughed. “Oh, I’ve lost count of the number of ministers who I’ve had this exact conversation with, almost word-for-word. But back to the time issue... When I said you had to do more, I didn’t mean there’s a whole truckload of things to do *on top of* what you’re already doing. I meant there are some different things you should do *instead of* what you’re currently doing. In a lot of cases, you’ll need to view what you already do differently and make some adjustments. But, yes, there will be some additional things, and that’ll mean making hard decisions about what you’re going to stop doing so that you can start these new things. But I guarantee you, down the track you’ll get back more time than you ever knew you had. The hardest part is starting.”

“Okay, I think I’m up for that. What do I need to do?” Phil said, sitting up straighter.

“First”, Luke smiled, leaning back in his own chair, “we’re probably both going to need another coffee.”

After they’d each ordered, Luke turned back to Phil and said, “Let me paint a picture, and you tell me if this basically describes you and your church or not. This is what my church was like before, and it’s the kind of story I hear from other ministers.

“You want to see people come to know Jesus as their Lord and Saviour. You want to see people grow in their trust and obedience, and, among a host of other things, for them to engage in ministry—whether formal or informal, within or outside the church—with genuine acts of love and care for others and by speaking the word of God in various forms and fashions. There are some ministries at your church that do these things better and more clearly than others, but that’s basically what you want to see happen. Right so far?” Phil nodded, not yet particularly impressed by Luke’s insight.

“As a church”, Luke continued, “you’re doing okay at recruiting volunteers for ministry. There’re probably gaps, and you could do with

more workers for the harvest, but there still are many people serving in your church, both in official and unofficial positions. And you're doing okay at equipping the saints for this first layer of ministry, but it's a struggle to build leaders who can lead teams or perhaps shoulder even more responsibility. You may send one or two outstanding candidates on for some kind of full-time ministry training, but on the whole, it's harder to build high-level leaders. Still sound right?" Luke asked.

The waitress brought over their coffees and quietly set them down on the table. Phil replied, "Basically. My church has many people who are reliable and faithful in their ministries, and some who give an extraordinary amount of time serving. It's just that they don't seem willing or able to step up to lead. Help, yes; lead, not really. I suspect it might be either because they're just not wired that way, or because I haven't given them a vision for what could be."

"Yes, they may be factors, but it's highly unlikely that all the born non-leaders just happened to gravitate to your church. And yes, vision could be one component, but it's almost always one among many, and rarely the primary one. I think there are at least three other factors that make equipping leaders so hard, and they each feed into the others to create a negative spiral.

"The first factor is that everything tends towards complexity. Churches often start simple—say one minister, one service, one small group—and then over time they become two services, then three. They get an extra minister or two. New ministries start up and before you know it, you're organizing the roster for the ministry to left-handed men aged 34-36 who have yet to master frisbee throwing and have every second Tuesday off. Once that's where you're up to, your church has become very complex before you've even noticed.

"The second factor is that there is always more to do. Work creates work. Tasks create tasks. This feeds into the first factor, so the more things there are to do, the more complicated things get—and the spiral begins to emerge."

"That's happened in many areas of my life over the years," reflected Phil, "but I definitely see it happening around church as well. What's the third factor?"

“The third factor”, said Luke between sips, “is that equipping people for works of ministry *is* really hard. It takes a long time, and it’s not always obvious what we should be training people to be doing or what that training would look like. It takes great care and intentionality to conceptualize teams and team leaders and what they would all do within a broader area of ministry, say across a men’s ministry.

“There are basically two ways that people have gone about trying to deal with these feedback-looping factors. The first is to just keep working harder, both paid staff and the volunteers. The main problem with this solution is that it works! At least initially. You work harder and longer and you get the things done. But that doesn’t last forever, or even for very long, because the work continues to increase and grow in complexity, and also because you only have so much energy and so many hours until things begin to start collapsing on the inside and you’re staring into exhaustion and depression. Solution one is burning leaders.⁶

“And so then we try the other solution: hire another person to do some of it, perhaps an assistant minister or a youth minister. But we don’t hire them to multiply and train the saints: we hire them to do the work of ministry. Maybe we *think* that we’re hiring them to multiply ministry, but really what often happens is we just ask them to do stuff. And it also works, initially. But then that new hire will also be maxed out, and we’ll need to either buy another leader or switch back to burning.

“Obviously, I don’t like these two approaches. Instead of burning or buying, I like to *build* leaders.”

Phil reflected on his own church over the past few years. “I think this is where I’m up to”, he quietly admitted, sheepish that he had fallen into a trap that seemed so obvious when Luke laid it out. “We burned some people, then we bought some, but now we don’t have enough money to buy anyone else. Perhaps people have realized we’re back to burning leaders and are keeping their distance. But yes... I’m supposed to be equipping the saints for works of ministry. I knew that before we started talking. But I don’t really know how to do it. How do I build leaders?”

6 Obviously this cycle is often far more complicated than this. A good place to start if you want to think more about it is *Zeal Without Burnout* by Christopher Ash (The Good Book Company, Surrey, 2016).

Matt's opening salvo

“The thing that a lot of people don't realize”, Matt began as he changed lanes on the motorway, “is that the transition from being a leader to being a team leader is actually the most difficult leadership role transition there is. Nothing is as challenging or paradigm-shifting as the move from being a *part of* the team to being *responsible for* it.

“Even when leaders are aware that it's a tough transition,” Matt continued, “they still often don't understand just how profoundly hard it is, and they don't do enough to help another person make it successfully. I can't count the number of times I have seen someone be asked to lead a team, agree, be thanked and then the person who asked them says, ‘If you get stuck or need help, let me know’. They're left to fail frantically and quietly. It's cruel to that leader, but it's also cruel to all those in the team who are then subjected to the new team leader's flailing.”

Andrew felt guilty as he remembered saying something similar to Dan. Matt noticed Andrew shift uncomfortably. “Don't feel too bad. I know lots of people who haven't been taught situational leadership. But my heart goes out to the people they lead. Leading people is all about loving them, and one of the best ways to love people is to lead them well.

“But back to that leader to team leader transition. There are three elements that need close attention when a person makes any leadership transition, but especially the team leader transition. The first is the specific skills a team leader needs to be trained in so they can fulfil the requirements of that role. They won't instinctively know how to do it. They might have seen it done well before; equally, they may have seen it done badly. But seeing isn't enough for them to now be able to do it well themselves. They need some critical moves scripted for them. Like learning anything, we start out bad and we get better. This is normal.”⁷

“I did neglect to train Dan in the beginning”, Andrew admitted. “I was busy and it slipped off my to-do list. But then I realized I'd been neglecting him, so Dan and I started to meet up for training in some of the skills he'd need to function as a team leader.”

7 See Craig Hamilton, ‘Anything worth doing is worth doing badly’, in *Wisdom in Leadership*, Matthias Media, Sydney, 2015, pp. 179-181; ‘Fail forwards’, pp. 209-217; and ‘Treat them like children’, pp. 303-306.

“That’s great to hear!” Matt replied. “What kind of things did you train him in?”

“Hmm, in changing his default leadership style and understanding the life cycle of a team. We talked about delegation and the importance of communicating with a team. Oh, we also began talking about vision and strategy and using these to inspire and focus the team. Next, I plan on talking through things like coaching and performance monitoring, then we’ll move on to running a productive meeting and some introductory conflict resolution skills. That’s the plan anyway.

“But I’m no closer to figuring this out. Yes, team leaders need to be taught the skills they need, and if I wasn’t doing that then it would make sense of why Dan’s team isn’t working. But he has been learning those skills, and yet his team is still going backwards. Now that I think about it, when I started training him it actually made the problem worse.”

“Yes, that’s exactly what I would’ve expected”, Matt said cryptically.

“Well, yeah, I know I’m not the world’s greatest leader or trainer,” Andrew defended, caught a little off-guard, “but I don’t think I’ve done that bad a job”.

“That’s not what I meant”, Matt said. “I’m sure your training is grade-A. If the content was even vaguely what you listed, it was spot-on. The problem is much more likely to be that he *did* understand than that he *didn’t*. What’s happening with Dan is textbook.

“Remember how I said there are three elements to think about when someone makes a leadership transition? Skills are one of them, and they’re vital. But the other two elements are even more important. What we need to talk about next is really the 11 secret herbs and spices of any leadership transition and they’re what people often overlook. But here we are at the conference, so they’ll have to wait. I know you’re getting a lift back home from one of the others, so let’s make a time in the next week or so to catch up, and I can share with you the next piece of the puzzle.”

Determined to hear more, Andrew got out his phone and the two worked out a time to meet up while they walked across the car park and stood in line to register and get their nametags. After parting from Matt and as he sat down in the auditorium, Andrew sent a quick text message to his boss before the first session got underway.

Luke's way forward

"What you need is a leadership pipeline", began Luke, but at that moment the phone alarm he'd set to remind him to leave for his next appointment started buzzing. "But we'll have to talk about that some other time. I need to head off to the next thing." He quickly finished the dregs of his coffee and began packing up his diary and notebook. "I'll tell you what though," Luke said, "the common mistake that people make at this point—the mistake that I made!—is that as soon as they realize they need to clarify and implement a leadership pipeline, immediately they start working on implementing a leadership pipeline."

"I don't even know what a leadership pipeline is!" said Phil.

"Well, it's something that only works if it's one part of a larger leadership development system, and a leadership development system is only worth having if you've got the right people to begin with and if you know what you want your leaders to be making. Which means we need to start with discipleship: What are disciples? How do you make them? What are you doing to build them, and how does all that relate to leadership development—or as you put it, equipping them for works of ministry? That's the place to start. I'll pay the bill on the way out; let's talk more in a couple of weeks."

The two senior ministers shook hands, and once Luke was gone, Phil took out his notebook and scribbled down some reflections and questions. At the top of his page he wrote: FIRST STEP = DISCIPLESHIP. Just then his phone pinged with a message from one of his staff members, Andrew, who was at a conference a couple of suburbs away. The message read:

Just had the best conversation with one of the ministers from St Luke's. Lots to talk and think about! Will update you tomorrow.

Phil texted back:

Me too.