

## Leadership Development

### Dennis Jeffery, Superintendent

**"The** truly worthy career does not end with its own story, but in the story of those who **follow.**" -Richard Phillips

The church exploded with growth after Jesus left earth. Stop and think about that reality. Jesus told his disciples it would be better for them if he "went away" because then the Holy Spirit would come upon them which is exactly what happened on Pentecost. A leadership lesson we can learn from Jesus' example is a major component of spiritual leadership work is to develop a team of leaders who are prepared to take their God given place in unleashing a movement of God in the world which out lives the leader. We see this principle in John Wesley's life where after his death the Methodist movement spread far beyond the scope of his ministry when he was in the flesh.

Part of the mission of The River Conference is to "multiply leaders". Jesus modeled this noble work by investing his life into his 12 disciples who then led the fledgling church after his ascension back into heaven. If we want to gain popularity we prioritize gathering a crowd but if we desire to build a legacy we do the hard work of developing godly, competent leaders who will multiply the mission. Crowds gathered from the fruit of leadership development is part of the secret sauce for seeing people movements which transform the culture.

In 2016 the theme of my articles for The Current was growth. Now in 2017, if Jesus tarries and gives me breath, I want to focus our thoughts on leadership. This, the first article of 2017, will focus on leadership development.

In 1988 I was taught by John Maxwell, "there is no success without successors". We see this principle in scripture. One example is found in Exodus 18 where Jethro wisely counseled his son in law, Moses, that "the work is too heavy for you, you cannot handle it alone, select capable **people...have** them serve." Nancy Ortberg, long time staff member at Willow Creek Community Church outside of Chicago, expands on this principle when she wrote, "a wise leader strengthens people by giving power away". Pastor Dave McGarrah at Deer Flat Church is an inspiring example of a leader who develops leaders thus multiplying ministry.

A very practical reason **I'm** writing on this subject is my and **Coleen's** prayerful decision that this will be my last term as Superintendent. Therefore I have until June, 2018 to work carefully and prayerfully to set up my successor(s) for John 15 success. Time is finite, our lives are temporary, so may the Lord guide and bless the work of our hands. This is one of the reasons TRC is implementing the three stationed Assistant Superintendents and five District Leader plan in 2017.

I want to jump into a few thoughts that hopefully inspire your soul to effectively do the sacred work of leadership development but before I do I want to briefly explain the rationale for my decision to transition out as Superintendent. The foundational reason is a deep sense Coleen and I have that this is God's timing. That sounds nebulous but it is core to our decision. By the way, while Coleen is a behind the scenes leader she is absolutely as called and integral to our ministry as my more public persona. Without my partner I would probably be smoking doobies in a van down by the river. That's an attempt at humor but the point remains - thanks, Coleen!

Another aspect of our decision is a sense I need to step out of the boat again. Pastor Les Whitehead in 1982 took a flier on a raw college junior and hired me as his part time youth

pastor. Since that time I have had the distinct and joyous privilege to serve Christ via the church, specifically the Free Methodist Church, as a pastor and now as a pastor to pastors.

A temptation for middle aged leaders is to rest on their laurels, to maintain the security of the post they have worked decades to learn to master rather than continue to seek out new opportunities for personal development and mission advancement. By that I'm not criticizing leaders who have a call toward a long tenure - that can be God's will and a true blessing. I'm simply explaining what I believe God is doing in my life. He is asking me, again, to be all in by stepping out of the boat.

Coleen and I are not backing away from our call to ministry or our passion for Christ, His church, and expansion of his kingdom on earth. We yearn to be back on the front lines of ministry. Part of the reality of the Superintendency, from my perspective, is the wondrous yet sacrificial reality that you belong everywhere while you don't belong anywhere. We yearn to belong again in a specific place while we deeply rejoice in the many life giving relationships we have had the privilege of developing across The River Conference. Relationships with incredible people such as Les and Linda Rose in Priest River, Idaho; Michael and Carolyn Spotts in Aurora, Colorado; Tony and Shanda Simoncini in South Jordan, Utah; and Macario and Maria Segura in Rosenberg, Texas plus so many, many more. The River Conference is a beautiful reflection of Christ - a sacred mosaic of amazing people of God. I will always cherish The River Conference.

But enough about me, let's get back to the subject at hand. I hope the Spirit will use this simple article to light a fire of passion in your soul to give your life in developing leaders for God's glory. Leaders who will out live and multiply the ministry God entrusted to you.

#### WHY IS LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT SO IMPORTANT

Why is leadership development mission critical? Two thoughts come to mind. First, it is central to settling the Lordship issue. When we focus more energy on making leaders rather than followers we must by necessity acknowledge we are finite and temporal servants. The only one who is indispensable is the Lord Jesus Christ. In other words we humans come and go but Jesus is Lord of the church. Few people remember my Father in law, David Foster, who went to heaven in 2005 but his legacy lives on in many leaders including my life. His deep impact in my life wasn't primarily from his preaching, although that was a huge blessing, but from his relationship with me and his personal example I was privileged to see behind closed doors. Dad and Mom Foster paid for my doctorate and, Lord knows, I needed all the educational help I could get! So if I have been a blessing some of the credit goes to David and Joy for investing in a life which out lived their personal ministry. Why did they do that? They did it in obedience to Christ who was not only their Savior but their Lord. Leadership development is unselfish.

The thought of empowering others to eventually take my place is liberating rather than depressing. When we can say with authentic peace, "to live is Christ, to die is gain" and "he must increase but I must decrease", we are empowered to live a courageous life for God's glory. When I focus not on acquiring and keeping power and position but gladly serve others so they can fulfill their potential I am becoming a Christ-like leader. Leadership developers loosely hold the power and position God temporarily entrusted to their stewardship. It all belongs to Him not me.

Leadership development is also important because a **leader's** final report card comes years after they have relinquished their role as a leader. Richard Phillips who taught leadership at West Point emphasized this point when he wrote, "the truly worthy career does not end with its own

story but in the story of those who follow". Jesus set in motion a movement which has over 2 billion adherents today by pouring his life into 12 ordinary men 2000 years ago. The greatness of Jesus is magnified by the reality that the mission he gave those 12 leaders to "go and make disciples of all nations" is being fulfilled. One way to measure the quality of godly parenting is in the lives of grandchildren or great grandchildren lived for God's glory.

Popularity is a drug which like all addictions seeks more - the high **doesn't** last. Conversely, legacy is a narrow path where a leader chooses to do the hard work of setting others up for success. Jesus came to serve not to be served. Christian leadership is always centered on servanthood. My Dad, Wes Jeffery, modeled this principle in front of me growing up. Part of the report card on Dad's life and ministry is the legacy that his grandson last Sunday taught God's word with Holy Spirit unction. Dad passed in 2011 and now I suspect the note in Jesus' handwriting on his life's report card says, "well done, good and faithful servant".

President Dwight Eisenhower carried in his wallet the following anonymous poem which reminds us there is no success without developing successors.

"Take a bucket, fill it with water,  
Put your hand in - clear up to the wrist.  
Now pull it out; the hole that remains  
Is the measure of how much you will be missed..."

The moral of this quaint example:  
To do just the best that you can,  
Be proud of yourself, but remember,  
There is no Indispensable Man!"

#### HOW TO DEVELOP LEADERS

In closing I want to briefly mention two thoughts as an appetizer to whet your appetite toward life long pursuit of continual improvement in developing leaders whose ministry will live beyond your life.

Those who know me well will anticipate my first thought; Christian leadership development cooperates with grace. Jesus prayed all night then under Holy Spirit guidance selected his 12 disciples. Barnabas took the counter intuitive, courageous risk of bringing Saul, the church killer, before the apostles in response to Jesus' directive. The result was Paul the Apostle who wrote most of the New Testament. My goodness, why did Les Whitehead choose me to be his youth pastor? I had no experience, I **wasn't** even a ministry major at Seattle Pacific, plus my life was not without significant flaws. The ways of grace are many times mysterious.

In short, gospel leadership development follows the lead of the Holy Spirit. The first person who came to Christ in the small group I led in West Covina, CA in 1987, which grew into a church plant, was a pot smoking, heavy metal listening, t-bar installer named Mike who today is a prison chaplain in Oregon. You **can't** make stuff like that up; well, I suppose you could, but my point is the serendipitous nature of how God sovereignly picks the most unlikely people to be future leaders in his church. Miraculous leadership development is rooted in God's prevenient grace. A body without a spirit is dead, likewise human leadership development devoid of the Spirit of Christ actively working is spiritually dead.

Additionally, leadership development includes education but **isn't** rooted in academia or confined in a church building, rather, it is activated in ordinary life. In so many ways leadership is

caught more than taught. Scotty Priest, who is leading Journey Church in a building project on 12 acres south of Denver, speaks of his youth pastor when Scotty was a teen who did life with him as having the greatest impact upon his development as a leader. They built a deck together. They laid sod together. They prayed and studied the scriptures together. They went to the lake together. Scotty watched his youth pastor disagree with his wife and discipline his children. And in the process of doing life Scotty saw a man live out real faith in real life. Isn't that what Jesus did? This is why I'm a huge proponent of young people going on a mission trip. Leadership development is on the job training which includes tangible risk.

Make no mistake, there is no leadership development without embracing risk. How many of Jesus' apostles were martyred? All except for John - not counting Judas. I know of an 18 year old young lady who in Haiti had to deliver a baby in a hut while a voodoo witch doctor performed demonic incantations just feet away. That young lady now knows from personal experience the power of Jesus name. She is courageous and powerful in ministry which didn't come from the safety of a classroom but the danger of the real world. John Ortberg was correct, "you *can't* walk on water until you get out of the boat". Little risk develops weak leaders.

To develop leaders do life with your disciples. Have them in your home. Get out of the cloistered protection of the church building and take a risk together where Jesus must show up or the boat will sink. Not contrived or stupid risk but get into the real world where risk is simply part of life. Live a life worth emulating. Marshall Goldsmith rightly wrote: "To help others develop, start with yourself! When the boss acts like a little god and tells everyone else they need to improve, that behavior can be copied at every level of management. Every level then points out how the level below it needs to change. The end result: No one gets much better." We teach what we know but we reproduce who we are.

Leadership development is similar to music. It involves harmony and rhythm, soul and inspiration. It isn't a factory churning out machines. It is a concert which lifts the human spirit toward heaven thus inspiring people to go get dirt under their fingernails by serving the great needs of the world. We don't need "leaders" in our churches who are educated beyond their level of obedience. We need people on fire with Holy Spirit power who live and love like Jesus. Leaders whose lives are a symphony of beautiful heavenly music which draws others to Jesus like a piano string vibrates with a tuning fork. The music of Mother Teresa's life was a Masterpiece of grace.

I encourage you to make leadership development in your church, starting in your children's ministry, a top priority. Develop leaders in your home. Develop leaders under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. Intentionally pour your life into others. Few if any of us will be famous but by "faith working itself out in love" our reward will be great in heaven and our impact deep here on earth. What could be better? Gather 6-12 people for head / heart / hands leadership development starting this month!

Brent Carlson is the pastor of TRC Living Heritage Church in Lewiston, Idaho. He and Lauri clearly love Jesus with all their hearts. One of the things which always strikes me when I talk with Brent is how much his voice and values reflect his Father, Lowell, who was a dear friend of mine. Lowell, before he passed, was a TRC pastor who served effectively in Priest River, Idaho well into his 80's! Like loving Father, like beloved son is true of Lowell and Brent. That is an example of godly leadership development. At it's core leadership development is living out our faith and obedience flowing from a loving relationship with Jesus so others see and are inspired to make their contribution for God's glory in seeing the world become a little bit better.

Fifteen years ago Coleen and I were inspired at a conference in Orlando by the vision of becoming a soul millionaire. If in my life I can cooperate with the Lord in developing 100 people who are sold out for Christ and they each go do the same for 100 other people that is 10,000. If each of the 10,000 do the same by investing in 100 other lives that is a million people impacted for Christ and living for His glory. The point isn't about numbers, it is about living out God's passion to reach and touch every human being with his grace and truth. It's about wanting my life to bear much fruit for God's glory.

Our God given mission as a conference is to intentionally and faithfully develop leaders who in community effectively serve others in Jesus name. Per Jesus' promise in John 15 let us energetically develop leaders with expectation God will bless our work with fruit.