
***Jesus Christ
and the Development
of New Leaders***

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Introduction

Jesus Christ spent a lot of time intentionally developing leaders who would continue His work on earth. He chose, called, taught, mentored, commissioned and empowered them. In doing so, He transformed a group of very ordinary (somewhat raw and unreliable) followers into a nucleus who would turn society upside down in just one generation.

We can learn from Jesus' example how to develop the next generation of Christian leaders.... godly men and women who will be qualified and equipped to lead the church the way He led the first Christian community. If we fail to do so, we will have walked away from a most precious mandate and left a leadership vacuum.

Christian leadership has been politicised, secularised, commercialised and compromised over many centuries. But Jesus Christ remains at the centre and is determined to build His church. That's why I have hope that the baton will be passed successfully as we move forward, and the Body of Christ will grow and increasingly reflect Him for who He is: Saviour, Lord and King in our daily affairs.

Now is the time to understand the principles our Master applied when developing those who helped Him plant the world Christian movement. It is easy to dismiss Jesus' leadership strategies as belonging to "another time" and "another culture". However, what Jesus had to say (and do) about leadership is good for every generation of Christians, and applies to every generation (let's face it ... the human family has not fundamentally changed all *that* much). No one else has achieved what He has effected in world history. He is the beginning and the end, the final word in transformative leadership that we need to see evidenced in the church.

The following pages take a few of Jesus' examples of leadership that worked and put down a challenge for the Christian community to follow in His footsteps in developing new leaders.

Don't lament, "We lack leaders". Instead, ask the Holy Spirit to help you strategically plan to develop emerging leaders around you and see God's work multiply in the lives of countless others..

Jesus as Leader

“As Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon called Peter and his brother Andrew. They were casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. Come, follow me, Jesus said, and I will make you fishers of men. At once they left their nets and followed him. Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

(Matthew 4:18-22, NIV)

“Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him. He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach and to have authority to drive out demons. These are the twelve he appointed....

(Mark 3:13-19, NIV)

“One of those days Jesus went out to a mountainside to pray, and spent the night praying to God. When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom he also designated apostles: Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.”

(Luke 6:12-16, NIV)

He Prayerfully Selected Them

Principle: the call to Christian leadership must ultimately come from God and be evident

- Jesus prayed before He selected even the first disciple
- His purpose was that they be “with Him”, that they might share in His public ministry, with genuine spiritual authority
- He chose unlikely candidates, with major differences (character, political bias, social status, age)
- He established a senior team (Peter, James, John)

Suggestions for Developing Leaders Today

- have confidence in the call of God in their lives, regardless of external appearances (John 7:24)
 - do not be in a hurry to select and train a particular leader, no matter how urgently you need such a person (1 Timothy 5:22) – hear from God first and make the choice in an attitude of reliance on His guidance, gifting and timing (not just to plug a gap)
 - choose those with a proven track record as Christians (Acts 6:3; Titus 1:6-9)
 - choose on the basis of their authentic relationship with God (ahead of their talents)
 - encourage new believers to grow in Christ before being thrust into ministry (1 Timothy 3:6)
 - cherish their distinctiveness (even if they are not your mirror image) and work with them individually; work out who needs a lot of individual coaching, who does not
 - do not allow favouritism to drive your decisions (Luke 20:21, 1 Timothy 5:21)
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He Called Them

Principle: in order to be effective, the man or woman of God must be totally surrendered

- “Follow me” (Mark 1:7)
 - an absolute call - to die to self and follow Him (because He would first die for them)
 - an immediate call (Matthew 8:20, 21) – a deferred response is a negative response
- “We have left all and followed you” (Luke 18:28)

Suggestions for Developing Leaders Today

- urge people with the call of God in their lives to take it seriously
 - help them see that their call comes from Him, not people or position (Hebrews 5:4)
 - help them process the “cost “ of commitment to Christian leadership/service
 - take time to explain the “why” of Christian ministry (Matthew 17:1)
 - show them (by example) how to hear from God regularly and respond in willing obedience
 - show them that Christian ministry has eternal goals not defined by human measures of “success”
 - help them develop in the context of God’s call (clarify & validate the nature of that call)
 - allow them to be involved in your life
 - help them understand the benefits of team dynamics/synergy (and the blessing God promises where there is unity), and how to develop such relationships
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He Taught Them

Principle: Christian leadership must be based on the truth

- information – “the Kingdom of God is like”
- explanation. “I will instruct you.” Jesus “spoke” to many crowds but “taught” the disciples:
 - how to pray, with discipline, based on dynamic relationship with God
 - the true meaning of His public teaching, eg in the parables
 - the true meaning of the life of faith
 - the nature of the church and His redemptive mission
 - the spiritual nature of leadership (sacrifice, not controlling people - Matthew 20:25-27)
 - to be tolerant of other ministries
 - how to manage relationships the right way
- Jesus balanced private instruction with on-the-job training “in the field”

Suggestions for Developing Leaders Today

- give them good teaching material, from a wide variety of sources
- teach them what you know – be patient and generous, because you are investing in a life
- help them develop solid learning skills
- help them understand how to “rightly divide the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15) and discern between truth and error
- help them develop skills and reinforce “truth” in those they lead
- take them with you as often as you can into ministry situations, then explain the work
- give them learning “opportunities” in practical ministry and help them grow from the experiences

He Mentored Them

Principle: Christian leadership must be based on the character of Christ

- “Watch me as I do the work, then copy me”; modelled by practical example
 - relationship with the Father (personal relationship, dependency, obedience)
 - supernatural ministry
 - godly character
 - humility (Matthew 11:29; John 13:4-10)
- called the disciples to live and travel with Him
 - they experienced His life first-hand for several years
- expected them to be surrendered to Him; He was a “friend”, but also “Master” (John 13:13)
- mentored the life of faith and godly values in daily living

Suggestions for Developing Leaders Today

- first and foremost, keep an eye on your own spiritual life and ensure your example of Christianity (quite apart from your ministry position or role) is *worth* following
 - share often about how God is shaping you as a Christian leader
 - plan regular encounters, where you can share your ideas, programs, style, dreams & challenges
 - have ongoing personal conversations with every member of the leadership group
 - to the extent you are permitted, seek to be a “father” to those you are growing as leaders
 - talk with them often (in both planned and unplanned ways), pray with them, help them deal with set-backs, challenge them to go above and beyond, care for them, be open with them, be interested, trust them, help mould their perspectives (around Jesus Christ)
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He Tested Them

Principle: God will test leaders before (and after) using them to full effectiveness

- after three years of close contact with Jesus, during which they saw His power and authority, life and message, there was no guarantee the disciples were ready to take over from Him
- Jesus did not put confidence in people (John 2:24, 25)
- He knew one of the team would ultimately betray Him (John 6:64)
- Jesus was redemptive to those who struggled but repented (Luke 22:31, 32)
- when the disciples acted true to their individual quirks, he used this to teach and develop them
- He tested their motives:
 - attitudes re possessions (Matthew 8:20)
 - notions of power – He modelled “service” (Mark 10:44-46; Luke 22:26, 27); He inverted secular models; not hierarchical; showed leadership is a “calling”, not something to be “grasped”, that godly leadership is not merely “Christian” badging of secular models
 - self-preservation (Luke 8:22-25; the storm calmed at sea was not an accident)
 - rewards – must come from God (John 12:26)

Suggestions for Developing Leaders Today

- channel discussions about position, power, or privilege > service, sacrifice and giving
 - do not lower the spiritual qualifications or Scriptural standards for potential leaders
 - explain the part that testing and trials play in the development of every leader
 - teach them to identify learning opportunities in every situation
 - be patient, forgiving, redemptive in your discipling
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He Commissioned Them

Principle: spiritual authority and release mark genuine Christian leadership; its source is God

Jesus called His disciples to “become” ministers, eg fishers of men

- imparted His vision to them – “This is where we are going”
- taught them that true spiritual authority comes from God alone
- gave them permission, authority (Mark 6:7), spiritual power (called them “apostles”, ie “sent ones”)
- sent out of the 70, to do what He had been doing (Matthew 10)
- final command before His ascension: “Go into all the world and make disciples” (Matthew 28)
- commissioned them to look after His church

Suggestions for Developing Leaders Today

- give them a godly vision and help them identify the specificity of God’s call in their lives
- get them involved in active ministry - give them intense on-the-job training, stretch them, give them opportunities to test their gifts, make mistakes, then do everything you can to help them succeed and remain on track
- include them in planning and decision-making
- expose them to great men and women of God
- help them manage conflict with humility and confidence
- ensure (through discussion) that they understand the nature and scope of tasks you assign them
- help them “keep their eye on the ball” and operate within their call (there are many distractions)
- ~~delegate/release them, and debrief them after ministry opportunities~~

He Anointed Them with the Spirit

Principle: without the anointing of the Holy Spirit, Christian leadership lacks purpose & power

- His initial and ongoing anointing was visible to all
- modelled reliance on his anointing by the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:28; Luke 4:14)
- taught them to depend on the Holy Spirit as their sole source of ministry power

Suggestions for Developing Leaders Today

- do not rely (in your own ministry) on your experience, contacts, wisdom, intuition, or force of personality, but on the Holy Spirit
 - actively teach those you are training as leaders how to listen to the Holy Spirit and live in obedience to Him
 - encourage them to allow the Holy Spirit to do God's work in and through them
 - teach them how to walk in the Spirit (and not be high-jacked in their thinking by secular values and models)
 - teach them how to exercise the gifts of the Spirit, in the power of the Spirit
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He Led Them into World Mission

Principle: the goal of authentic Christian leadership is to fulfil Christ's global mission

- adapted the application of His message to the times (without compromising underlying truths) and to the world at large (Acts 1:8)
- Jesus had a clear theology of mission – emphasised the need to take the message out to the world and not be bogged down by tradition, place, structures or mood (Mark 1:38)
- was aware of what was going on in the world around Him – did not shut himself off from society or contemporary events

Suggestions for Developing Leaders Today

- be actively involved in God's purpose in the world – ask the Holy Spirit to develop a heart for mission in your life - do not allow yourself to be side-tracked or frozen in time, place, methodology or status (eg full-time/part-time, mono/multi-culture, denominational structures)
 - instil a similar broad/specific missions vision in leaders you train (involve them in mission within the community and beyond)
 - develop strategies to keep aware of what is occurring in the world around you, and how the unchanging message of the Gospel can respond to changing circumstances and events – teach emerging leaders how to do likewise
 - get outside your comfort zone as often as you can and take your team with you
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He Taught Them To Develop Others

Principle: authentic Christian leaders will invest their lives in NextGen leadership

- Jesus built solid disciples, filled them with the Spirit, then released them as leaders and teachers, so that the work would continue long after them
- His teaching was reproducible in others

Suggestions for Developing Leaders Today

- make sure that you keep growing as a healthy Christian (you can't give what you do not have)
 - understand that development of others is part of your call
 - build leadership development into the church calendar
 - review what the church is supposed to be and identify gaps (avoid labelling people as "lay")
 - multiply your ministry principles and life experiences = teach those you teach how to teach others in a Biblical way (2 Timothy 2:2)
 - avoid teaching and examples that are difficult to follow and imitate
 - work with them till you have confidence in their ability and integrity (see 2 Corinthians 7:13-16)
 - ensure that you leave a legacy (unlike Joshua's generation, see Judges 2:10)
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More Information

For further information and contact details
check out:

www.Relevant-Christianity.com
