Growing the Servant Heart

The Jesus Model
Reflections on Leadership

Student Notes

*These notes accompany the **Reflections on Leadership** on-line course module available at Christian-leadership.org*

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Acknowledgments

The "Growing the Servant Heart" programme has been developed from work done over many years by the late Colin Buckland and his close friend Rick Sessoms. The thrust of their work was to encourage the growth of a Christ-like character in Christian leaders and to equip them with practical leadership tools that would allow them to live this out as the leaders of people. Colin carried out this ministry for more than 35 years working with leaders in the church, mission and para-church agencies around the globe. His desire was that the church, in its broadest sense, would achieve its full Kingdom potential to the glory and honour of God; that its leaders would lead with integrity and enable those that they led to achieve their full potential in God's service.

This is not about Colin's teaching, it never was. It is about encouraging leaders who are Christians in Christian settings, to grow in and live out the humble servant character of Christ in their leadership. It is a privilege, with the help of Andy Gilbert, to recapture the material that Colin taught to many around the globe and make it available in the form of the on-line "Growing the Servant Heart" programme.

You can find the "Growing the Servant Heart" on-line programme at academy.christian-leadership.org It is being prepared and released one module at a time.

Mike Waddell

Contents

Objectives

These notes accompany the Reflections on Leadership on-line course module available at Christian-leadership.org

This module reflects upon the nature of leaders from the secular perspective and allows the student to compare this with what was discovered in the previous, "Exploring Leadership in the Kingdom" module. In this context it also introduces the idea of organisational culture and how a leader's outlook and behaviour can determine that culture and thus raises the question about the impact of one's leadership style. Is it of the world or the Kingdom and what impact does that have on churches and organisations which serve God?

Reflections on Leadership:

- Considers the world's myths about leadership and in response reviews the realities.
- Looks more broadly at what leadership is and provides an opportunity to integrate the lessons from "Exploring Leadership in the Kingdom"
- Examines organisational culture and the impact of the leader on that culture.

At the end of this lesson the student will:

- Have considered the nature of leadership and how traditional secular views affect how leaders and organisations behave.
- Have been challenged with the impact of Christ-centred servant leadership in comparison to the world's approaches to leadership.
- Discover six leadership behaviours that are important in the establishment of healthy and unhealthy organisational cultures.

Prerequisite

Students should complete the "Exploring Leadership in the Kingdom" before commencing this module.

Experience of Leadership

- **Take a Moment:** To reflect upon your experience of leadership? You may want to make some notes:

  o Who have been your leaders?
  o Which ones have had the biggest impact, (good or bad) and why?
  o Which ones have had the least impact and why?
  o How would you describe the leadership style of these leaders?

  o Where have your leadership models come from? Has anyone ever taught you to be a leader or have you been left to work it out on your own?

Practical experience of working with Christians in leadership shows that most have simply been given leadership roles and have then been left to work out how to be a leader by themselves. It's not surprising, therefore, that Christian organisations and churches frequently find it difficult to be effective and have problems with people. *(There are of course other causes than leadership behind such issues but lacks in leadership ability are often a very significant contributor.)*

In colleges where Church leaders and missionaries are trained, leadership development is mainly confined to the areas of theology and worship. Very little is taught about how to lead people and establish organisations.

Does all this apply to churches? The Bible doesn't describe "church" in organisational terms but describes it in terms of organic entities such as the "family of God" and the "body of Christ". Jesus never set up an organisation. However, whilst one would not want to impose the secular styles of organisation on a church, organisation is important because churches do things that need to be organised.

Also, because of the lack of attention to the area of leading people, most leadership approaches in the church and Kingdom enterprises come from the world and been have brought in by Christians who have been trained in business organisations. This results is the wholesale adoption of worldly models of leadership in Kingdom service. Often these are not compatible with the character of Jesus and the Kingdom values that he taught. See: **The Jesus Model – Exploring Leadership in the Kingdom**

Leadership Myths and Realities

Keeping in mind the things we learned about Jesus' leadership model and the fact most leadership practice has its roots firmly embedded in the world's philosophies, let's consider some of the myths about leadership.

Effective leaders are Cool and Analytical

Historically leadership theory has been heavily influenced by process and systems thinking.

Henry Ford, credited with mass production and making the automobile available for the masses, achieved this by effectively making people to be "cogs" in the machine. Also, the later development of "Systems Thinking" (Senge) was about looking at organization in terms of ordered processes and Total Quality Management (Crosby) seeks to measure, analyze and control in order to improve quality.

Because of this machine/systems perspective, generally the search has been for leaders who are rational, logical and analytical; people who are cool and unemotional under-fire. Thus a myth has grown up that the key quality of a leader is being cool and analytical.

When researchers speak to people who are effective leaders they discover that they talk about how they use their emotions. The people they lead gain insight on what the leader values from their emotional responses and it helps them to be followers. Because they don't leave their emotion at home, these leaders also care about the people around them. They want to understand their

"followers" and help them to succeed by doing their jobs well. These are emotional qualities and they are seen in the best leaders.

It's not that it's wrong to remain cool and analytical in a crisis, BUT seldom are crises every hour or even every day occurrences. It's just that the emotional dimension builds stronger connections with people and is more helpful to those who follow.

Effective leaders possess a special dynamic personality

If effective leaders demonstrate emotional characteristics then one could be forgiven for drawing the conclusion that this is not a myth. It suggests that their character and personality inspire those who choose to follow them. They are people who are easy to follow. However, such charismatic leaders <u>can be</u> destructive. They are often people who lead by dominating their followers and often create a dependency on their guidance and direction. With a moment's thought one can probably identify people who are that in the extreme.

Leading by charisma is more about the leader than the people they lead, nor is it about the organization they work for. History shows that when a strong, charismatic leader moves on, often the organisation will get into difficulty. This can be interpreted that the charismatic leader was essential for success. Alternatively it could be a condemnation because the leader did not grow and develop the organization to survive and thrive. They were more concerned for their own success than anyone else. Thus, they actually fall far short of the mark.

The more negative characteristics of charismatic leaders are the exact opposite of those needed in any organization. Studies show that effective leaders have a strong sense of purpose and conviction and are able to envision those they lead but they do not dominate, instead they motivate and empower their team and draw the best out of them.

Jim Collins (Author of Good to Great) researched companies that turned around from being just good – or worse- to being great and sustaining that for at least 15 years. His conclusion is that this happens when "*leaders commit themselves and all who work with them to becoming the very best at what they collectively do. Deep, personal commitment precedes greatness. There is no other way*"[1].

All this means that leaders can be grown. Some may be born but the majority can grown.

Effective leaders must have heavenly vision

Emerging directly from the myth that leaders have a charismatic character is the myth that the leader **IS** the source of vision or, that they are the only ones who are inspired to achieve great things. It is true that certain people seem to be destined to bring some great goal to reality and it is true that some of these people are gifted leaders, but neither of these things are necessarily true of every leader.

The task of the leader is to lead people on a journey and a vision of the destination is vital to helping people to choose to undertake and complete the journey. BUT the vision does not have to originate with the leader. Many people are navigators not the pilots. They initiate the vision but are unable to express it clearly or are not able to lead people on the journey. They are the navigators and need the leader to be the pilot.

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[1] Viewpoint: Jim Collins –pp212 Business the Ultimate Resource – Third Edition - A&C Black Publishers Ltd.

Effective leaders ensure that there is a vision, it may be their vision but when necessary their job is to help others collectively crystalise and express the vision. Sometimes a leader is called to take hold of another's vision and bring together a team to realize it. The leader must enable the team to make the vision their own. They then lead the journey to that destination.

Effective leaders control their environment (time, money, and people).

This is a classic myth and one can see it reflected in Henry Ford's development of the production line. It is an authoritarian model which places all the responsibility on the leader, who by necessity must micro-manage his work force by command and control. A moments thought brings forth the weaknesses of such an approach.

It might also be considered to be a classic military model. It may have had merits when Wellington and Napoleon sat astride their horses surveying the battlefield, moving the divisions of their armies against each other. But even the military has moved from such an approach to one that is more about setting objectives and developing their men to be able to lead on the ground to achieve the desired results, without forever seeking instructions from the command chain. When things chnage quickly this approach is vital.

It is worth noting in passing that many mission organisations have their origins immediately after the Second World War; established by men who had seen the desperate need for the Gospel while in overseas military service. The organisations they established were based on the leadership style they knew which was a command and control style military model. Frequently Christian organisations are extremely conservative and slow to change and the command and control model can still be seen today. As we look back to "Exploring Leadership in the Kingdom" we can see that it is not a model that reflects the way of Jesus.

The most effective leaders are those who grow their people, motivate and empower them, enabling them to do their job, and then provide the back-up and support so they can do what has been asked of them.

Effective leaders promote progress through great policy

Great policies and vision, mission and value statements are what deliver great leadership.

It's true that an organisation's purpose, vision and mission need to be clear and understood. However, unless they are lived out they are dead words that simply show up the duplicity or hypocrisy of the leadership. The classic example is the value statement that "Our people are our greatest or most important asset". This sets an expectation on the part of the people about how they will be valued. When that doesn't happen it is seen and recognized and remembered. It disengages the workforce, reducing their levels of commitment and energy.

The most effective leaders genuinely know that integrity is the vital underpinning of trust and that trust earns them a hearing from those that choose to follow. Like Balam's deceleration about God in Numbers 23:19 a leader must align his words and deeds. When they are not aligned trust can be lost and while it may be recoverable this is a hard thing to do. Thus, the most effective leaders know that their deeds are more important than policies. Words must be backed up by deeds to maintain integrity and earn trust.

It's lonely at the top

The brave leader as the fount of all knowledge and wisdom, braving the forces arrayed against them, directing operations in detail, issuing instructions to all as necessary is a classic conception. It is a recipe for loneliness because that leader fails to develop relationships with his people.

The most effective leaders build relationships with the people they lead. They know them and know how to call upon their expertise when necessary. They recognize that it's only when the team works collaboratively can they resolve issues and accomplish their goal.

A key element of building relationships is building trust and where there is trust, even the most difficult issues can be shared. It may not always be prudent to share some things with the whole team but where there are trusting relationships they can be shared and assistance sought in finding solutions.

The most effective leaders enable their people to achieve their full potential and seek to be able to do that for themselves too. This means that they need input and feedback from others, so that they can grow as a leader. Coaches and mentors help leaders in this way.

All together, it's clear there is no reason for the leaders to be lonely, if they have set about becoming truly effective.

Leadership is reserved for only a very few.

This is only true if you subscribe to a view that says leaders are only those with a charismatic personality and are born with the personality traits necessary to be leader. Whilst on occasion such people may turn out to be good leaders, studies and practice show that excellent leadership skills can be developed. Therefore leadership is not reserved for the few.

More than this look at any organised situation and it is clear that leadership happens at many levels. There may be only one CEO but there are many department leaders, many project leaders and many team leaders. Each of whom needs to achieve their full potential as a leader and can be developed to do so.

Beyond these layers of formal leadership every group of people includes informal leaders. The ones who come alongside and help newcomers integrate with group, those who share their expertise to help others develop and so on.

It is a very narrow view that sees leadership as being limited to a very few rather than being practiced, in many forms, by many people.

So What is Leadership About?

- **Take a Moment**: Before we proceed, take a few moments to ponder and note down what you think leadership is about. How does this differ from secular views of leadership? Then we will continue our exploration of the subject.

Leadership is….

One definition is that Leadership is: "*the dynamic process in which an individual influences a group of people to achieve a goal."* Dr Peter Northouse

According to Dr John Kotter[2], *"Leadership is the set of processes involved in creating a vision of the future and a strategy for getting there, and for communicating that to people in a way that causes them to choose to embark on the journey. It creates an environment that motivates people, that inspires them to want to make that vision a reality*."

Using different words these two speak of the same things: By relationship and influence a leader engages and inspires people to achieve something. It's about envisioning people to embark on a journey with a common and shared objective, which is to achieve a specific outcome. It is inherently a process of change, through which the leader guides those who have embarked upon it.

- **Take a Moment:** make some notes on your responses to the following questions:
  - Compare this view of leadership with the myths & realities that we looked at earlier. Is it what you thought leadership was about? If it was or if it wasn't, ask yourself why you thought that way?
  - How well do these definitions fit with your impression of Jesus as leader?
  - How well does this view of leadership fit with my own leadership style?

Leadership v Management

At this point it's worth a short diversion to consider management.

Take a Moment: " Are leadership and management the same?"

We saw Dr Kotter's description of leadership above and how it's essentially about leading people on a journey. Because a journey is about ending up some place different to where you started, it inherently encompasses change.

Dr Kotter's view on leadership and management is in line with most teachers on the subject. He says "*Management is about maintaining course in a stable, consistent, repeatable fashion."* He goes on "*It's about the use of monitored processes to ensure that change is minimised and consistency and control are maintained. Management is inherently about stability whereas leadership is inherently about change.*"

As we will see later in the programme, when we look at teams, processes are important in ensuring solid relationships and effective collaboration so that a team can successfully complete its journey. It's just that the processes do not govern the outcome, they enable it.

Dr Kotter also observes that "*Often management and leadership are fatally confused. When the need for leadership is most urgent, most often more management is applied. It is leadership that develops and grows organisations; management maintains the status quo. Both are vitally needed at all levels but it is leadership that seizes the day and completes the journey.*"

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[2] Dr Kotter PhD is Professor of Leadership, Emeritus at the Harvard Business School

Servant Leadership is?

Dr Robert Clinton develops Northouse's definition of leadership and applies it to the Christian context defining Christian servant leadership as: ***the dynamic process in which an individual with <u>God-given capacity and responsibility</u> influences a group of <u>God's</u> people <u>toward God's purposes for the group.</u>***

This simply recognizes that in the Kingdom our goal is to achieve God's purposes and the leader uses influence as his key tool - a far cry from domination and the exercise of power. As Christians we recognize that God calls individuals and groups to a specific purpose. Sometimes this is a long term call and involves the development of a substantial organisation. Other times the call is to something much smaller in scope and shorter in duration.

There is more to servant leadership than this however. As we have observed in "Exploring Leadership in the Kingdom" that it's about focus and character. Even in the secular business schools it is acknowledged that being a servant leader is about more than technique and that there is a required 'spiritual' dimension if one is be truly effective. Some even talk in terms of a kind of conversion experience as the realisation arises that servant leadership is not about position, power and status but about enabling others – i.e. concern that others achieve their potential.

This spiritual dimension is hardly surprising because true servanthood, arising from agape-love, is an essential part of the character of the triune God. It's clearly shown in Biblical accounts to be the very essence of the character of Jesus, the Son of God, who himself is the "exact representation" of the Father. (see Exploring Leadership in the Kingdom")

Christ-centred servant leadership emerges from the Christian's growth to maturity in the character of Christ. Thus servant leadership should emerge amongst Christians, allowing for man's fallen nature, not because it's a good leadership technique but because it grows from a faithful, maturing, Christ-like, Christ-centred character.

Perspectives on Servant Leadership

From the secular perspective Robert Greenleaf rediscovered servant leadership while working as an executive with AT&T in the United States, a monopoly which in its time was the world's largest telephone company. He described servant leadership in his seminal book "Servant Leadership - A Journey into the Nature of Legitimate Power and Greatness". Because servant leadership is an inherent outworking of the character of the Son of God it therefore predates Greenleaf by at least two thousand years. Greenleaf observes:

> "The servant-leader is servant first. It begins with the natural feeling that one wants to serve, to serve first. Then conscious choice brings one to aspire to lead. That person is sharply different from one who is leader first, perhaps because of the need to assuage an unusual power drive or to acquire material possession.
>
> The leader-first and the servant first are two extreme types. Between them there are shadings and blends that are part of the infinite variety of human nature."
>
> Robert Greenleaf "The Leader as Servant First"

Greenleaf, who it seems had a Christian upbringing but was probably not a Christian, recognised that servant leadership was first about serving, i.e the role of the leader is about enabling those he leads.

Stacy Rhinehart, one time vice president of Navigators and founder and chairman of MentorLink International, writes in his book "Upside down: The Paradox of Servant Leadership"

> "Servant leadership is currently a popular term in both business and ministry milieus; however, often those who write and speak about it (servant leadership) focus on the second word: leadership. Viewed with this emphasis, serving is simply a means to an end . . . This is just another subtle form of power leadership"

Rhinehart identifies the heart of the issue. The world sees servant leadership as a technique that enables the people in an organisation to achieve more effectively and will adopt it for that reason. When that is the motive, it is no different than any other form of secular leadership, it may be more subtle, more pleasant but it is about power and the leader achieving their goals. Not so with Christ. His servant leadership emerged from his servant character, his model of servanthood was sacrificial.

Servant leadership is first about serving others; for the Christian it is a desire that emerges from a character centred upon Christ. Therefore, it is the way Christians should lead, not because it's effective, it is, but because it **is** Christ's nature.

- **Take a Moment:** Review what you learned in the previous lesson "Exploring leadership in the Kingdom". If you haven't studied that lesson yet, now would be a good time.

Kingdom Leadership Review

In "Exploring Leadership in the Kingdom" we explored what the Bible has to say about leadership in the Kingdom of God and how it is modelled upon Jesus. The "take-away" headlines drawn from the things we discovered are:

Leadership in the Kingdom:

1. is to be radically different from how the world sees and executes leadership.
2. is not about the leader's power, position or status, rather it is about humbly serving those who follow.
3. emerges from a humble, Christ-like, Christ-centred character that expresses the maturing nature of Christ in the leader.
4. is an expression of Kingdom culture, which is radically different to any and every culture in the world.
5. is about serving a higher purpose, i.e. God's plan.
6. is about relationship and influence not command and control.
7. focuses on the wellbeing and growth of others not self and the leader serves others by enabling them to achieve their full potential.
8. recognises that leadership works at many levels and seeks to grow leaders at all levels.
9. enables others to align to a shared vision and a common purpose.
10. guides those who follow on a journey and enables and helps them to handle the change that this inevitably entails.

The challenge for Christian leaders is to deliberately seek to become mature in Christ and live out this Christ centred model of leadership, leaving aside the leadership philosophies and approaches of the world in favour of the character of Christ.

Organisational Culture

As we continue in this lesson our challenge is to set this vision of Christ-centred servant leadership against the dynamics of organisation so that we can begin to grasp the difference it can make.

- **Take a Moment:** What do you think "organisational culture" is? Note down any examples that you can identify.

Organisational culture is often described as "the way we do things around here". Leaders have a strong impact on how things are done because they reinforce existing behaviours and by their own example establish new values that get lived out. Because of the influence that leaders have on organisational culture and the influence organisational culture has on others, it is an important area of concern for Christ-centred leaders. It matters because the people of an organisation tend to reflect the character of its culture. Thus a Christian enterprise, or even a church, that reflects worldly organisational cultures will not be a place in which Christians find it easy to reflect and live out a Christ-centred character.

Rick Sessoms and Colin Buckland describe organisational culture as:

> "… a collective way of perceiving reality. It is a set of assumptions – or a worldview – that is shared by a group of people. The people adopt these assumptions as their own over a period of time. These assumptions take on increasing importance as the group adapts to the outside environment to address challenges and to solve problems. Based on these assumptions, the group develops a "way of doing things" that works well enough so that these patterns become the values of the group. These values are reinforced by the leaders of the group as the correct and acceptable way to think, feel, and behave."[3]

Sessoms and Buckland identify 3 primary elements in an organisational culture.

Assumptions

Assumptions are concepts, ideas and expectations that are taken to be self-evident and true - <u>even if they are not</u>. Assumptions underpin action and behaviour. You are probably sitting down right now. If so you assumed that the seat you are using will not collapse under your weight. So you sat down without a second thought. Your assumption led to, or at the very least enabled your behaviour.

Shared assumptions in organisations determine the behaviour of all who share the assumptions. Thus they lead to organisational values; ideas, concepts and goals that are considered important, and ultimately to conformance about "how we do things around here".

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[3] Culture Craft pp23. In Culture Craft Rick Sessoms and Colin Buckland explore the factors which lead to healthy and unhealthy Christian organisations, It can be obtained as an eBook from Christian-Leadership.org/shop

Leadership Assumptions

Assumptions lead to mental images that fill out the detail, which is not otherwise set out, and lead to our behaviour.

For instance if your assumption about the nature of teamwork is based on a soccer team you will have certain expectations and will behave accordingly. Such a team is managed by a coach who determines game strategies and will direct play from the side line – the whole team must follow his strategic instructions otherwise chaos will follow. But as a player, you will be free to execute the strategies as play demands and be expected to be opportunistic, even to improvise should advantageous situations arise.

If your assumptions are based on a soccer team, then your expectations and behaviour will be quite different to the person who thinks that a team is like an orchestra under a conductor. In that case the conductor's job is to keep everyone together as they play, as planned, in line with the master score. Improvisation is not allowed.

If you think that a team is like a well, oiled machine, as Henry Ford would have, then you will assume that every member has their own very specific job that only they will do. Faultless functioning is crucial to delivering the product. Each does their own job and will not interfere with others because a smooth and efficient work flow is everything. The leader sees each member as a component of the machine – human cogs. The leader regulates flow and maintains the machine, swapping out parts (people) as necessary to maintain output. They develop no relationship with the individual components (people). Why would that be necessary? They determine the goals and objectives, solving problems and passing their 'wisdom' down in terms of specific instructions to each "human cog".

Or you may see a team as being more like a garden and the leader is the gardener. In a garden each plant is important and the gardener considers its needs so that it flourishes. Individual plants in the garden need the right environment and the right care. Each plant is individual but when seen as a whole they "work together" to form a beautiful garden.

Christian-leadership.org has a short series of articles entitled "The Servant Leader as Gardener" that explores this perspective. You can find them here: http://christian-leadership.org/developing-leadership-skills/being-a-christ-centred-servant-leader/

So you can see that the assumptions that you have as to how a team works affects your expectations of the leader and your fellow team members. And indeed, the leader's view as to the nature of a team will significantly affect how he leads people.

- **Take a Moment:** How would you model your view of team and leadership? How does that model work out in your daily leadership practice?

Invisible Assumptions

One problem with assumptions is that most times they are embedded and invisible. People are not aware of them because they are taken for granted and assumed. This means that <u>many aspects of organisational culture exist, but no one really knows why</u>. For this reason they are difficult to identify and difficult to change.

A good way to identify the hidden assumptions in your organisation is to ask a recent recruit what they make of things. They will not yet have absorbed "how things are done around here" and will be trying to work it out. Their fresh eyes can be very helpful.

Leaders can unthinkingly embed assumptions in the organisations, teams and churches that they lead. They do this through a six mechanisms that we will look at shortly.

- **Take a Moment:** What assumptions can you identify that underpin your organisation?

Values

Embedded assumptions lead to values, which are the core collective beliefs of the organisation and its members. These values are expressed in attitudes and behaviours and set inherent priorities. Therefore it's the values that are actually held that are of interest, not the ones that should be held. For instance a declared value may be that our work will be of the highest standard. Our practice might be quite different. For instance:

> A software company called SuperSoft valued excellence and had a written value statement that excellence was expressed in terms of "zero defects" (i.e there would be no problems or errors in the delivered software programmes).

> Sandra, a programmer, had been recently recruited because she was technically exceptional. She was very careful to think through the detail of her software designs, and to plan what needed to be done before leaping into the work of writing the programme. As a result her work had very few errors and so she did not need to spend much time correcting them. Sandra was able to do her job well and go home more or less on time.

> Sandra's fellow programmers worked late. Why?

> They were not as competent or careful as Sandra and as a result their work had many more errors and problems. Consequently they needed to work late to correct faults and still meet the schedules.

> Sandra was taken to task for not being committed because she didn't work late.

> What was the real cultural value?

In practice what did the value of excellence mean? Was it that a) the commitment to excellence was shown through error free work and high efficiency or that b) the commitment to excellence was shown through working long hours, even if they could be avoided? The written value may have been about delivering excellence through "zero defects". The actual value was quite different.

Leaders determine the real values of an organisation by endorsing certain behaviours.

Organisation members are often aware of some of the good values but bad values are seldom discussed. This makes dealing with them very difficult. Especially as acceptance of new people in the organisation requires that they adopt the organisation's values. This is important where the written and lived-out values are different as just illustrated.

The Long Shadow of the Leader

Studies have shown how the original founder's values persist long after they have moved on. This may be more true in Christian organisations because the Christian world has a tendency to be conservative.

As we have seen, values may be good but they can also be bad. They may have been good values originally but circumstances change over time and they may no longer be helpful. Bad or inappropriate values lead to unhealthy and inappropriate behaviours and culture in an organisation. Unhealthy organisations have negative affects upon the people that work there, and degrade the ability of the organisation to function effectively and to be a good place to work.

In order to understand the values of an organisation it is important to understand the founder's values.

Where values are bad or no longer appropriate, it is the task of the leader to lead his people on the journey that restores health to the organisation.

- **Take a Moment:** What are the stated values of your organisation? Compare them with its real values; what do you learn?

Products and Practices

The final elements of organisational culture are tangible things in terms of products and practices.

The products of an organisation reflect the things they value because they seek to provide them to their customers. These are easily identified.

The practices adhered to by an organisation are the important products of its assumptions and values; we've looked at one example. They also include elements like the organisation's vocabulary, acceptable dress, social interaction, use (or not) of formal titles, how conflict is handled and so on.

The way leaders behave is normally the most important catalyst in the development and maintenance of organisational practices.

It is easy to attempt to change the products and practices of an organisation, but they are the consequence of the shared assumptions and values of the organisation's members. If a change of culture is required then the change must go deep down to the roots of values and assumptions otherwise it will fail. This is deep-change.

- **Take a Moment:** Based on this model how do you think that Christ-centred servant leadership would affect organisational culture?

A New Paradigm of Leadership

In the light of what we have learned about being a Christ centred servant leader it's time now to explore a leader's style and behaviour in an organisational context. We have identified that much traditional leadership emerges, one way or another, from the idea that organisations are machines and its members are components of that machine.

Traditional leadership:

Broadly speaking, traditional leadership manages processes and as we saw earlier this is about viewing an organisation as a machine. Therefore, it is about maintaining smooth running, ensuring stability and consistency. It limits what people can do to previously prescribed functions and actions and constrains them to remain within the boundaries that have been set. In fact, by the definitions we looked at earlier, it is management not leadership.

Thus leaders tell staff what do, directing their actions according to a "big picture" only they know. This shuts down initiative, because it's not required, enforces compliance and causes workers to be protective of their jobs. Needing people to cross job-boundaries or change what they do becomes a threat and has been the cause of endless industrial disputes.

Traditional leaders, therefore, need to persuade and convince (sell) people that a change is needed and that it benefits all. Where there is little trust of the leaders it becomes very hard, sometimes impossible to convince staff of anything.

Because only the leader(s) appreciate the overall objectives and it's their job to "mind the machine", workers, who have closely defined and limited roles, are never invited to help solve problems or rise to meet challenges. The leader must work it out and hand down the answers and decisions.

Their role of machine minder and repair man means that leaders seek to control exactly what the machine does and with that, their focus is on controlling and supervising the workforce (the human cogs) by the exercise of power, so the machine runs well.

The Servant Leader

The servant leader leads, which as we saw is about the journey. They will need to engage in some management processes but this is in support of servant leadership, not the adoption of the machine model. They relate to staff and value them as individual people with individual needs. Together they bring about the desired result but the main focus of the servant leader is that each member realises their full potential.

They engage with the members, listening to them and seek their views, ideas and insight, thus engaging the collective wisdom of the organisation. Together they work out the solutions to challenges and problems.

The leader facilitates the achievement of the individuals and helps them coordinate their activities to collaboratively achieve the common purpose, which they all understand and share. Everyone has a view of the "big picture".

The leader coaches individuals rather than controls them and seeks to release their initiative and creativity because the leader knows he doesn't have all the answers.

(The secular world finds that even its form of servant leadership is far more effective than the command control leadership of the machine model.)

From the Christian, Kingdom perspective, servant leadership is about valuing people and giving them significance as they are recognised as individuals who are called to bring honour to God in the living of every aspect of their lives.

- **Take a Moment:** Which of these two models best describes you as a leader? What might you have to do to be (more) effective as a Christ-centred leader?

A New Perspective

The servant leader approach means that we need to take a fresh look at how organisations work. In a servant leadership based organisational culture the manner of interaction between people becomes different; it changes from my goal being to deliver my outputs to the next person in the process to one of proactive collaboration, collectively seeking to fulfil are shared and common purpose.

From Hierarchical Leadership to Servant Leadership

Traditionally organisations have been seen as being hierarchical with the boss at the top, executives beneath them, then managers then staff. The energies of everyone are spent serving the goals directed by the boss at the top. Status and rewards are dependent upon one's position in the hierarchy and progression and reward is achieved by being promoted up through the hierarchy.

Some organisational thought-leaders observe that people are an organisation's most valuable and important asset, because they are the ones at the front-line, doing the job. The rest of the organisation is there to enable that to happen. Therefore, they say the hierarchy should be inverted. This fits in with secular views of servant leadership because it emphasises the fact that the leaders are there to serve the others. However, it still retains a hierarchy, it's just that the workers are now at the top.

- **Take a Moment:**
  - Is a hierarchical model in line with the Biblical perspective? Consider James and John's request to sit at Jesus side. In other words, they asked that they be the top of the hierarchy.
  - How did Jesus respond?

From Jesus's response it is plain that he does not think of things in terms of hierarchy. There is no room for it in the Kingdom. In modern organisational-speak it is the flattest of flat organisations.

The Servant "Hierarchy" is more like tipping the hierarchical triangle on its side than flipping it upside down. Each member has a role for which they are responsible and for which they are fully equipped and empowered with the necessary authority. Each role has a specific purpose in the context of the common, shared purpose of the whole organisation.

The authority question is not about hierarchical level and status, but about what authority is needed to fulfil the role, and how that authority is used. Such a situation recognises that each individual has a purposeful role and that they work collaboratively together, serving each other as necessary, in order to achieve the common purpose.

This view is a consequence of considering what Jesus taught and modelled about leadership. It's different to the world's view of organisation and leadership and is more akin to the Kingdom principles we see emerge in the New Testament, as it supports a Biblical view of servant leadership that is centred upon Christ.

- **Take a Moment:**
    - Does this change of perspective, status to role, fit with what we see in the Bible?
    - If you were charged with making this 'New Perspective' work practically, how do you think it might work out?

- **Take a Moment:**
    - Considering Church Leadership
        - In Ephesians 4:11-13 Paul sets out that in the church some were given to be pastors and teachers, some prophets and some evangelists. Is this about authority levels and hierarchy or is it about role?

        - Where elders and deacons are established is this about authority and hierarchy or role?

It may seem to be about authority and in Hebrews 13:17 the people are told to obey and submit to their leaders. However, the idea underpinning the word translated "obey" is "to be persuaded". Being persuaded is a voluntary act, as is submission. The leaders are appointed certain responsibilities but their authority is completed by the voluntary act of those they lead. This is not at all hierarchical but about role.

In many ways this is confirmed by the fact that those who are led are also directly responsible to God. So, we don't see a hierarchical structure amongst people in the New Testament. We do see an assembly of Christians, each having a different role and with that role they have the necessary authority required to enable it to be fulfilled.

Six Leadership Mechanisms That Establish Culture

There are six leadership traits that happen in every organisational situation that determine "organisational culture", often without the leader being aware.

Remember, that organisational culture" is "how we do things around here" and it determines the behaviour of the people who are being led. That in turn determines how the organisation behaves and consequently how it is perceived by others. Used well, these leadership traits or mechanisms can establish a healthy organisation. If misused, or used carelessly, they will lead to an unhealthy organisation with the attendant outcomes. Plainly then, these leadership traits are of importance to the Christ-centred leader as they are an important means of bring the character of Christ to bear on an organisation.

It's sad to say, however, that many Christian organisations, like many secular ones, have dysfunctional cultures because they operate on a set of real values that are not the same as the written values. They operate on a secularly/worldly model of organisation not one that is based on the character, teaching and model of Jesus and this establishes a conflict, a discontinuity at the heart of the organisation. Sessoms and Buckland observe:

> "Jesus' leadership was founded upon a relationship with His followers, was activated by spiritual and personal influence rather than coercive power, and focused on His followers' potential. It stands in stark contrast to many Christian leaders of organizations

today who are recognized for their status, power, and personal success."[4]

Let's examine these six mechanisms:

What the Leader Measures

Things that are important to the success of an organisation need to be measured otherwise the leader does not know if the desired goals are being achieved. The fact that measurements are put in place brings the spotlight to bear and everyone knows that these things are considered important. The message is loud and clear, do what is needed to achieve the desired goal as defined by the measurement.

Measuring unhelpful things will establish an unhealthy situation.

Being inconsistent in what is measured will confuse organisational members. Trying to make sense of the inconsistency they will develop their own interpretation which will affect what they do. There will be as many interpretations as there are people. An unhealthy, chaotic organisational culture will emerge.

The spotlight of measurement alone is insufficient to determine a healthy culture. A lesson that has recently been visible, if not learned, in the UK's National Health Service. Over years a target driven culture has been created and the expense of caring. The goal has been to meet targets and patient care became a bi-product. In some hospitals some people found other ways of hitting the statistical targets to the detriment of patient care.

- **Take a Moment:** What do you measure as a leader? What message does this give to those that you lead?

How the Leader Responds to Critical Incidents

Deeds, in the normal course of affairs, are important as they show true values. True values and the leader's character never become clear than when response to a critical incident is required. Because the response is reactive it shows the leaders true heart; what they really think emerges, compared to what they say they think the rest of the time. So, healthy values need to be built on character because in times of crisis character shows. Character is at work all the time and as a result a leader's character will impact organisational culture and health. Their character needs to be consistent at all times.

A lack of relationship with the people who are led may mean that the leader fails to appreciate when something is critical to them. Consequently, the leader only responds to what they believe to be the critical issues. Failure to respond at all, let alone appropriately, to issues of importance to the team gives the message to the affected people that they are of little value.

- **Take a Moment:** As a leader do you know what is important your people? Is it that you think that these things are important or, do you know because you have found out from them?

What the Leader Models and Teaches

We have touched on this earlier on. Suffice it to say that words and deeds must match because character leads to deeds regardless of the words used. Alignment of words and deeds is the basis of

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[4] Sessoms & Buckland – Culture Craft pp46. Culture Craft explores these six factors in more detail

integrity and lack of integrity destroys trust. But those who are led will adopt the leader's true values as made visible by their deeds. Such a difference between what we say and what we do is completely out of line with the character of Christ, which should be growing within us and working out through us as Christian leaders.

Leaders develop healthier organizations by establishing principles through a character driven consistency in their words and actions concerning the way people should be treated and the way goals should be pursued. They create standards of excellence and then make themselves accountable to that standard.

- **Take a Moment**: Prayerfully review your actions as a leader compare what you say and what you ask of others against what you do. Are they aligned? How should you respond?

The Behaviours the Leader Rewards

It seems so obvious that the rewards and penalties proffered by a leader declares what is important and will strongly influence the future behaviour of organisational members. Rewards and penalties triple underline values.

Rewards can be all kinds of things ranging from a financial bonus, through public acclamation to simply being noticed by the boss.

- **Take a Moment**: As a leader, what kind of rewards do you use and how do you use them? Are you building healthy organisational values?

How the Leader Allocates Scarce Resources

If faced with more to do than can be resourced, where a leader places available resources shows exactly what is valued. Such choices often balance dissimilar things. The choice could be between employing more staff to alleviate overloaded workers and funding some pet project. If the project is chosen what is the message given to the organisational members? They are unimportant?

The allocation of resources highlights the leader's priorities?

- **Take a Moment:** How did Jesus spend his time? What were his most important uses of time? What does this say about his priorities? What message would this have given to the disciples?

Who the leader hires, fires, promotes and retires

When it comes to hiring, firing and retiring leaders, senior leaders usually determine the outcomes. For instance when recruiting key leaders most often they make the selection. They have a specific view as to the type and character of person needed. This means that the leader's affinity for people who meet their, perhaps unwritten, profile of assumptions and values will be preferred. Very often this profile is very similar to the recruiting leader's own character. Similar factors apply when it comes to promotion of leaders. The opposite is true when it comes to firing and retiring people.

The net result is that the leader-based cultural assumptions and values of the organization are strengthened and established, because the people that the leader gathers around tend to be out of the same mold. They have similar outlooks. So these people can establish and lock in a culture. Thus, there is a tendency for an organization to reflect the character of the senior leader. Leaders in this

group may remain in the organization for many years, they may still be there long after the recruiting leader has left, but they ensure his assumptions and values remain.

- **Take a Moment**: Whose character should a Christian organization reflect? That of the leader or that of Christ? What character does your organization reflect and from whom does it come?

Review

We have seen six mechanism through which the leader's practices can establish and embed cultural assumptions and values, many of them unwritten and not acknowledged. These practices establish that culture long into the future.

Christian organisations should be distinctly Christian; that is they should reflect the character of Christ in the way they operate and in the values and assumptions that determine their culture, "the way things are done around here."

From these six mechanism it can be seen that the character and practices of the senior leader and his leadership team , their values and assumptions, are vitally important. If our organisations and churches are to be distinctly Christian, then leaders need to be both Christ-like and Christ-centred; being squarely built on Christ's character and building a Kingdom culture.

- **Take a Moment:** What are your assumptions and values as a leader? Are they based upon Kingdom values and the character of Christ?

Christ-centred Servant Leadership in View.

- **Take a Moment:** Reflect upon what you have learned about servant leadership modeled on the character and teaching of Christ and how it compares to the default secular/worldly models. Jot down the key points that you come up with. How does it relate to your own culture?

Kingdom leadership is built upon character and attitude not position and status. Although some elements of the secular world use a form of servant leadership, true servanthood is personified in Jesus, the son of God. Jesus led his disciples and taught that leadership was about humility and servanthood. More than this he lived out servanthood as a leader and so his example models servant leadership for us. As Christians, Christ abides in us and we in him (John 15) and as such, through the indwelling Holy Spirit, we are called to live out his character in our lives.

Building our leadership "style" upon the outworking of the character of Christ challenges us not to comply with the world's approach. It challenges every culture, regardless of whether its origins are national, ethnic, religious, educational or business school. The way of the Kingdom is different and emerges from Christ's character through humility and servanthood.

We see that Jesus built solid relationships with his disciples and led them through influence. He taught and modeled the things he wanted them to do, he presented them with challenges to give them scope to try it out and he was there to coach and guide. When absolutely necessary he intervened and coached them through situations.

What he did not do was stand on his position and status as leader, Teacher, Son of God; nor did he relate to the disciples through command and control; in fact he taught them that this way was not the Kingdom way. Others were his important focus and his leadership was built upon deep relationships with them, treating each as an individual.

He focused upon developing the full potential of the disciples, seeking to grow them so that they would be able to stand when he was no longer with them and he taught them to serve a shared common purpose which aligned with his Father's higher purposes.

This we refer to as **Christ-centred servant leadership** and it is this that needs to be absorbed into our Kingdom organisations so that they avoid the conflict of claiming to be Christian but actually embody secular/worldly values and outlooks. This need for Christian organisations to be distinctly Christian in character is a significant challenge for senior leaders in any and every Christian organisation.

Action Plan

Take time to reflect on what you have learned. Merge that with the things you learned from "**Exploring Leadership in The Kingdom**."

What actions can you identify that you need to take to develop your transformation into a Christ-centred servant leader?

How can you impact your organisations culture so that its witness would be distinctly Christian?

Further Study

The Leadership Bible edited by Dr Sid Buzzell, Dr Kenneth Boa and Bill Perkins, published by Zondervan Systematically examines leadership from a Biblical perspective and provides study sets on many leadership topics.

What Next?

Explore the rest of Growing the Servant Heart on-line programme for Christian leaders. The remaining modules build on the foundation of a Christ-centred approach to leadership and explore Emotional Intelligence, Teams, Leadership practices, communication skills and vision and change. The approaches identified are selected to allow the servant leader to develop skills and practices in these areas that will equip them with practical tools to grow as a Christ-centred servant leader.

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