Leadership is understanding people and involving them to help you do a job. That takes all of the good characteristics, like integrity, dedication of purpose, selflessness, knowledge, skill, implacability, as well as determination not to accept failure.”

Admiral Arleigh A. Burke

“The leader has to be practical and a realist, yet must talk the language of the visionary and the idealist.”

Eric Hoffer

“Leadership is action, not position.”

Donald H McGannon

The church needs people who continually experience learning and growth as they go about their ministry. Such persons develop as leaders who in turn create positive transformation. They integrate learning and change with their experience. They in turn disciple others who grow as leaders, experience meaning in their service, and contribute significant organizational change.

Such leadership development is an on-going process in which the following eight conditions are established and nurtured. The eight conditions form a cyclical system; each condition promotes the others. Effective integration of this model means that leadership development becomes hard to distinguish from usual ministry. Leadership development is experienced while actually doing ministry, accomplishing and adapting, rather than a distinctive program.

Church organizations and their leaders can intentionally foster this process. But they need to understand that these conditions must be integrated into the on-going life of the local church or the ministry entity rather than seen as a particular program delivered in seminars or workshops. It is not that leadership workshops are not needed. They can draw attention to the process I describe below. And they can provide skill training that enhances specific ministry skills. In hierarchal organizations this model for leadership development requires promotion of a leadership development process within the local church, not one imposed from the top down to the local church.

Condition One: Rethinking Mission

Organizations (including the local church) seeking renewal typically attempt to clarify their mission. The organization has to get its mission straight. Rethinking mission means an organization identifies and embraces — within its idea of mission -- that it is a creative relational network in which personal transformation of its members is realized. No longer is mission seen in terms of output alone; mission becomes developing people who learn and change while doing ministry.

In hierarchal organizations positional leaders at some level must experience this resolve. Attitudes about evaluation held by these positional leaders then extend to how a member is changing in their important relationships while they go about ministry. Evaluation of mission becomes weighted toward how people are learning and changing while experiencing ministry.

Condition Two: Interrelatedness

Experience, learning, and changing are seen as parts of a whole process in this leadership development model. They are cyclical and internal, not linear or imposed from outside the community. That is what is meant by interrelatedness. It is essential that persons who serve religious organizations both understand and nurture this reality. Learning, changing, and doing happen where people are in relationship with one another and working together in their primary community; that is where leadership development takes place.

Every system is in relationship with a broader system. So, though leadership development occurs in the setting of the local church, provision of
The author is President of Leighton Ford Ministries which deals with raising up younger leaders to spread the message of Christ worldwide. He has spoken face to face to millions of people in 37 countries on every continent of the world and served from 1955 until 1985 as Associate Evangelist and later Vice President of the Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. For many years Ford was featured as the alternate speaker to Billy Graham on the Hour of decision broadcast and his own daily TV and radio spots in the United States, Canada, and Australia.

Ford picks up the concept of "transformational leadership". He traces it back to James McGregor Burns, who "was perhaps the first to speak in terms of transformational leaders" (Leadership, 1978). He then uses Bernard Bass's definition of "transformational leadership" as "that kind of motivation which raises the consciousness of people about what they want" (Leadership and Performance: Beyond Expectations, 1985). Putting this concept in contrast to the "transactional" type of leader, who promises rewards to followers in exchange for performance, Bass explained the difference between the two in the following way:

- Transactional leaders work within the situation; transformational leaders change the situation.
- Transactional leaders accept what can be talked about; transformational leaders change what can be talked about.
- Transactional leaders accept the rules and values; transformational leaders change them.
- Transactional leaders talk about payoffs; transformational leaders talk about goals.
- Transactional leaders bargain; transformational leaders symbolize.

In short, says Bass, the transformational leader motivates us to do more than we expected to do, by raising our awareness of different values, by getting us to transcend our self-interests for the cause and by expanding our portfolio of needs and wants. This, according to Ford, is why transformational leadership best expresses the kind of leader Jesus was.

In support of this claim, the author presents ten aspects of Jesus as a leader which forms the substance of the book (pp. 37-293):

1. The Leader as Son: Jesus knew who he was — he had a quiet sense of confidence that grew from his relationship with his Father.
2. The Leader as Strategist: Jesus knew where he was going — he had a strong sense of purpose.
3. The Leader as Seeker: Jesus had his own standard of success — he stood for the values of the kingdom.
4. The Leader as Seer: Jesus saw things clearly — he had a steady vision.
5. The Leader as Strong One: Jesus showed strength — of character — he had the moral authority to move others.
6. The Leader as Servant: Jesus knew the price of leadership — he was willing to give himself.
7. The Leader as Shepherd-Maker: Jesus had a strategy to develop leaders — he aimed to reproduce himself in them.
8. The Leader as Spokesperson: Jesus knew the importance of communication — he could articulate his vision.
9. The Leader as Struggler: Jesus was prepared to face conflict — he was gracious, courageous and wise.
10. The Leader as Sustainer: Jesus made provision to keep

In summary, transformational leaders symbolize Jesus in his role as transformational leader. They are motivated by the values of the kingdom and have the moral authority to move others. They are prepared to face conflict and are intentional in developing leaders to reproduce themselves in others. They are characterized by a quiet sense of confidence and a steady vision. This characteristic would make Jesus the perfect leader.

Condition Three: Theoretical Reflection

Significant theological reflection on the nature of leadership is mutually experienced in the ongoing life of a healthy church or church organization. Relational processes of seeking meaning-making in the context of doing ministry provide the best ground for that theological reflection.

The vehicle for such activity is highly relational group interaction. I am suggesting these relationships be intentionally fostered. Highly relational groups should be created, and time for mutual reflection around scripture and ministry experience should be scheduled in the ministry context.

Condition Four: Theoretical Learning

Leadership is everyone's opportunity, so all members of the church or organization should be equipped to critically think about their assumptions regarding the nature of leadership. Theological foundations for leadership understanding should form the foundation for this dimension of the leadership development process. Pastors or other positional leaders too often approach learning on this level as their domain without realizing the value to members throughout the organization.

Theoretical learning in the church or church organization can be accomplished by reading groups, annual workshops, and continuing education standards. These activities should be intentionally implemented and designed to foster theoretical learning regarding the nature of leadership.

Condition Five: Reflection on Leadership Practices

People experience leadership through specific behaviors they observe in their community including building shared vision, practicing solid integrity, challenging the status quo, empowering people, demonstrating abundance mentality, and relating to diversity. Attitudes are interpreted and formed as these practices are observed.

Think again about the cyclical nature of leadership development. It is certainly true that the heart of a person changes through theological and theoretical learning in the community. But an additional step is needed. That step is the skill of reflection. The opportunity for leadership behaviors to generate change within the heart of members of an organization is proportional to the skill and time devoted to reflection.

Reflection on leadership practice means identifying behaviors, analyzing, and critically thinking. Relationships in religious organizations between peer leaders, managers, and positional leaders should foster conversation that is reflective, aside from evaluation regarding productivity. Additionally, continuing education should provide emphases on leadership practices involving skills in reflection.
the movement going— he was committed to the future.

Consistently, Ford draws on the biblical material to sustain his understanding and casts new light on many well-known passages.

Faced with this impressive list of leadership qualities Jesus had, the reader may wonder how one can begin to grow and incorporate some of them. Seeing them and acknowledging them in Jesus does not automatically equip me with the same. The answer is by a deep, deep spiritual connection with Jesus that reveals and expands my understanding of what being his disciple is really about—and experience that is present in my daily work, as I lead and serve, following HIM.

The book ends with an epilogue in which a list of questions asked by young leaders are being answered by words of Jesus from the gospels, each answer being given by one of the ten leadership functions listed above. It is a practical application of the words of Jesus to leadership challenges that all of us face daily. I am selecting only one of the ten examples provided:

A Question of mission

Dear Lord, so far as I can see, most organizations, including the church, are concerned mainly with maintaining their traditions and programs. Honestly, I’m a little disillusioned about the possibility of changing anything. How shall I start?—

Disillusioned

Dear Disillusioned, “This is how you should pray: ‘Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.’” (Matthew 6:9-10)—Jesus, the Strategist

The underlying lesson here, of course, is that I cannot be disillusioned if my focus is God, my Father who is holy and above all else, making him known, preparing for his kingdom. The way I do this is through a process.

Ralph Waldo Emerson

“Do not follow where the path may lead. Go instead where there is no path and leave a trail.”

Condition Six: Experiential Learning

The ministry itself provides a transforming opportunity within an organization. This condition is distinct from reflection on leadership practices in that it grasps the value of what might otherwise be seen as ordinary work having nothing to do with leadership or its development. People have the capacity to find meaning and experience change as they go about mundane activity.

Experiential learning requires recognition of the value of the ministry. Such a culture will produce self-directed reflection on just how ministry is done, how it may improve, and what it means to contribute through ministry. A culture of experiential learning is produced by affirming experimentation, valuing the learning failure provides, providing peer feedback, offering coaching, and performance reviews that emphasize the learning that is taking place while doing the ministry itself.

Condition Seven: Training

Skill training for a wide range of ministry skills such as strategic planning, conflict management, managing meetings, managing change, communication, financial administration, human resource management, or other specific ministry challenges should be provided in the context of the church in an intentional and professional manner with affirmation given by endorsement or certification of the specific skills pursued.

Condition Eight: Feedback

A 360 degree assessment tool that provides feedback from peers, those served, and those that a person reports to should be applied no less than every fourth year to provide feedback to the leader. The growth of the organization around important values can be measured and interpreted as the transforming impact of leadership. We need to listen to the voice of others who can affirm our strengths and help identify our areas of challenge.

Conclusion

These eight conditions are integrated dimensions of an on-going transformational leadership development process creating positive change for organizations. The process must be experienced within the ministry of the local church or other organization and is on-going. In hierarchical organizations, the role of supporting leadership development from one organizational level to another is to provide consultation and guidance in establishing the process.

TO THINK ABOUT...

Growth = Change

“Be transformed by the renewing of your mind.” Romans 12:2.

Just about anyone would agree that growing is a good thing, but relatively few people actually dedicate themselves to the process. Why? Because growth requires change, and change is hard for most people. But the truth is that without change, growth is impossible.

Most people fight against change, especially when it affects them personally. As novelist Leo Tolstoy said, “Everyone thinks of changing the world, but no one thinks of changing himself.” The ironic thing is that change is inevitable. Everybody has to deal with it in their lives. On the other hand, growth is optional. You can choose to grow or to fight it. But know this: people unwilling to grow will never reach their potential.

Making the change from being an occasional learner to someone dedicated to personal growth is tough. It goes against the grain of the way most people live. Most people celebrate when they receive their diploma or degree and say to themselves, “Thank goodness that’s over. I’m done with studying.” But that kind of thinking doesn’t take you any higher than average.

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