

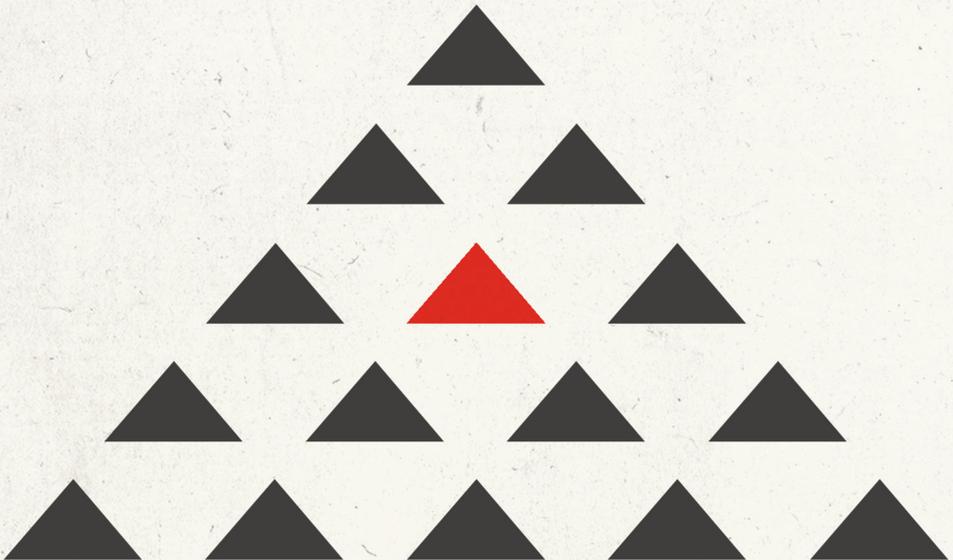
ERIC GEIGER *and* KEVIN PECK

THE CHURCH AND
LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT

DESIGNED

to

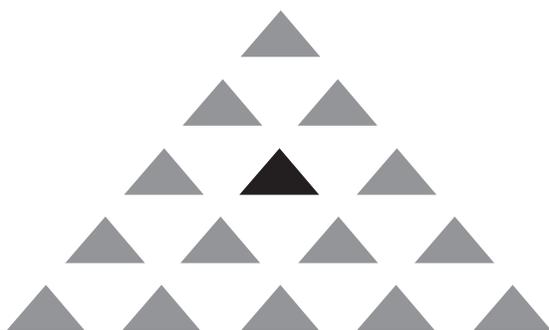
LEAD



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CONTENTS

Introduction: The Church as a Leadership Locus1
Chapter One: What’s Missing?11

Conviction

Chapter Two: Holy Cause and Effect: The Conviction
for Leadership33
Chapter Three: Leadership in the Image of God53
Chapter Four: Leadership for the Kingdom of God75

Culture

Chapter Five: Theology of Culture101
Chapter Six: Transforming Culture125

Constructs

Chapter Seven: Discipleship and Leadership
Development153
Chapter Eight: Pipelines and Pathways177

Conclusion

Chapter Nine: Continued.....203

Appendix: Jesus and Discipleship.....217

Notes.....225



INTRODUCTION

THE CHURCH AS A LEADERSHIP LOCUS

*Give me ten men that hate nothing but sin and love
nothing but God and we will change the world.*

—JOHN WESLEY

Where is the leadership locus in your community? In your town or city, where do leaders come from? Where are leaders formed, developed, and sent into the world? In your context, what group of people excels at creating leaders who impact the world?

Your church should be a leadership locus.

Locus can be defined as “a central or main place where something happens or is found.” The locus of any activity is not on the fringes, but the core of where action happens. The locus is a strong concentration, the anchor, or the center of gravity. For example, when someone speaks of “locus of power,” the reference is to a small group of people who call all the shots. When a news anchor speaks of the “locus of resistance” in an area of the world, the anchor is referring to the center of the fighting or rebelling.

Because the word *locus* indicates a strong center, many would deem “leadership locus” a misnomer. Because leadership is practiced in a plethora of environments, can there really be a locus? With all the wide range of leadership definitions and frameworks

offered through leadership books, leadership podcasts, leadership coaches, and leadership classes, is there *really* such a thing as a leadership locus?

And if there is a center, can that center be the Church?¹

If We Believe

The Church is uniquely set apart to develop and deploy leaders for the glory of God and the advancement of the gospel. The Church is designed by God to create leaders for all spheres of life. *Your* church is designed to lead, designed to disciple leaders who are, by God’s grace, commanded to disciple people in all spheres of life. How can we make such a strong statement?

If we believe that apart from Him we can do nothing (John 15:5), we must recognize that much of what is recognized as “leadership” will not stand the test of time. In the end, all that is done apart from Him will be proven to be rubble and worth absolutely nothing. No matter how convincing modern wisdom may seem, apart from the wisdom and activity of God, all human leadership activity will prove futile in the end. Leadership, apart from the work of God, cannot produce true flourishing or eternal results.

If we believe that God created the world and handed responsibility for watching over the garden to Adam and Eve, then human leadership must be understood as God-initiated. He purposed to use humanity to steward and cultivate (Gen. 1—2); His people were and are “at the center” of His plan. From the beginning, His people have been designed to lead.

If we believe that God has chosen to make His multifaceted wisdom known through the Church (Eph. 3:10), then the leaders that are developed through the Church are “at the center” of God’s design to represent Himself in all facets of life. Leaders who are motivated by His grace and shaped by His Word are leaders who invest their lives in what really matters.

If we believe, as William Temple stated, “The Church is the only society that exists for the benefit of those who are not its members,” then all of humanity benefits from the leaders created and formed in the Church. No organization carries such a holy mandate, thus the leaders developed in the Church and by the Church are leaders who are developed for the world. They are developed “in the center” and sent out to the world. The world is impacted and improved by the leaders the Church develops and deploys.

If we believe that ultimately only Jesus transforms, then only the message the Church carries can bring about true, everlasting change. Only the gospel, the message His people steward, can change the human heart. And the leaders that the Church develops administer the grace of God in its various forms (1 Pet. 4:10).

If we believe the command to make disciples (Matt. 28:19) is bigger and more beautiful than merely making converts and calling people to “make a decision,” then we understand the essential role of the Church in maturing people in Christ. The command to “make disciples” carries the connotation of forming believers who learn and develop over a lifetime.² One result, then, of discipleship is believers who serve and influence others in all spheres of life. The Great Commission is Plan A; Jesus has no Plan B. Discipleship, developing believers who grow over a lifetime, is His method. The full extent of discipleship is the development of disciples who are able to lead and develop others, not merely people who gather together for worship once a week.

So, yes, there is a locus of truly sustaining and transforming leadership. And the locus of leadership is the Church of Jesus Christ. She has been designed by God to develop and produce leaders who bless and serve others.

God’s people are designed to influence others. God’s people have been purchased by His blood and are empowered with His Spirit to influence the world around them. They are designed to

lead. If you are His, you are designed to lead. And your church is designed to create and commission leaders who serve the world as they represent Christ and reconcile people to Him.

Notice we are not saying that the locus of the Church is leadership development, but that the locus of leadership development is the Church. Please do not miss the difference. The locus of the Church is and must be Jesus and His finished work for us. The center of the Church must be the gospel; for it is the gospel—His righteousness given to us in exchange for our sin—that created the Church, and it is the gospel that sustains the Church.

The center of the Church is the gospel, but the center of leadership development must be the Church—meaning, that the leaders who will ultimately transform communities and change the world come from the Church. These leaders carry with them, into all spheres of life and culture, the conviction of a people who are the *called-out ones*, of a people who have been brought from death to life through Jesus. These leaders are designed to serve others because they have been served first by Christ. These leaders are empowered to sacrificially offer themselves to others because their hearts have been transformed with the sacrifice of Jesus for us.

God has designed His people to lead. From the first recordings of history, God has made it clear that He has designed creation to be led by His covenant people. More than that, He has decided what His people are to do with that leadership. Whether you are called to lead your home, in the marketplace, in God’s Church, or in your community—if you are called by God, then you are called to lead others to know and worship Jesus Christ.

Leadership: Go Forth and Die

Robert Quinn, a leadership professor at University of Michigan, has joined others in pointing out that the origins of the word *leader*

means to “go forth and die.”³ In his book *Change the World*, he writes:

Leadership authors do not understand that leadership means “Go forth to die.” If they did understand it, they would not be enticed to write about it—because people do not want to hear this message. Most people want to be told how to get extraordinary results with minimum risk. They want to know how to get out-of-the-box results with in-the-box courage.⁴

True leaders are servants who die to themselves so others may flourish. True leaders go forth, not for themselves, but for others. The Church, as no other group, follows the only One to die that others may forever live. If the foundation of leadership is “go forth and die,” then the Church must be the epicenter for developing and deploying these kinds of leaders. Who but the Church can really understand the weight and significance of “go forth and die”?

The Church has been served. The Church exists because our great death-defeating Savior went forth to die for us and, now, invites all who follow Him to die to themselves and truly live. The message of our Savior-King dying in our place is central, and of first importance, to believers. He went forth and endured the shame and pain of the cross for us. We are His because He served us.

The essence of Christianity is not that we serve Him first, but that He has served us by sacrificing Himself on the cross in our place and enduring our suffering and shame. On the cross He was treated as we deserve, so we may be treated as He deserves. His dying words capture the essence of the Christian faith: “It is finished!” (John 19:30). His sacrifice is final, the work is complete, and our salvation is secure.

Reportedly, Buddha’s dying words were, “Strive without ceasing.”⁵ Work really hard for your own salvation! He died giving a

pep talk, while our Savior died securing our redemption. No one has served the way Jesus has served us.

The Church has the ultimate example. His service to us is the example He has instructed us to emulate. Because He has served us, we are now free to “go forth and die” by serving others. After He washed His disciples’ feet, Jesus said:

“So if I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example that you also should do just as I have done for you.” (John 13:14–15)

Jesus shows us that the values in His Kingdom are the opposite of the values in this world. In His Kingdom, the hungry are full, the poor are rich, the last are first, and “whoever wants to be great among you must become your servant” (Matt. 20:26).

The Christian life is about dying. When Jesus invited the crowd to follow Him, He invited them to die. When He told them His followers would be taking up their cross daily (Luke 9:23), they knew He meant a life of dying, as the cross was an explicit statement of death. The Christian life is not about trying daily, but dying daily. His life is revealed in us, with increasing measure, as we die to ourselves (2 Cor. 4:11). We grow by continually “going forth to die.”

Christians, more than anyone else, should resonate with what it means to “go forth and die.” Christians, more than anyone else, have been designed to lead. The Church, more than anyone else, is designed by God to create these kinds of leaders. No other people have been secured with the blood of Christ, knit together solely by His grace, and commissioned by Him to multiply. The Church has been providentially formed by God to bless the world, to be a holy gathering of people who make disciples. The Church has been designed to possess a holy rhythm of gathering people to scatter so more may be gathered.

Should Not Be Outpaced

Because the core of sustaining and transforming leadership is the Church, no organization should outpace the Church in developing leaders. *Why should we not be outpaced?* No other gathering of people has a greater mission, a greater promise, or a greater Reward.

No greater mission. Today, even as you read this, leaders are being recruited. There are meetings taking place around conference tables, over meals, and in coffee shops. Potential leaders are being asked to join a company, to give to a cause, or to join the core team of a start-up. In each of those meetings some type of mission is discussed.

Our company is really about this . . .

You can make a difference by giving to this . . .

Our start-up is going to do this . . .

If the one doing the inviting is wise, the “this” is a compelling and catalyzing mission. Any amount of time spent reading about leadership will tell you that you can’t have a strong and committed team without a deep sense of mission. But any mission that people are being invited to join pales in comparison to the mission God has given His people. No other people have been reconciled to God through Christ and been given the privilege and responsibility to reconcile others to Christ. God’s people are, therefore, His “ambassadors,” and God makes His appeal to others through us (2 Cor. 5:20).

Because a local church exists to serve her community, to bless the world, and to be a light to the nations, then the leaders developed in each local church are developed for much more than each local church. In the church we are recruiting leaders to a mission bigger than the smaller ones the world offers. Whether we lead our homes, companies, or churches, our mission is always bigger than

the organization we lead. As Christ-followers everything we lead can be used for His glory. Any and every organizational mission is trumped by the larger one the Lord has given His people: to make much of Jesus through our lives and to make disciples of all nations.

No greater promise. No one should outpace the Church in developing leaders because no one else has the assurance that their contribution will last, that their leadership will eternally matter. No other gathering of people will stand the test of time. Companies that have been declared successful are no longer in existence. Organizations falter as quickly as they rise.

Organizational theorists even plot out the typical life cycles of an organization from birth to growth to maturity to decline to death. The Church of Jesus Christ cannot be plotted on the chart. She cannot be contained! She will stand the test of time. Jesus has and will preserve His Church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome her (Matt. 16:18).

No greater reward. There is a great cost to following Jesus, and Jesus never minimized it. He taught the crowds that following Him means dying to ourselves and giving up everything to be His disciple (Luke 14:33). We discover that everything we give up is really nothing compared to the greatness of knowing Christ. The cost is great, but the reward is greater. We get Jesus. He is our great joy.

When Peter mentioned to Jesus that he and the other disciples had left everything to follow Jesus, Jesus responded:

“I assure you, there is no one who has left house, brothers or sisters, mother or father, children, or fields because of Me and the gospel, who will not receive 100 times more, now at this time—houses, brothers and sisters, mothers and children, and fields, with persecutions—and eternal life in the age to come.” (Mark 10:29–30)

No organization or opportunity offers what Jesus offers us. He promises us that the cost of work in His Kingdom will be worth

it. Not only do we receive blessings and rewards, but above that He is our ultimate Reward, as everything is loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ. Local churches should not be outpaced in developing leaders who bless the world and advance His Kingdom.

But . . .

But sadly many churches are outpaced in developing leaders for the mission of God. In many churches, leaders are not being developed as fully and intentionally as they could be. The lack of leadership development among God’s people is the burden that has led to this book.

Your church should be, must be, a leadership locus.

Is it?

We wrote this book because we love the Church. But we also wrote this book with holy angst and anticipation for churches to excel in developing leaders who serve the world. Angst because our hearts grieve when ministry leaders fail to see the Kingdom potential in their midst, the “ordinary people” waiting to be developed and deployed. Anticipation because we have seen glimpses of churches who are centers of leadership, who disciple people to lead well in their homes, communities, businesses, and places of influence.

We long for your church to be a leadership locus, to embrace your design to lead.

In the next chapter, we are going to unpack a framework for developing leaders through your church. We say *through* because much of their Kingdom influence will happen outside the walls of your weekly gatherings. We want to offer you a framework to think about how leaders are formed and commissioned to impact the world. If leaders are not being developed in your context, this framework will help you identify what is missing. We will then spend the rest of the book unpacking the *Designed to Lead* framework.



CHAPTER
ONE

WHAT'S MISSING?

*Things which matter most must never be at
the mercy of things which matter least.*

—WOLFGANG VON GOETHE

Developing leaders is hard work for an organization. It often seems like an even harder task for a local church. Many seem to be on the same page about its importance, and yet very few churches would admit to having a handle on the subject. Let us introduce you to three fictitious examples, though we could name dozens of real ones in each category.

Quitter Community Church (QCC): At QCC, the congregation has long existed in an ambivalent truce in the war of developing leaders. Congregants come to Sunday service and small group every week to learn about being a better Christian. The word *leader* at this church means volunteer with the job of doing whatever everyone else doesn't remember or want to do. Members with leadership skills outside the walls of the church are not expected to bring those skills to bear in the church because, well, "church is church" and "work is work" and "the two worlds don't need to intersect."

At QCC, the work of the church isn't a place for innovation, improvement, or creativity; it's a place for duty and faithfulness.

Duties are merely broken down into a manageable number of tasks and assigned to volunteers. Then the piles of tasks get too big for “just the volunteers”; the church looks at the budget and hires a new staff member according to their bylaws.

Church of the Flywheel: At the Flywheel, people know how to build things. A staff member brags, “Our system for making leaders is nails. We spent the last four years studying the most advanced leadership systems the world has to offer. We’ve studied the Armed Forces, Fortune 500s, and even several agencies in the espionage world.” But alongside all their systems is one major problem . . . *no one cares.*

The plans are met with blank stares. The “pipelines” are empty. The slogans and nudges from the platform to “own your development” fall on deaf ears. Sure, a few months after each major overhaul and new emphasis the church always gets a new batch of Johnny-come-latelies to jump into the amazing system; but they always seem to flake out. The staff knows this is a problem and pontificates, “Our content and system is good; maybe we just have a congregation full of duds?” *Yeah, that’s probably it.*

Talk Louder Community Church: Talk Louder claims to be all about making leaders. “Every year we have two sermon series on developing the next generation of leaders and we give everyone in the congregation the next best leadership book. It’s a success every time! We have nearly 50 percent of our people who see themselves as having leadership potential, and most of them have signed up to volunteer. We have piles of people every year take a gifts profile, and most people look really promising.” Still, strangely enough, every time there is a staff opening the leaders at Talk Louder have to look outside the body. And the truth is that those piles of “gift tests” sit on a desk, untouched since they were completed.

Also at Talk Louder, all the emphasis on “leadership” is focused on “making the church better.” Though not explicitly stated this way, the emphasis of the church is essentially: “Come

to our church, get plugged in, and volunteer to help us do church even better.” Because of this, members at Talk Louder are no more likely to be effective leaders at home or in the marketplace than they were before joining the church. Thoughtful leaders on the team know this and struggle, “Every year we think we are taking big strides by creating more momentum for developing leaders, but something is holding us back from producing leaders.” Something is missing at Talk Louder, and it isn’t more rhetoric on leadership development.

Something is missing in many churches.

Perhaps you see your church in one of the examples. While fictitious, they are actually far too close and too real for many of us. It would be a challenge to find a vibrant evangelical church that doesn’t admit that leadership development is a key function of the local church. And yet, it is our experience that very few church leaders can identify the problem that is hampering the leadership potential in their church. Church leaders know the people they serve have been made in His image, purchased with His blood, equipped with His Spirit, and called to make disciples, but they struggle with helping people live out the reality of their capacity to lead.

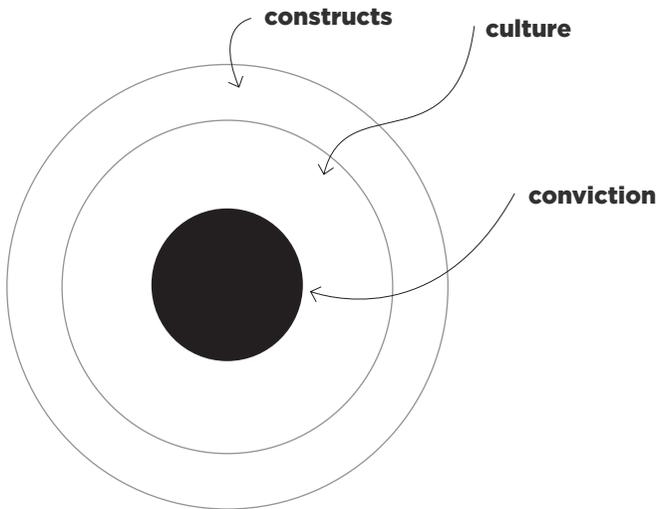
So the programmatic rat race in most churches continues. Most churches merely exist to keep running their programs and services. They are not developing leaders intentionally and consistently. When leaders emerge from some churches, it is often by accident. “Wow, a leader emerged. . . . How did *that* happen?” should not be heard among God’s people. Something is missing. Something is off.

We attend conferences and preach sermons imploring the church of God to stand up and take hold of their destiny to advance the Kingdom of God across the globe. Still, our pews and folding chairs stay warm with immobile, uninspired, ill-equipped saints. Our churches, homes, and places of work lack the leadership of Christian men and women.

Something has to change.

We must find a way to unlock the power of God in the people of God, to see His sons and daughters rise up and lead for the glory of God. Jesus Himself has given to His blood-bought people the mandate to lead in His Kingdom, and to equip others to do the same.

For leaders to be developed consistently and intentionally, churches must possess *conviction*, *culture*, and *constructs*. Based on our own leadership and ministry experiences, studying leadership development, and interacting with churches and ministry leaders who develop others, we believe the following framework encompasses what must happen in a local church for leaders to be developed and deployed.



Designed to Lead Framework

Churches that consistently produce leaders have a strong *conviction* to develop leaders, a healthy *culture* for leadership development, and helpful *constructs* to systematically and intentionally

build leaders. All three are essential for leaders to be formed through the ministry of a local church.

Conviction is a God-initiated passion that fuels a leader and church. Conviction is at the center of the framework because without conviction to develop others, leadership development will not occur. Developing leaders must be a burning passion, a non-negotiable part of the vision of a local church and her leaders, or it will never become a reality. The essential task of developing others must not be at the mercy of other things, of lesser things in a local church.

Once the church leaders share this conviction, this ambition must become part of the very *culture* of the church itself. *Culture* is the shared beliefs and values that drive the behavior of a group of people. The church that believes in and values the development of others collectively holds the conviction for leadership development. When development is in the culture, it is much more than an idea or program; it is part of the very core identity of the church.

Wise leaders implement *constructs* to help unlock the full potential of a church that seeks to be a center for developing leaders. By constructs, we mean the systems, processes, and programs developed to help develop leaders. Constructs provide necessary implementation and execution to the vision and passion of culture and conviction.

Because we have a proclivity to run to the practical for a quick fix and to find something we can quickly implement, most leaders will run to constructs when addressing leadership development problems in a church. While constructs are important, if you embrace and implement constructs without first developing a coherent and strong conviction and culture, you will only reap apathy or exhaustion.

Constructs without Conviction = Apathy. The reason that many people in churches give blank stares to leadership development initiatives is because an overarching sense of conviction has

not been fostered in the church. The reason many churches settle for enlisting people to “fill necessary slots” to pull off programs is there is not a conviction for developing leaders. The pastors, the people, everyone has given up on the grand idea of discipling and deploying leaders. If a shared sense of conviction that God wants to raise up and release leaders in His Kingdom through His Church is lacking, apathy is sure to follow. If you want to know why churches have given up, look no further than lack of conviction.

Constructs without Culture = Exhaustion. Constructs are doomed to fail without strong conviction and a healthy culture. If a church attempts to execute constructs without a culture of leadership development, the systems will feel exhausting. The church longs for the “leadership flywheel” and seeks it through systems; but without a healthy culture those systems are merely seen as another set of things to do, a cumbersome hoop to jump through. And as staff attempts to implement, everyone grows weary. Every time the team aims to fill the leadership pipeline it feels as if they are pushing a boulder up a hill. An unhealthy culture breeds exhaustion.

Conviction without Constructs = Frustration. At the same time, if a team holds a deep conviction for development but lacks constructs to help develop leaders, frustration festers. Constructs are vitally important. Conviction and culture must be the starting point; but if constructs are not provided, then intentional and ongoing leadership development is merely wishful thinking. A vision without a strategy is nothing more than a fun whiteboard moment that rarely results in anything significant. There is nothing more frustrating than an unrealized vision, than a passion without any traction. A leader who isn’t passionate about leadership development will sleep better tonight than the one who is but lacks necessary constructs to help develop leaders. A leader without constructs often says, “We keep talking (louder and louder) about developing leaders, but nothing happens.”

Formulas for Diagnosis

Constructs without Conviction = Apathy

If a leader is apathetic, it could be they lack a proper sense of conviction.

Constructs without Culture = Exhaustion

If a leader is exhausted, it could be they are not a part of a healthy leadership culture.

Conviction without Constructs = Frustration

If a leader is frustrated, it could be they lack the constructs that are necessary to realize vision.

Conviction, culture, and constructs. If any of the three are missing, leadership development will be stifled. Is one missing in your context? Does one or more need focus and attention?

To further explain and illustrate the importance of all three, let's look at Moses and his leadership of God's people. Moses is as an example of a godly leader who developed others for the mission the Lord had for His people. In observing Moses' leadership, we can see a holy *conviction* for investing in others, an emphasis on a *culture* that develops leaders, and *constructs* that enables development.

Moses and Conviction

Often our churches don't make leaders because we lack conviction. Granted, it's probably much more than that, but it is certainly not less. If we look at Moses and Joshua, his successor, we see conviction for development in one and lacking in the other. And we also see that the implications of possessing or lacking a conviction for development are massive.

Conviction for developing others gripped Moses. He understood that leadership is always a temporary assignment—always. It is a temporary assignment because leaders do not ultimately own the teams, ministries, or organizations they lead. We simply steward what the Lord has entrusted to our care for a season. The brevity of life ought to birth urgency in us to develop others. Not to mention that our time in this life is much more limited than that of Moses! He lived to be 120 and lived with an urgency to develop others; how much more should we embrace the temporary nature of our time as leader? Part of wise and selfless stewardship is developing others and preparing them for their impending time to lead.

Moses personally selected and invested in leaders. As you read through the Scripture, you see Moses pouring into Joshua. Moses brought Joshua up the mountain to receive the Ten Commandments from God (Exod. 24:13). Joshua observed Moses' righteous indignation when Moses smashed the two tablets (Exod. 32:17–19), and Joshua sensed the sweet communion Moses shared with the Lord as Joshua guarded the Tent of Meeting (Exod. 33:11). Joshua was also chosen to spot out the land of Canaan.

Through all these critical moments in the life of God's people, Joshua was there with Moses. Moses served God's people by pouring into the life of another. And immediately after Moses' death, Joshua was ready to lead Israel.

After the death of Moses the LORD's servant, the LORD spoke to Joshua son of Nun, who had served Moses: "Moses My servant is dead. Now you and all the people prepare to cross over the Jordan to the land I am giving the Israelites." (Josh. 1:1–2)

The leadership legacy of Joshua, sadly, is very different:

Joshua son of Nun, the servant of the LORD, died at the age of 110. . . . That whole generation was also gathered to their

ancestors. After them another generation rose up who did not know the LORD or the works He had done for Israel. (Judg. 2:8, 10)

Did you notice the significant difference in the legacies of Moses and Joshua? After Moses died, immediately God's people were ready to move to the land the Lord had given them. After Joshua died, a generation rose up who did not even know what the Lord had done for His people. Why the stark contrast?

There is no record of Joshua investing in anyone. We don't see him intentionally developing leaders. We don't read of him pouring into others. And the generation after his leadership doesn't know the Lord. Israel enters a period marked by leadership failure after leadership failure. We know this period as it is recorded in the book of Judges. The book opens with the people of Israel asking God who should go first, who should lead them. There was no clear leader out in front. From this moment, leader after leader steps up and leads more poorly than the last. Because of Joshua's shortsightedness, Israel is in a leadership crisis.

Clearly Joshua lacked the conviction to develop others. Even still, as most leaders, he likely would never have admitted that. He would have claimed developing leaders was a priority, something that was important to him, but his life over the long haul revealed it wasn't.

Over time, our lives, not merely our words, reveal our convictions. And based on the lack of leadership development in many of our churches, it is clear that many church leaders lack a real conviction for developing leaders.

How do you know if something is a conviction? If you can imagine life or ministry without it, it is *not* a conviction. For example, we are deeply encouraged that most church leaders hold a conviction that Jesus must be preached, that there is salvation in no other name but Jesus. Because Jesus is a conviction, ministry leaders cannot fathom ministry without preaching and teaching Jesus.

Amen! If someone offered these leaders a more “successful” or “larger” ministry if they didn’t preach Jesus, they would refuse. No way they would even consider it. Their response would be: “What’s the point if Jesus isn’t the focus? Who cares if tons of people gather around something else other than Jesus?” This is conviction.

Or take evangelism as an example. If a leader was assured that an easier ministry awaits if “you never challenge people to share their faith, to engage people who are not Christians, and to be salt and light in their communities,” the leader who holds firmly to a conviction that Christians are commanded to share the gospel would never take the route of an easier ministry. It would be unthinkable because evangelism *is* a conviction.

Clearly most church leaders do not hold the conviction of developing leaders, so they find ways to continue in ministry without it. They have learned to lead churches without developing leaders. They have learned to offer programs, conduct worship services, and manage budgets all without developing leaders. Like Joshua, they are able to execute tasks and make decisions without any conviction to develop leaders. It is to our shame that we have learned to lead ministries without developing other ministers.

Are you more like Moses or Joshua? Does a conviction for developing leaders grip your heart? Or can you actually function and see your church function without it?

Moses and Culture

Culture bridges conviction and constructs. If a church has a strong culture of development, it was birthed from conviction. And a church with a strong culture of developing and deploying leaders will keep working to find or build constructs that help them develop leaders.

Leaders must own the culture of the ministry they are leading. A seminary professor once shared, “You can complain about the

culture of your ministry your first three years, but after that it is a reflection of your leadership.” By culture, we are not speaking of the socioeconomic or ethnic makeup of the ministry you lead, but the shared beliefs and values that undergird all your church does. Thus a strong culture of developing leaders permeates the entire church.

Culture is powerful. It constantly teaches, constantly shapes, and constantly forms the people who are within it. Peter Drucker famously said, “Culture eats strategy for breakfast.” He was not diminishing the role of strategy or systems. He advocated for their use, but it is possible to have the right systems and a great strategy in the midst of an unhealthy culture. And if the culture is not healthy, the unhealthy culture swallows the systems and strategies.

As Moses led God’s people, there was the famous confrontation between Jethro and Moses in Exodus 18. Jethro visited his son-in-law Moses and observed that Moses was worn out by the magnitude of the responsibility. So he confronted Moses with the truth, “What you’re doing is not good” (v. 17), and challenged him to delegate responsibilities to others. But in the midst of the encouragement to delegate, Jethro tells Moses that there are several things he must do—several things he must not delegate. Don’t miss this: In the midst of the famous delegation passage, Jethro tells Moses there are things he must not delegate. And the things “Moses must do” are all essential in building a healthy culture of development.

“Instruct them about the statutes and laws, and teach them the way to live and what they must do. But you should select from all the people able men, God-fearing, trustworthy, and hating bribes. Place them over the people as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens.” (Exod. 18:20–21)

The responsibilities that Jethro encourages Moses to retain are culture-forming responsibilities. *Instruct* them about the statutes

and laws; provide clarity about their identity. *Teach* them the way to live; provide focus of mission. *Select* the leaders; provide leaders for the people. In a healthy culture, the people know who they are, what they are to do, and leaders are being developed and deployed. In a healthy culture there is strong sense of identity, clarity of mission, and credible leaders with integrity.

A healthy culture has a strong identity. Jethro confronted Moses in Exodus 18, and in Exodus 20, God gave His people the Law. So before the Law was even given, Jethro encouraged Moses to “instruct the people in the statutes of God.”

God gave the Law, in part, to show us we can’t keep the Law—that we need Jesus. Also He gave the Law to form a distinct people who would be a blessing to all other peoples. God was using the laws and statutes that Moses would constantly teach to form His people to be a kingdom of priests and a holy and distinct nation (Exod. 19:6). They were His prized possession, distinct from all other nations to be a blessing to all other nations. The Law reminded the people of their God, of His great rescue, of His great adoption of them. As God gives the Ten Commandments two chapters later, He reminds them, “I am the LORD your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the place of slavery” (Exod. 20:2).

A healthy leadership culture doesn’t allow for tasks and assignments to be merely handed to people without connecting the responsibilities to the identity God’s people have as sons, daughters, and servants of our King. In a healthy culture, people are continually reminded who they are, that they are His people, rescued by Him, a royal priesthood, and a people belonging to Him. If people are not reminded of their identity, they will be burdened with lists of tasks and responsibilities without their hearts being refreshed and renewed by the Lord who loves them.

More important than work getting done is the Lord’s refreshing work in the hearts of His people. Jethro was the “org design guy,”

and even he challenged Moses to first and foremost instruct the people in their distinction. If we forget who we are, we mindlessly execute and perform ministry functions without the sacred *why* behind all our actions.

A healthy culture has a clear mission. Jethro also encouraged Moses to “teach them the way to live, and what they must do” (Exod. 18:20). Not only were God’s people to understand their unique identity, but also they were to receive instructions on “how we live around here.” They were given a sense of mission as God’s people.

Michael Goheen reminds us that “the Great Commission is not a task assigned to isolated individuals; it is an identity given to a community.”¹ Jesus didn’t simply ransom a random collection of individuals; rather He purchased a new community, a special people. This people, whom He named the Church, are called, not only *to God*, but *for God’s glory*. We are, at our very core, a missional people. This reality is the basic understanding of the identity of the New Testament church. It’s the culture of the new Kingdom under Christ. Because He has redeemed us, we join Him in His mission to bring redemption to others. The mission of God is for the people of God.

You can’t have a strong culture without a strong sense of mission. A healthy ministry cultivates a clear sense of “here is what we are going to do together.” Jim Collins wrote that when an “organization has a strong vision, a sense of why they are here, a visitor could drop in from another planet and understand the vision without having to read it on paper.”²

A local church with a strong sense of mission will inevitably invite and develop others to join the mission. The mission is too important, too overwhelming to attempt alone. Thus churches with a deep burden for their cities or a passion for unreached people groups will attract leaders and develop them through the mission and for the mission.

Ministries without a clear sense of mission move in a plethora of directions, as a multitude of lesser and competing missions invade the culture. In a world of complex and competing causes and messages, we must be ruthlessly committed to the mission of making disciples. Thus a church's mission statement should be more than merely, "Come to our church, get connected, and help us do church better." What an incomplete mission and a shallow view of discipleship! We are the people of God, the called-out ones. Those outside of us should benefit from our existence, from our community, from our gatherings.

A healthy culture develops and deploys godly leaders. While Jethro encouraged Moses to delegate responsibility to others, he also challenged Moses to be personally involved in the selection and placement of leaders.

"Select from all the people able men, God-fearing, trustworthy, and hating bribes. Place them over the people as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens."
(Exod. 18:21)

Moses was tasked with selecting and placing leaders of both character and competence so that the people would be served well. Those selected and placed were to be God-fearing, trustworthy, and able. Jethro emphasized God-fearing and trustworthy because the culture among God's people was going to be set by the character of those in leadership.

The leaders who have responsibility entrusted to them dramatically shape the culture of any ministry or organization. The health of a culture is deeply connected to the health of her leaders. Leaders shape the ministry culture infinitely more than your policies or programs.

With Jethro-like intensity, when the apostle Paul challenged Timothy to expand the ministry and reproduce himself in others, he emphasized trustworthiness. He didn't diminish competence,

but he started with integrity and faithfulness. The apostle Paul told the young pastor, Timothy:

What you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses entrust to faithful men who will be able to teach others also. (2 Tim. 2:2 ESV)

Notice the order of the language of this often-quoted verse. The verse does not read, “Entrust to able men who will be faithful.” Paul is not saying: “Go find some great leaders and try to make them faithful. Make a list of high-capacity leaders and work to turn them into faithful followers. Find the best, most talented people and put them through a character boot camp.”

To the contrary, Paul essentially says, “Entrust all the important things to the faithful, and in time, they will be able.” Though the temptation is to find anyone to “fill a spot,” Paul is saying the opposite:

Find those whose hearts are His and coach them on their competence.

Invest in people who love the Lord and develop their skills.

Pour yourself into people who have devoted themselves to Him.

Biblical leadership development is to “find the faithful who will be able. Not the able that might be faithful.” Reversing the order of the famous leadership development verse may provide short-term relief, but it has massive long-term implications. Undoubtedly you have seen the devastating effects of character implosion in ministry leaders, whether prominent leaders or those who serve in less visible roles. Regardless the situation, when the role and responsibility outpace the leader’s character, disaster is inevitable. And more people than the leader suffer.

Entrusting leadership to the faithful, to the God-fearing, does not mean entrusting leadership to those who are sinless, as there is only One. Being a person of integrity isn’t about perfection, but it is

about the direction of one's heart. Someone who is faithful repents, displays the fruit of the Spirit, and lives a life directionally in submission to the Lord, not directionally in opposition to the Lord.

Oswald Sanders stated strongly, "Spiritual leadership requires Spirit-filled people."³ Spirit-filled leaders are required to lead a ministry that produces other Spirit-filled leaders. If our churches are developing leaders who are not filled with His Spirit, our churches are developing leaders who will not advance the mission and serve the Kingdom well. When a church produces leaders apart from the Spirit, a church produces people who can execute tasks without walking with the Lord, who can fulfill responsibilities without remaining in Him. Without Spirit-filled people, all the work that gets done, all the energy that gets expended, and all the activity that fills schedules and calendars amounts to nothing in the end. For apart from Him, we can do absolutely nothing. Thus a healthy culture—a culture that produces spiritual leaders—values the character and trustworthiness of the leaders, not merely the skills they can offer.

The world benefits from leaders who are surrendered to the Spirit, men and women whose character is formed by the Lord. According to research conducted by KRW International, CEOs noted for their integrity led their organizations to higher levels of performance than those CEOs with lower integrity scores.⁴ Employees were asked to rate their CEOs on integrity, responsibility, forgiveness, and compassion. And those CEOs with higher marks led their companies to higher returns as compared to the CEOs with lower marks. *The Harvard Business Review* article that reported the research declared, "The people who work for you will benefit from the tone you set. And now there's evidence that your company will too."⁵ The world is longing for leaders who are filled with integrity, responsibility, forgiveness, and compassion. In essence, even the world's research says that the world benefits from leadership that is Christian in nature.

Without faithful men and women, a ministry culture loses credibility. The ministry may produce great programs, be well-managed, and meet budget, but if the leaders lack character, the ministry lacks the moral authority and credibility to call others to come and die, to challenge men and women to become leaders.

In their landmark leadership book *The Leadership Challenge*, Jim Kouzes and Barry Posner articulate that the most important leadership characteristic is credibility. Of credibility they write:

Credibility is one of the hardest attributes to earn. And it's the most fragile of human qualities. It's earned minute-by-minute, hour-by-hour, month-by-month, year-by-year. But it can be lost in very short order if not attended to. We're willing to forgive a few minor transgressions, a slip of the tongue, a misspoken word, a careless act. But there comes a time when enough is enough. And when leaders have used up all of their credibility, it's nearly impossible to earn it back.⁶

Ministry leadership often requires leaders and teams to take risks and make bold moves. But wise leaders in a healthy culture don't risk the credibility of the ministry by placing unfaithful and untrustworthy leaders into roles. A healthy culture that values leadership development has a strong identity, a clear sense of mission, and is committed to selecting and deploying godly leaders.

Moses and Constructs

In looking at Moses' leadership, we see someone who held a conviction to develop others. And we see how Jethro's instructions to Moses, the things he told him not to delegate, were instrumental in developing the culture among God's people. But we also see the wise counsel of Jethro insisting that Moses build a leadership system, a *construct* that would serve God's people.

“Place them over the people as commanders of thousands, hundreds, fifties, and tens. They should judge the people at all times. Then they can bring you every important case but judge every minor case themselves. In this way you will lighten your load, and they will bear it with you. If you do this, and God so directs you, you will be able to endure, and also all these people will be able to go home satisfied.” (Exod. 18:21–23)

Before Jethro arrived, there was confusion and chaos. People waited all day to see Moses. He went home exhausted. Decisions were delayed that could have been made. Actions that should have been taken were put on hold until Moses could review plans and give his ruling.

Without constructs, without systems, chaos and confusion always abound.

Before Jethro’s counsel, Moses delegated responsibilities to himself. If there had been an org chart, Moses would have been in every box. If a task needed to get done, Moses would be the one to do it. He was the superstar leader who attempted to meet every need and do all the ministry himself as the people watched. He needed to repent of his foolish attempts to be omni-competent, and Jethro provided the appropriate rebuke. No leader is omni-competent. The beauty of the body of Christ is that we need one another. For a pastor, or the people in a church, to view a pastor as omni-competent is to insult the body of Christ. “The body is not one part but many” (1 Cor. 12:14). All of God’s people are part of the body of Christ with an important function, an important role.⁷

More than just offering a rebuke, Jethro instructed Moses to build a leadership system, to design and architect a structure that will distribute the responsibility to others so that the people will receive care. And if you do this, Jethro told Moses, the “people will go home satisfied” (NIV). Meaning, the motivation was not merely

for Moses to have a lighter load, but also so the people would be better served.

Building constructs, delegating and broadening the capacity of the ministry, is not *only* about the leaders having a lighter load. The burden will be lighter and the pace will be more sustainable, but the people will also go home satisfied. And though Jethro was a priest of Midian—meaning, he was not a Jew but an outsider—Moses listened to him because the counsel was wise. Moses designed a system, placed leaders in significant areas of responsibility, and delegated both responsibility and authority. The system was a tool to organize and deploy leaders so that the people of God would be better served.

For any organization to develop and deploy lots of leaders, constructs are required. Quite simply, leadership development cannot be scaled without systems that undergird the development of leaders. A leadership construct provides a framework for leadership development, a pipeline for future leaders, and a path for people to walk in their own leadership development.

Ultimately, the development of leaders within the church serves as a locus for developing leaders for places of leadership all over the world. Leadership constructs should not only result in leaders developed for ministry within a church, but also for leadership in the home, workplace, and world. The Church is able to multiply the Christ-empowered leaders the world desperately needs.

So we say it again: your church, the one you worship with every Sunday, is divinely designed to develop leaders who will bless and serve their families, churches, communities, and the world. But conviction, culture, and constructs are all required. Without them your church may offer programs, fill calendars, exist with an array of activity, and may even fill all your volunteer spots, but you won't develop leaders the way God intended.

Let's Go . . .

We don't want to be overly dramatic, but there is so much at stake here. The Church of God must be the locus of leadership development that God has designed her to be. As we struggle to find traction in this climb to our destiny, so much of the world around us is suffering from the lack of God's leaders. The world is in agony awaiting the leadership of God through the people of God. We must not give up, and we cannot abdicate our duty. There is a way forward, but local churches must pursue this endeavor with diligence and determination. Our churches must preach and teach this conviction until our cultures bleed it. But we cannot stop there. Our passion must turn to action through thoughtful constructs.

Perhaps as you are reading this book, you yourself are in a situation like Quitter Community Church; the dream and conviction of developing world-changing leaders has been assigned to legend and mythology. Or maybe you are in a context like Church of the Flywheel; you have systems without a culture, systems without an identity. Or maybe you resonate with the people at Talk Louder Community Church; there are no constructs to undergird all the messages.

There is no doubt that the work of leadership development is hard. But it is no mere work of fiction . . . God's Church was designed to lead. To develop leaders, you must have a strong *conviction*, a healthy *culture*, and simple *constructs*. We are going to walk through all three in the following chapters. Let's go . . .