

The Church Leadership Development Series:

CHURCH LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK



GREAT
COMMISSION
COLLECTIVE

Church Leadership Development Framework

INTRODUCTION

The Church Leadership Development Framework¹ is the philosophical and methodological response to the theological foundation of church leadership found in the paper, *Toward A Theology of Church Leadership*.² The purpose of this paper is to outline a framework for developing Gospel-centered leaders in the local church through an intentional process of making, maturing, and multiplying leaders that ultimately results in elder-qualified men. The major sections of this paper are: Gospel-Centered Leadership, The Partnership Plan, Overview of the 4 Levels, Leader Profiles, Leader Qualities, Training Considerations, and Conclusion.

GOSPEL-CENTERED LEADERSHIP

What is gospel-centered leadership? Leadership is spiritual influence exerted to help others follow Jesus faithfully. In short, leadership becomes gospel-centered when Christ's perfect life, atoning death, and life-giving resurrection forms the center, source, and power for helping people change. In this context, it is church leadership that ensures that the gospel is the theological center for the church's leadership, preaching, and ministries—all aspects of the church's life. In sum, "The cross alone is our theology."³

The problem is that many people in the church don't know or understand the gospel. Bridges declares, "The reality of present-day Christendom is that most professing Christians actually know very little of the gospel, let alone understand its implications for their day-to-day lives. My perception is that most of them know just enough gospel to get inside the door of the kingdom. They know nothing of the unsearchable riches of Christ."⁴

So, gospel-centered leaders live in such a way that the gospel is the organizing principle for everything they do. In other words, gospel-centered leaders are captivated by the person and work of Jesus and live with gospel integrity as stewards of the gospel (1 Cor 4:1-7), servants of Christ (1 Cor 4:8-13), and standard-bearers for others (1 Cor 4:14-21).

What does this understanding imply? First, leadership development in the church is an extension of discipleship. This means that the church has an intentional process of making, maturing, and multiplying leaders from disciples of Jesus Christ. Second, character is the starting place for leader development and is the quintessential quality for leaders. This means that the church must be committed to the biblical life-on-life model for leader development using coaches and apprentices. Third, faithfulness and fruitfulness are not mutually exclusive

This paper is the result of a collaborative effort of a team of lead pastors in the Great Commission Collective working together over six months. This team includes Brian Bement, John Crabtree, Josh de Koning, Kent Dresdow, Ian Hales, Jon Kelly, Earl Marshall, Andy Snider, and Jeff Terrell.

¹ The Church Leadership Development Framework is referred to as *The Framework* throughout the remainder of this paper. *The Framework* is adapted from the book, *Designed to Lead*. Eric Geiger and Kevin Peck, *Designed to Lead* (Nashville, TN: B&H Publishing Group, 2016).

² Earl Marshall, *Toward A Theology of Church Leadership*, paper, 2021.

³ Martin Luther, *The Cross Before Me* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook, 2019), 25.

⁴ Jerry Bridges, *The Gospel for Real Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002), 15.

when it comes to leader development. This means that assessments are needed for each level of leadership. Fourth, context is critical for a church which means that churches must hold fast to the principles of leadership development but contextualize the practices to fit their location and culture. Finally, leadership development takes into account the leadership gifting identified in the Scriptures. This means that since the Holy Spirit supplies leadership gifts, those gifts must be identified, nurtured, sharpened, and deepened.

In sum, we believe that gospel-centered leadership is essential for today's church leaders because it most closely represents the purpose for New Testament leadership, it moves people towards gospel application, and it forms a biblical response to the overwhelming use of secular business practices in the church to the neglect of the gospel application for church leadership. The next section focuses on what we call the GCC Partnership Plan.

THE PARTNERSHIP PLAN

Generally speaking, the organizational context for *The Framework* is the Great Commission Collective, which is a family of churches on mission together to plant churches and strengthen leaders. This group of churches partner together to see healthy elder-teams plant and build flourishing churches. Specifically, these churches are committed to the *Partnership Plan* which helps each church to focus on four areas of multiplication: Discipleship Pathway, Leadership Pipeline, Planter Preparation, and Church Planting.

The focus in this paper is on the section of the *Partnership Plan* called Leadership Pipeline, that develops and multiplies leaders through an ongoing process of identification, equipping, and deployment. This process allows leaders to: 1) identify, invite, equip, and establish qualified men for elder teams; 2) define key leadership roles and role descriptions for the local church; 3) identify and invite potential leaders into the development process; 4) equip leaders for essential leadership skills and for target roles; 5) empower leaders for their ministry roles; and, 6) evaluate leaders' effectiveness and ongoing development potential.

The next section of the paper provides an overview of the four levels of leadership in this leadership development framework. In each level there is a description of both the function and model for that particular level of leadership.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE FOUR LEVELS OF LEADERSHIP

The four levels of leadership in *The Framework* are:

Level 1: Lead Self	People serving as ushers, greeters, nursery workers, etc.
Level 2: Lead People	People serving as mentors and group leaders.
Level 3: Lead Leaders	People serving as deacons, coaches, and ministry team leaders.
Level 4: Lead Local Church	People serving as sr. / lead pastors and elders.

The corresponding models of leadership for each level are: Spiritual, Servant, Strategic, and Shepherd. This section provides an overview of each level and corresponding model (See Appendix A).

LEVEL 1: LEADING SELF

Leading self means living under the leadership of Christ
(People serving as ushers, greeters, nursery workers, etc)

These leaders have a healthy understanding of their *identity in Christ* which means they are not performance driven; their first audience is Christ. This significant application of the gospel is clearly stated by Horton, who says, "The Gospel is not just a series of facts to which we yield our assent but a dramatic narrative that replots our identity."⁵ If leaders don't understand who they are in Christ, then they will try to impress people. The difference this makes is that when leaders understand their identity is in Christ, they are captured by the idea of making a difference in the Kingdom rather than merely trying to please people.

This understanding protects leaders from wrongly defining success or seeking to find their identity in a position. It protects them from wrong expectations about leadership and it promotes healthy expectations. Remember, all we are is because of the grace of God. The lesson is this: leaders who seek identity in the human trappings of leadership will fail to lead others toward Christ. So, the goal in self-leadership is for these leaders to present themselves mature in Christ as spiritual leaders.

Spiritual leadership is the model for level 1 and is defined as striving to know, love, and look like Christ in order to serve others by helping them know, love, and look like Christ (Col 1:28). It starts in the *heart* and is an extension of obedience in the life of a Christ-follower. In other words, leadership is an extension of discipleship, because it flows from a person's *identity* in Christ. As a result of knowing who they are in Christ, these leaders learn to lead self, work well with others, and display a willingness to be discipled and developed.

Spiritual leadership, therefore, is the result of a vertical relationship with God through the gospel that has horizontal implications in life. It takes us deeper into holiness and sends us further into mission. Thus, spiritual leaders are moving from where they are to where they need to be in Christ, exerting influence to draw others into a deeper knowledge of God through Christ by the Spirit, and following Jesus in such a way as to help others follow Jesus.

How does spiritual leadership shape the way I lead myself? *Self-awareness* is one of the most important features of leadership. Spurgeon said the foundation of leadership is learning to master the inner life. Therefore, level 1 leaders cannot teach what they do not know and they cannot lead where they will not go.⁶ It informs character, convictions, and calling. It gives these leaders the content for which they are responsible to deliver to others and helps them obey "all that he has commanded" (Matt 28:19–20). The lesson is not the coopting of therapeutic thinking that begins with the importance of one's self. The lesson is that spiritual leaders must first learn to be faithful *followers* before they can influence others in a similar direction. Self-control and self-discipline are two foundational pieces to a person living under the leadership of Christ.

So, self-awareness is a biblical response to God's grace in the lives of leaders (Rom 12:3). The knowledge of ourselves is connected to wisdom as Calvin states, "God's truth, therefore, agrees with the common judgment of all mortals, that the second part of wisdom consists in the knowledge of ourselves."⁷ This means that leaders are: growing in their understanding

⁵ Michael Horton in Jared Wilson, *Gospel Wakefulness* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2011), 216

⁶ Unknown source.

⁷ John Calvin, *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, Book 1* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1960), 243.

of their emotions and moods (1 Cor 13:12); allowing God to test and refine them (Ps 26:2); learning how they affect others around them (Lam 3:40); growing in their knowledge of limitations and assessment of their strengths by faith (Rom 12:3; 1 John 1:8); and, growing in their confidence in God's redeeming work in them, exercising patience in their progress (2 Tim 1:6–7).⁸ Three actions necessary for leaders at this level of leadership are: 1) die: sacrifice to make a difference; 2) walk: embrace the Father's love; and 3) plan: design life according to God's purpose.⁹

In sum, it is important to remember that our understanding of self-awareness is based on what Christ has done and not on what we must do. When it comes to embracing the Father's love, we know the Father's love because of what we see on the cross (1 John 3). It is helping people understand the ultimate display of his love in the gospel of Jesus Christ.

LEVEL 2: LEADING PEOPLE

Leading people means leading others to love and serve Christ
(People serving as mentors and group leaders)

Servant leadership is the model for level 2 leadership and is defined as Christlike leadership. It is seeking to lead others by placing their needs above our own and striving to build them up in Christ. It is contrasted by other forms of leadership that places the interests of the leaders above those under their care or authority. It is not using others to make personal progress, but sacrificially helping others in order to see them make progress (Mark 10, John 13, Phil 2).

Servant leadership is an approach that seeks to follow Christ's example to achieve the same objective as Christ. Practically speaking it sees the end game of discipleship as the goal of Christ-likeness and seeks to contribute to that development with a mindset that reflects that of Christ (Philippians 2:1–10). Jesus influenced other people by serving them sacrificially for their good.

Some evidences of giving our life as a sacrifice for others are through a process of growing hospitality, learning to point people to Scripture, sacrificing for others for their good and growth, emulating Christ's servanthood, and understanding that *humility* is at the core of servanthood. Jesus descended into greatness on the ladder of humility (Phil 2:5). A person who is learning to lead people works through others and seeks to lead them to serve Christ.

How does servant leadership shape the way I lead others? Jesus supplies wisdom for servant leaders when he says everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted (Luke 14:8–11). He turned the understanding of leadership on its head because people who desired leadership then, as now, clamored to sit at the head tables. Wilkes declares, "It is a myth that those who sit at head tables are somehow more important than those who serve in the kitchen. Head tables have replaced the *towel and wash basin* as symbols of leadership among God's people. But, submission to God and to the divine mission for your life is the first step to servant leadership. You will never become a servant leader until you first become servant to the Leader."¹⁰

⁸ Scott Thomas, *The Gospel Shaped Leader* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press, 2021), 12.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 12

¹⁰ C. Gene Wilkes, *Jesus on Leadership* (Nashville: LifeWay Press, 1998), 13,14, 22.

So, level 2 leaders must realize that they are in a position for the gospel benefit of others first. Practically, when leaders fulfill the role of servant leaders, they are driven by the growth of others. This should contribute to patience, innovative approaches to leadership, the way they respond to challenges and barriers, and the like. Paul writes in Philippians 2:3–4, “Do nothing out of selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.”

When leaders focus their lives on serving others, it prevents them from using others for their own selfish interests and allows them to stay focused on their God-given role of building up the saints for the work of the ministry. It reorients them away from asking about how others can benefit the leader and toward how the leader can benefit others. Servant leaders ask, “How can I help/serve you?” Self-sacrifice includes working to create margin in life, reaching out to others even when it’s inconvenient, checking-in with others, being patient with results (people don’t get it right away), moving in orientation away from “how can others benefit me?” toward “how can I benefit others?”

Why is humility so essential to servant leadership? Because it delivers us back to gospel-application. We follow a Savior who emptied himself, taking on the form of a servant and demonstrated humility to the point of death (Phil 2:5–9). To be a servant leader is simply another way to say gospel-leadership. Without humility leaders lead out of self-interest and ambition. In Mark 10:35–45 and John 13:15–17 Jesus showed us the model and calls us to follow His lead.

Without humility, God can have no place in a person’s life because personal ego becomes their god. The difference between pride and authentic confidence is the source: God grants confidence to those who trust him. Divinely directed confidence is the certainty that God has created us, bought us through the death of his Son, and called us out to join the worldwide mission of hope. In John 13:3, we read that Jesus knew that God put all things under his power, he knew he had come from God, and he trusted that he was returning to God.¹¹

The gospel changes lives when people demonstrate humility in repentance and they believe in the person and work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Not only does their status with God change (Rom 8:16–7), but their life in Christ looks different than it did before (Eph 1:20–22; 2:6). How does this translate into our lives as a leader? It means we can trust that God has provided everything we need to carry out his mission through our lives. God has empowered us with the Holy Spirit, the authority of the name of Jesus, and the assurance that all our needs will be met.

Unhealthy use of authority and power, which are components of leadership, have the potential to produce pride in a sinful fallen heart. It is easy then for those in power to abuse others for their own interests. The nature of servant leadership requires humility in order to truly serve and overcome this unhealthy tendency, and humility is a sign of *relational awareness*.

Relational awareness is a response to the gospel in the lives of servant leaders (Gal 5:14). This means that leaders are thoughtful of others around them and compassionate about their needs (Matt 9:35–38); listening to others as an act of love and can discern their unspoken actions, attitudes, and emotions (1 John 4:1; Phil 1:9–10); and, seeking to communicate with straightforwardness, transparency, and honesty (Matt 5:37)¹² Three actions that accompany this level of leadership are: 1) love: love the people and church of Jesus; 2) serve: lead with humility; and, 3) speak: communicate with grace-filled candor.¹³

¹¹ Ibid., 43, 131

¹² Thomas, 12

¹³ Ibid., 12

In sum, as we move from level 2 to level 3 leadership—from small group leaders that are deacon qualified to leaders of leaders that are elder qualified—it is important to recognize a shift in the perception of these leaders that are called to this level of leadership. A pervasive culture of cynicism that exudes a spirit of democratic equality has emerged, meaning that everyone should be equal, even in talent and position. The idea that a person feels called to lead or occupying a position of leadership incites immediate suspicions and we must step up to this challenge and teach that God calls people to lead who have faith, cast vision, oppose false doctrine, and act courageously for gospel good.

LEVEL 3: LEADING LEADERS

Leading leaders means developing leaders to lead others
(People serving as deacons, coaches, and ministry team leaders)

Strategic leadership is the model for level 3 leadership and is defined as focusing on influencing other leaders with alignment to mission in their area of ministry. It is an approach that intentionally identifies both the end goal as well as the strategic process for achieving it. These leaders are constantly thinking about Jesus and how he multiplies his life of *integrity* in others. As such, this leadership is influence exerted to coach leaders and coordinate their efforts to lead others in the context of the church's vision and priorities.

How does strategic leadership shape the way I lead leaders? Strategic leaders desire to multiply their lives of *integrity* in the lives of others. Jesus mentored/coached his followers to bear the fruit of leadership development by replicating his life in their lives. The point is that Jesus gave his leadership away by practicing certain habits with his apprentice leaders. They in turn were able to prioritize those reproducible strategies that catalyze sustainability of leadership development over time in their apprentices.

Why is *integrity and priority* an issue when it comes to strategic leadership? First, it contributes to the character over charisma resolve. The greatest concern is that leaders become too *task oriented* rather than *people oriented*. Second, it also puts leaders in a good starting position to lead others to imitate Christ (1 Cor 11:1). These leaders must be submissive to Christ and the vision and priorities of the elders and pastor of the church, rather than carving out their own personal identity or following in the church. Third, although zeal is not always linked with pace and often the notion of being strategic is tied too closely with tasks, commitment to hard work, zeal, and pace mark this level of leadership (Romans 12 - working with zeal). But if leaders at this level are not committed to a healthy pace it will be difficult for them to lead in a healthy way. Zeal must include patience and wisdom, because often a lack of pace is a revelation of potential character issues (e.g., laziness or workaholism).

Leadership at this level is driven by *hina*, the Greek preposition meaning purpose or result ("so that," "in order to"). It helps these leaders to move their thinking from a "defender" to a "builder" mentality. They begin thinking "mission" a lot more, focusing on the strategic element of giving leadership away. This shift in mindset includes the flexibility of taking risks (within certain boundaries) and nurturing leadership in people without being too confining.

Further, it helps them to start thinking more intentionally about multiplication in their leadership, because these are the people who are transmitting to other leaders who transmit to other leaders (2 Tim 2:2). At this point written documentation becomes an important skill.

The point is that these leaders lead others with intentionality, clarity, and alignment to the overall vision and mission of the church and ministry area within the bounds of God's Word. All of this requires a measure of *self-management* in order to manage others.

In sum, *self-management* is a response to the gospel in the lives of shepherd leaders (Eph 4:22–24). This means that Level 3 leaders are submitting their hearts, soul, and mind (Matt. 22: 37), wills, and emotions to the desires of the Spirit and not to the desires of the flesh (Gal 5:16–26); being continually shaped by the gospel through the power of the Spirit (Phil 1:27; Rom 8:4–11); confessing their sins and acknowledging their weaknesses (1 John 1:7–9); striving for holiness and the renewing of their minds that leads to transformed lives (Rom 12:1–2); and, patient in their hardships and constant in their prayers (Rom 12:12)¹⁴ Three actions taken by Level 3 leaders are: 1) stand: pursue integrity always; 2) learn: explore new ideas; and, 3) rest: commit to a sabbath.¹⁵

LEVEL 4: LEADING LOCAL CHURCH

Leading the local church means overseeing the church with other leaders
(People serving as sr./lead pastors and elders)

At this level, we are using the term *Shepherd Leadership* to identify pastors and elders that have the responsibility to oversee and lead the local church. Leadership at this level and is defined as knowing, feeding, guiding, and protecting the flock. It is influence exerted to nourish the whole church and it places an emphasis on oversight of the whole flock. So, these leaders nourish and encourage the body, and build structures that move the whole church toward a goal.

These leaders model this level of leadership after God who was the Overseer of His people Israel, and Christ who laid down his life for His sheep. Shepherd leadership takes into account the nurturing aspect of leadership (taking into account the needs and growth of those being led) as well as the objectives aspect of leadership (cultivating leaders of leaders) and requires the *multiplication* of leaders.

Biblical leaders understand the *principle of plurality* and share their lives and leadership with other people. Jesus is called the Great Shepherd and his sheep know his voice (Jn 10). He was able to guide and protect his people because they knew him, trusted him, and believed what he said. A shepherd leader works through ministry leaders and creates a *leadership development culture* in the church.

Why is *plurality* the core leadership principle at this level of leadership?¹⁶ Simply put this team of leaders share the load and seek collective wisdom for complex leadership issues. Theologically, it is helpful to remember that the leaders at this level in the churches of the New Testament consistently addressed this principle and functioned within the context of plurality. Practically, inherent within the concept of plurality is the idea of maturing and multiplication. The point is that pastors and elders lead together, each bringing their own unique set of skills and gifts to leading the church. In this model the Lead Pastor/Sr. Pastor is not the president, king, or dictator; he does not have all authority alone. Authority in the local church has been delegated by Christ to the eldership. The Sr. Pastor plays the role of first among equals.

¹⁴ Ibid., 13

¹⁵ Ibid., 13

¹⁶ Dave Harvey, *The Plurality Principle* (Wheaton: Crossway, 2021).

Plurality is required because of the co-existing roles of Sr. Pastor and elders, therefore, there is a need to work through plurality because of the need to make decisions at the level of equals in responsibility and role. Unification in qualification means that plurality necessarily comes from the equality of the elder role. This means there is a shared responsibility in the plurality to identify, train, and deploy other level 4 leaders.

How does shepherd leadership shape the way level 4 leaders lead the local church? First, it reorients leaders to Christ, reminding them of how He is their example and the ultimate provider, protector and guide for His sheep. As a result, it shapes the manner in which leaders lead (Ps 23), because now the *motivation* to lead is true love, care, and compassion rather than a selfish, domineering, and impatient attitude. It also reminds leaders of their own *accountability* to God to whom they will one day give an account.

Second, leaders still must lead by example, building on the previous three levels of leadership. The desire of these leaders will be wanting to see others grow and succeed as leaders and disciple-makers. It is not about building a platform for the leaders or their ministries, but for serving the purposes of Christ by the power of the Spirit in community with the saints and in plurality with other leaders.

Third, the emphasis at this level of leadership is on guiding, leading, and feeding the flock entrusted to overseers toward, under, and in the manner of Christ. Leaders at Level 4 are elders. Their hearts at this level are guided by clear elder principles and the character of Christ as the ultimate shepherd of their souls. Each of these leaders are contributing to their own *relational integrity* as well as to that of the others in the plurality.

In sum, *relational integrity* is a response to the gospel in the lives of level 4 leaders (Eph 4:1–3). Level 4 leaders apply biblical wisdom in relational circumstances (James 1:5); develop other people to build up the church (Eph 4:11, 16); resolve relational conflicts immediately and biblically (Phil 4:2); reconcile broken relationships immediately and biblically (Matt 5:23–24; 18:15; Rom 12:18); and, build relationships to accomplish goals (Heb 10:24–25)¹⁷ Four actions taken by Level 4 leaders are: 1) guide: relate as family; 2) teach: develop other leaders; 3) yoke: grow meaningful friendships; and, 4) multiply: multiply the church.¹⁸

The four levels of leadership help leaders to use common language as they develop other leaders in the church. This part of *The Framework* provides a picture of the progression of leadership in the church. The following section begins to construct leadership profiles for each level of leadership along with their corresponding roles.

LEADER PROFILES

What is a church leadership profile? Simply put it is a way to begin to see and understand the responsibilities and roles of various levels of leadership (See Appendix A). The following sections explain the profiles according to each of the four levels.

Level 1: Leading Self

The core leadership responsibility at this level is to serve others. Some examples of roles include ushering, greeting, working in the nursery, and the like. These leaders are growing in their leadership and the fruit of the Spirit is evident in their lives. These leaders are apprentices that submit to mentoring leadership.

¹⁷ Ibid., 13

¹⁸ Ibid., 13

Level 2: Leading People

At the core of a level 2 leader's responsibilities is leading a group of people. This means that a plausible role of this level leader is small group leader who is deacon-qualified. This person is a leader and teacher that leads the group to maturity in Christ. Inherent in this leadership role is care for people in the group.

Level 3: Leading Leaders

The core responsibility of strategic leaders is leading other leaders that includes deacons, small group leaders, and ministry team leaders. The primary role of these leaders is being a coach who is tested in deacon qualifications but not tested in elder qualifications (The primary difference being not enough time has elapsed to be an elder).

Level 4: Leading Local Church

The leadership responsibility of a level 4 shepherd leader is to lead the local church and the corresponding roles include Sr./Lead Pastors and Elders. These leaders are men that are tested elder qualified (1 Tim 3:1–7; Titus 1:1–9; 1 Pet 5:1–4). A major responsibility of these leaders is the overall care function in the church.

The responsibilities and roles provide a snapshot of leader profiles for each level of leadership in *The Framework*. These profiles are important to understand because they serve as a launching pad for a discussion with these leaders about leader qualities for each of the levels of leadership in the church.

LEADER QUALITIES

In this section it is important to understand that these qualities are the non-negotiables for biblical church leadership. The temptation is to begin with leadership competencies, but we do not believe that is the proper starting point. Thus, in this section we ask key questions that help to identify and explain these qualities (See Appendix A).

LEVEL 1: LEADING SELF

As a reminder, *leading self means living under the leadership of Christ*. These are people serving as ushers, greeters, nursery workers, etc. Again, at this level the people have a developing understanding of their identity in Christ and their hearts are being nurtured with the Word of God and relational engagement with their pastor, church leader, mentor, and others. The following qualities are appropriate for this level of leadership.

Character: internal and external progress of Christlike qualities being formed in a leader's life as evidenced in Scripture (Gal 5; 1 Tim 3; Titus 1; Phil 2).

- Gospel integrity and clarity, and fruit is evident.
- Personal integrity is valued.
- Growing dependence upon Jesus (humility, teachability, and submission).
- Service is a lifestyle.

Conviction: a deeply held gospel-grounded belief about what is true and right that impacts how an individual thinks, speaks, and lives.

- Hunger for deeper knowledge and application of God's Word.
- Courage to make disciples that make disciples.
- Takes initiative in following Jesus and other leaders.
- Dependence on the Holy Spirit to follow Jesus and serve.

Chemistry: interaction with and relationship to people, leaders, philosophy, and mission of the church.

- Unity with people, leaders, philosophy, and mission of the church.
- Affinity for certain leaders and ministries.
- Aptitude in specific serving opportunities.

Capacity: a personal availability and willingness to serve, study, develop and lead self and people.

- Gospel application.
- Personal availability to serve.
- Willingness to get involved and do ministry.
- Sacrifice to become an apprentice to a mentor.

Competency: the skills necessary to serve and lead.

- Identify and develop skills to execute a task.
- Suitability and fitness for working with others.
- Discern and name a problem.
- Receive direction on how to solve the problem.

In sum, level 1 leaders express in concrete ways their love for the least of these, submission to church leaders, and deep engagement in the church community.

LEVEL 2: LEADING PEOPLE

Remember, *leading people means leading others to serve Christ*. These are people serving as mentors and group leaders. Leaders at this level serve Christ by picking up a towel and wash basin, serving others as servant leaders. The following leader qualities are necessary qualities of level 2 leaders.

Character: internal and external progress of Christlike qualities being formed in a leader's life as evidenced in Scripture (Gal 5; 1 Tim 3; Titus 1; Phil 2).

- Gospel integrity and clarity, and fruit is evident.
- Deacon qualifications are evident.
- Openness for personal evaluation from others (accountability to a leadership team).
- Influences others to grow in Christlikeness.
- Demonstrates a spirit of humility.

Conviction: a deeply held gospel-grounded belief about what is true and right that impacts how an individual thinks, speaks, and lives.

- Gospel-grounded belief about God, Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit.
- Convinced of the mission and attributes of the church.
- Growing in understanding and belief of biblical doctrines.

Chemistry: interaction with and relationship to people, leaders, philosophy, and mission of the church.

- Unity with people in the group.
- Affinity with coaches.
- Aptitude in group dynamics.

Capacity: a personal availability and willingness to serve, study, develop and lead self and people.

- Gospel application.
- Lead people to apply the gospel in all areas of life.
- Help people become Christlike in accountability, decisions, insights, and questions.
- Provide motivation, observation, feedback, and evaluation.

Competency: the skills necessary to serve and lead.

- Initiate tasks.
- Work through others to accomplish the work.
- Problem solver.
- Give direction using clear communication so people understand.

LEVEL 3: LEADING LEADERS

As a reminder, *leading leaders means developing leaders to lead others*. These are people serving as deacons, coaches, and ministry team leaders. These strategic leaders both direct and correct other leaders using the Word of God and their leadership encouragement. The following qualities are found in level 3 leaders.

Character: internal and external progress of Christlike qualities being formed in a leader's life as evidenced in Scripture (Gal 5; 1 Tim 3; Titus 1; Phil 2).

- Gospel integrity and clarity, and fruit is evident.
- Tested in deacon qualifications.
- Non-tested in elder qualifications (in terms of time as a pattern).
- Perseveres in faith.
- Daily pursues Christ.

Conviction: a deeply held gospel-grounded belief about what is true and right that impacts how an individual thinks, speaks, and lives.

- Strong belief about the necessity of multiplying leaders.
- Apply the gospel in storms that come in many forms.
- Affirmation and evidence of calling.
- Overwhelming sense of mission.

Chemistry: interaction with and relationship to people, leaders, philosophy, and mission of the church.

- Unity with people leading ministry teams.
- Affinity with team leaders.
- Aptitude in team dynamics.

Capacity: a personal availability and willingness to serve, study, develop and lead self and people.

- Gospel application.
- Provide gospel coaching in a leader's personal, spiritual, and missional life.
- Influence ministry through other leaders.
- Consistent pattern of learning and growing as a leader.

Competency: the skills necessary to serve and lead.

- Identify the tasks needed to accomplish the goal (implement direction).
- Work through others.
- Synthesize problems.
- Craft and deliver clear communication.

In sum, strategic leadership is essential for sustaining strategies, systems, and structures for ministry areas of the church. level 3 leaders provide healthy missional intentionality to group leaders and ministry leaders of the church.

LEVEL 4: LEADING LOCAL CHURCH

It is important to remember that *leading the local church means overseeing the church with other leaders*. These are people serving as lead pastors and elders. God did not intend for one person to take on this enormous responsibility. In the Old Testament, Jethro gave Moses godly advice about shared leadership responsibility and it proved to be beneficial for both Moses and God's people (Ex. 18). The same principle is observed in New Testament churches. The following qualities are important for level 4 leaders.

Character: internal and external progress of Christlike qualities being formed in a leader's life as evidenced in Scripture (Gal 5; 1 Tim 3; Titus 1; Phil 2).

- Gospel integrity, clarity, and fruit is evident.
- Demonstrate tested elder qualifications (1 Tim 3, Titus 1).
- Live above reproach (focus on needs of the plurality and the people).
- Collaboration with the elders to lead and multiply the church.

Conviction: a deeply held gospel-grounded belief about what is true and right that impacts how an individual thinks, speaks and lives.

- Unshakable commitment to the Word of God.
- Courageous, visionary, on watch, looking out ahead, planning, and providing oversight.
- Christ-conviction is the center of life.
- Multiplication of churches.

Chemistry: interaction with and relationship to people, leaders, philosophy, and mission of the church.

- Unity with elders in the plurality.
- Affinity for ministry leaders.
- Aptitude with organizational dynamics.

Capacity: a personal availability and willingness to serve, study, develop and lead self and people.

- Gospel application (master teacher).
- Inspire others.
- Direct others to act.
- Oversee the organization.

Competency: the skills necessary to serve and lead.

- Prioritize tasks based on an understanding of the vision and mission of the church.
- Work through plurality (communicate a clear vision).
- Solve problems through others.
- Set the strategic direction of the church for the future.

These leader qualities distinguish between leaders at various levels of leadership development in the church. The following training considerations are used to determine when it is time for leaders to move to the next level of leadership.

TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS

This section of the paper deals with training considerations that help leaders evaluate where developing leaders are at each level of leadership, and where the church is in terms of leadership development relative to a change strategy in their context. A training tool is provided in Appendix B.

TRAINING CONSIDERATION FOR LEADERS

This sub-section details what training questions are needed for leaders as they develop in their leadership and begin migrating across the various levels of leadership in the church.

LEVEL 1: LEADING SELF

These people serve as ushers, greeters, nursery workers, etc.

What do these leaders need to learn and know at this level?

- Gospel application (Understand the gospel and holistic implications for a Christian life).
- They can do nothing without abiding in Jesus, he is sufficient (John 15).
- How to deal with the tension between faith and fear, generosity and scarcity.
- Find hope and encouragement in troubles to comfort others (2 Cor 1:4; Eph 4:32–5:2).

What do these leaders need to experience at this level?

- Gospel conversations.
- Opportunities to serve.
- Actively committed to the local church, serving others on teams and individually.
- Receive critical input and learn how to be hospitable in the process.

What kind of coaching and mentoring do these leaders need?

- Basic Christian living that includes making decisions, suffering well, repenting, trusting, engaging in edifying relationships, and serving the church.
- Get busy serving others with the gifts the Lord has given you.
- Remember that you are accepted by God as his child and he fully forgives you.
- Set your hope fully on the grace to be revealed at the revelation of Jesus Christ.¹⁹

What does maturation look like at this level? Spiritual maturity is indispensable to good leadership. A plant needs time to take root and come to maturity, and the process can't be hurried. The seed must take root downward before it can bear fruit upward. Bengel says, "novices usually have an abundance of vegetation and are not yet *pruned by the cross*. They must first be tested (1 Tim 3:10).²⁰

- Stable in character and spiritual in outlook.
- Selfless in attitude and enlarged passion for others
- Broadened view of the world
- Deepened convictions.²¹

In sum, the process of maturation includes a clear understanding of how to grow, clear evidence of growth, strong desire to help others grow, taking initiative to grow, and intentionality about the spiritual growth of others.

¹⁹ Ibid., 24-25.

²⁰ J. Oswald Sanders, *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1994), 44.

²¹ Ibid., 44-45

What does multiplication look like?

- Train others to lead (2 Tim 2:2).
- Ask, "What in me can be multiplied?"
- Willing to have leaders multiply their leadership "into" me.
- Track record of discipleship is established.

What does transition into level 1 look like?

- Gospel application and conversion is confirmed.
- Commitment to grow in their relationship with God and others.
- Coaches engage these leaders about: the cost of leadership and self-sacrifice (1 John 3:16; Mk 10:44–45; Gal 6:17; 2 Cor 4: 8–11), loneliness (2 Tim 1:15), fatigue (2 Cor 4:16; John 4:6), criticism (1 Cor 4:3–4), rejection, and pressure.²²

What does transition out of this level look like?

- Over time it becomes evident to Level 2 leaders that a person at Level 1 begins to influence others and shows the ability to direct that influence.
- A personal development plan begins to influence the transition from Level 1 to Level 2 leadership.

In sum, these leaders begin to mirror the gospel in their leadership, not just their words. Level 1 leaders that are ready to move to the next level are leaders who do not think they are a big deal, die to self so others can thrive, willing to serve unnoticed, walk with the Lord and invite others along, believe holiness is not old fashioned, and savor the living words of Jesus and repent daily.²³

LEVEL 2: LEADING PEOPLE

These people serve as mentors and group leaders.

What do these leaders need to learn and know at level 2?

- Crisis tests and proves leadership, handle the stress of leading people.
- Leaders solve the problems, bear burdens, find solutions, and win victories.²⁴
- Leaders are aware of their gifting, know how to disciple others.
- Leaders know how to ask good questions and steer conversations.
- Leaders know how to navigate the Word of God.

What do I need to experience at level 2?

- Training in gospel conversations in the context of a group setting.
- Experience opportunities to serve, endure trials, implement spiritual disciplines, and live in community.
- Do some very *menial roles* at the church.
- Opportunities to lead others and receive feedback from leaders.

What kind of coaching/mentoring do I need at level 2?

- Rest as a result of humbling self and learning from Jesus (Matt 11:28).
- Mentor for 2–3 trainees, meet monthly to evaluate handling of group dynamics.
- Receive feedback on application of giftedness in the body of Christ.
- Apply knowledge, learn from experiences, receive encouragement from their coach.

²² Ibid., 40-45, 48, 82, 93-99, 101-107, 109-113, 115-122.

²³ Thomas, 160

²⁴ John MacArthur, *The Book on Leadership* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 2004), 45.

Fourth, what does maturation look like at level 2?

- Gospel-centered lifestyle, faithful, available, submissive, and teachable.
- Focus on objectives, initiating empowerment of people, delegate.
- Demonstrate love for people and the desire to impact them for Christ.
- Move from the *what* to the *why*, from *doing* to *equipping*.
- Identify other leaders.

Fifth, what does multiplication look like at level 2?

- Empowering others to lead in the discipleship of the church.
- Identify, assess, and invest in another potential leader
- Apprenticing potential leader for a leadership role.
- Maintain consistent touchpoints with their leader overseeing them.

What does transition look like “into” level 2 leadership?

- Leaders learn to lead by learning to follow, apprentice as a group leader.
- Ask “What are you doing to obey Christ’s call to mission in your life?”
- Take up Jesus’ towel of servanthood to meet the needs of others.
- Know the job description and skills and giftedness for the specific ministry.

What does transition look like “out of” level 2 leadership?

- Demonstrate personal growth in their walk with Christ, consistent faithfulness.
- Move to the role of a coach/mentor of group leaders.
- Display clarity of giftedness, ability to identify other leaders, and have multiplied healthy leaders.
- Commitment to the vision/mission of the church.

In sum, these leaders love the church as Christ loves his bride, do not serve their own interests, radiate the gospel by speaking to others with grace, and lead in love and gentleness.²⁵

LEVEL 3: LEADING LEADERS

These people serve as deacons, coaches, and ministry team leaders.

First, what do I need to learn and know at level 3?

- Gospel application and clarity, and fruit evident.
- Know that storms will come, leadership can be lonely.
- Responses to leadership often follow responses of people in Athens (Acts 17:32–34).
- Follow the example of Christ (Philippians 2:1–10; 1 Peter 2:21–25).

What do I need to experience at level 3?

- Gospel conversations in the context of teams.
- Lead others to impactful and effective leadership, demonstrate/evaluate effectiveness.
- Opportunities to teach, execute leadership in a case study scenario, solve problems.
- Experience time with the elders of the church.

What kind of coaching / mentoring do I need at level 3?

- Training in gospel application in the context of team ministry.
- Case Studies in groups.
- Train leaders on how to evaluate the progress of other leaders and teams.
- Bring in someone who is “creative” as a coach/mentor to help bring Level 3 leaders to an even better place of leadership (encouraging creativity with them).

²⁵ Thomas, 160

What does maturation look like at level 3?

- Effectiveness in leading with “so that” in mind.
- Taking criticism with humility and also not being derailed.
- Work through difficult seasons and difficult people.
- Resilience through disappointment revealing mission commitment.

What does multiplication look like at level 3?

- Identify leaders who are able to lead effectively.
- Identify various aptitudes of leaders that are firm in their conviction to lead.
- Identify leaders that demonstrate a calling to grow as leaders.
- Identify leaders that demonstrate a calling to full time ministry.

What does transition look like “into” level 3 leadership?

- Recommendations from others about leaders effective in leading others.
- Identify leaders that communicate with clarity.
- Identify leaders that attempt God-sized goals that inspire others in their faith.
- Identify leaders that enliven others to rejoice in the good news of Jesus.²⁶

What does transition look like “out of” level 3?

- Leaders who demonstrate aptitude in leading others.
- Leaders who demonstrate an insatiable desire to grow and an interest in engaging at an even deeper level in the development of leadership in the local church.
- Leaders who have a strong theology of the local church.
- Leaders who aspire to elder or staff who are tested and confirmed in character.

LEVEL 4: LEADING LOCAL CHURCH

These people serve as lead pastors and elders.

What do I need to learn and know at level 4?

- Gospel integrity, clarity, and fruit is evident.
- How to function in plurality and lead in relation to other elders and pastors.
- Theology, ability to refute, correct, and build up.
- Skills of encouraging, communicating, and inspiring a whole organization.

What do I need to experience at level 4?

- Gospel conversation and application in the context of elder meetings.
- Ongoing fruit of accumulated faithfulness as a plurality.
- Relationships with other pluralities with a willingness to learn from them.
- Tools to cultivate shepherding growth amongst the plurality.

What kind of coaching / mentoring do I need at level 4?

- Participation in cohorts of pluralities, coaching from outside leaders.
- Guidance about risk-tolerance, perspective from others who push them forward.
- Touch points with leaders with extraordinarily different contexts and perspectives.
- Church size dynamics training, handling complexity in an organization.

What does maturation look like at level 4?

- Faithful fulfillment of leader responsibilities and handle a variety of complex issues.
- Commitment to continue learning and growing in all their relationships.
- Patterns of shepherding at both an individual heart and congregational level.
- Understanding that maturation is tied to multiplication.

²⁶ Thomas, 160

What does multiplication look like at level 4?

- Investing in other leaders as they raise up future elders.
- Rhythms of health for elders with growing intensity of multiplication at this level.
- Ensure mechanisms are in place to cultivate health of a plurality.
- Cultivate healthy self-care.

What does transition look like “into” level 4 leadership?

- Intentional training, development, and mentoring.
- Official installation and recognition.
- Demonstrate patterns of healthy rhythms and verifiable fruit in the first three levels.
- Assessment and training leading to ordination/installation.

What does transition look like “out of” level 4 leadership?

- Hiatus, sabbatical, retirement, or disqualification.
- Develop a healthy transition plan, healthy conversations (counsel) with the other elders.
- Go to glory.
- Declining aspiration to continue, adjust to a different season of life.

TRAINING CONSIDERATIONS FOR THE CHURCH

The following sub-section contains general, contextual, and next steps questions related to the leadership development framework in a given church.

General Questions

- Is the leadership development process formal or informal?
- Is leadership development happening in the church?
- If so, what does it look like and how is it happening?
- If so, how effective is it and what needs to be improved?
- If so, how clearly is it being communicated to the church?
- If not, why not?

Contextual Questions

- What is the age of our church?
- What growth stage of the church are we in?
- What is the health stage of our church?
- What size is our church and what are the church size dynamics?
- What is the psychographic make up of our community?

Next Steps Questions





- How do we implement a leadership development framework in the church?
- Where can we see immediate progress?
- Who do I need to involve in the discussion and implementation?
- What is the change management plan for the church?
- Who can I learn from that is ahead of me in this process?

In sum, training considerations assume a willingness on the part of church leaders to evaluate the effectiveness of identifying, developing, and deploying leaders in the church. It takes great courage and humility to travel the road of assessing the qualitative and quantitative health of the church in this area. But, the eternal significance of the task beckons leaders to step up and make such an analysis and determination.

CONCLUSION

Practically speaking, while this paper does not detail every single *how to* for each of the levels of leadership in the church, it does provide a detailed explanation for each level of leadership. Churches can use this paper to establish a leadership development process in their churches to grow leaders from volunteers to elders. Philosophically speaking, character trumps competencies when it comes to biblical church leadership. This does not suggest that competencies are not important, they are, however they are not all important like character. Leadership development in the church is a hands-on process. Life-on-life is the biblical model for leadership development, which necessitates coaching and mentoring. Assessments are required at each level of leadership development to measure the progress of individuals that are growing through the process, Churches must contextualize the process outlined in this paper, because such as church size and psychographics are important considerations. Churches, therefore, must hold fast to the principles found in this paper while contextualizing the practices.

APPENDIX A

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT FRAMEWORK		LEADER QUALITIES				
		Character: Observed progression of Christlike qualities being formed in a leader's life as evidenced in Scripture (Gal 5; 1 Tim 3; Titus 1, Phil 2)	Conviction: Deeply held belief about what is true and right that impacts how an individual thinks, speaks and lives	Chemistry: Interaction with and relationship to people, leaders, philosophy and mission of the church	Capacity: Availability and willingness to serve, study, develop and lead self and people	Competency: Skills necessary to serve and lead
LEADER LEVELS	LEADER PROFILE					
LEVEL 1 Lead Self Living under the leadership of Christ  <i>Spiritual Leadership</i>	RESPONSIBILITIES serve people ROLES usher, greeter, etc.	FOLLOWER	CHILD	INDIVIDUAL	APPRENTICE	EXECUTE TASKS
LEVEL 2 Lead People Leading others to serve Christ  <i>Servant Leadership</i>	RESPONSIBILITIES lead people ROLES small group leader	INFLUENCER	YOUTH	GROUP	MENTOR	INITIATE TASKS
LEVEL 3 Lead Leaders Developing leader to lead others  <i>Strategic Leadership</i>	RESPONSIBILITIES lead leaders ROLES coach, ministry team leader, deacon	ENCOURAGER	ADULT	TEAM/MINISTRY	COACH	IDENTIFY TASKS
LEVEL 4 Lead Local Church Overseeing church with other leaders  <i>Shepherd Leadership</i>	RESPONSIBILITIES lead local church ROLES senior pastor / elder	INSTRUCTOR	FATHER	ORGANIZATION	TEACHER	PRIORITIZE TASKS

(Note: adapted from Geiger and Peck, Designed to Lead)

APPENDIX B

TRAINING QUESTIONS

Leader Questions for each level

- What do I need to learn and know?
- What do I need to experience?
- What kind of coaching/mentoring is needed?
- What does maturation look like?
- What does multiplication look like?
- What does transition into look like?
- What does transition out of look like?

General Questions

- Is the leadership development process formal or informal?
- Is leadership development happening in the church?
- If so, what does it look like and how is it happening?
- If so, how effective is it and what needs to be improved?
- If so, how clearly is it being communicated to the church?
- If not, why not?

Contextual Questions

- What is the age of our church?
- What growth stage of the church are we in?
- What is the health stage of our church?
- What size is our church and what are the church size dynamics?
- What is the psychographic make up of our community?

Next Steps Questions

- How do we implement a leadership development framework in the church?
- Where can we see immediate progress?
- Who do I need to involve in the discussion and implementation?
- What is the change management plan for the church?
- Who can I learn from that is ahead of me in this process?

APPENDIX C

RESOURCES

The primary text used in this paper for understanding the concept of leadership pipeline is: Geiger, Eric and Peck, Kevin. *Designed to Lead* (Nashville: B&H Publishing), 2016.

The Gospel

Bridges, Jerry. *The Gospel for Real Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress), 2002.

Luther, Martin. *The Cross Before Me* (Colorado Springs: David C. Cook), 2019.

Wilson, Jared. *Gospel Wakefulness* (Wheaton: Crossway), 2011.

Level 1: Leading Self

Essential Texts

Sanders, J. Oswald. *Spiritual Leadership* (Chicago: Moody), 1994.

Other Texts

Alcorn, Randy. *The Purity Principle* (Colorado Springs: Multnomah Books), 2003.

Bounds, E. M. *Power through Prayer* (Chicago: Moody), 2009.

McNeill, John T., ed. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion, 2 Volumes* (Louisville, KY: Westminster Press, 1960), 243

Higbee, Garrett. *Transforming Mutual Care (Level 1)* (Indianapolis: Soul Care Consulting), 2019.

Murray, Andrew. *Humility: The Journey Towards Holiness* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers), 2001.

Powlison, David. *How Does Sanctification Work?* (Wheaton: Crossway), 2017.

Scazzero, Peter. *The Emotionally Healthy Leader* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan), 2015.

Tozer, A. W. *The Pursuit of God* (Bloomington, MN: Bethany House Publishers), 2013.

Level 2: Leading People

Essential Texts

MacArthur, John. *The Book on Leadership* (Nashville: Thomas Nelson), 2004.

Tripp, Paul. *LEAD* (Wheaton: Crossway), 2020.

Other Texts

Bonhoeffer, Dietrich. *Life Together: The Classic Exploration of Christian Community* (New York: HarperOne), 2009.

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Stanley, Paul and Clinton, Robert. *Connecting: The Mentoring Relationships You Need to Succeed in Life* (Colorado Springs: NavPress), 1992.

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Wilkes, C. Gene. *Jesus on Leadership* (Nashville: LifeWay), 1998.

Level 3: Leading Leaders

Essential Texts

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Thomas, Scott. *The Gospel Shaped Leader* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press), 2021.

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- Strauch, Alexander. *Paul's Vision for the Deacons: Assisting the Elders with the Care of God's Church* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth), 2017.

Other Texts

- Bridges, Charles. *The Christian Ministry: With an Inquiry into the Causes of its Inefficiency* (Edinburgh: Banner of Truth), 1959.
- Higbee, Garrett. *Transforming [Coaches] (Level 3)* (Indianapolis: Soul Care Consulting), 2021.
- Marshall, Colin and Payne, Tony. *The Trellis and the Vine* (Youngstown: Matthias Media), 2009.

Level 4: Leading Local Church

Essential Texts

- Harvey, Dave. *Am I Called?* (Wheaton: Crossway), 2012.
- _____ *The Plurality Principle* (Wheaton: Crossway), 2021.

Eldership

- Smyth, P. J. *Elders: Developing Elders and Revitalizing Teams* (Redhill, UK: Advance), 2020.
- Strauch, Alexander. *Biblical Eldership* (Littleton, CO: Lewis and Roth Publishers), 1995.
- Thune, Robert. *Gospel Eldership: Equipping a New Generation of Servant Leaders* (Greensboro, NC: New Growth Press), 2016.

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- Baxter, Richard. *The Reformed Pastor* (Carlisle, PA: Banner of Truth), 1994.
- Carson, D. A. *The Cross and Christian Ministry* (Grand Rapids: Baker), 1993.
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- Peterson, Eugene. *Working with Angels: The Shape of Pastoral Integrity* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans), 1989.
- Tripp, Paul. *Dangerous Calling* (Wheaton: Crossway), 2012.
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