



OpenGate STEP 2022

Session 1 - Getting going in leadership

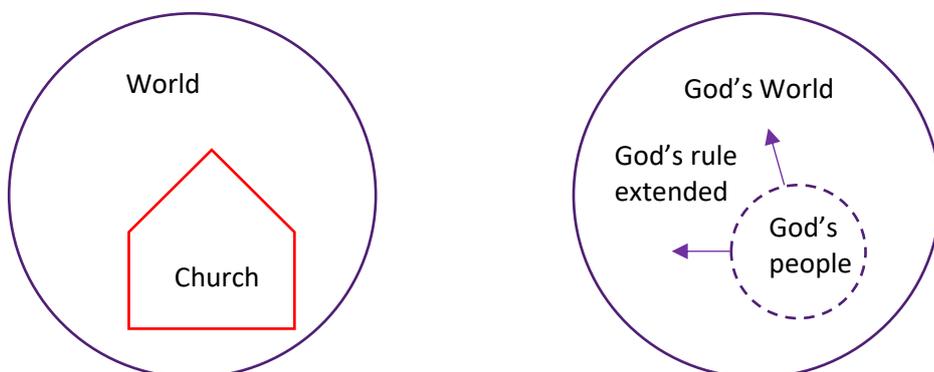
Neil Townsend, 2022

Leadership – what do we mean?

Leadership means different things to different ones of us:

- A workplace leader who doesn't lead very well at all, an inspiring political leader seen on the media.
- Good role model/example in your own life
- Christian leadership from churches you've been in
- Ideas about yourself!

In fact, leadership is a gift from God to release blessing: and lack of leadership is seen as a curse (Judges, 1,2 Kings, 1,2 Chronicles). The call on the people of God is to be a blessing to all nations (Genesis 12.1-3), and the church is to called push back hell (Matthew 16.18-20) – to see the blessing of God in more and more places. And leadership is integral to that. Our highest model in all of this, and in leadership, is Jesus, who taught us to pray to our father, “your kingdom come, your will be done, may it be on earth as it is in heaven.”



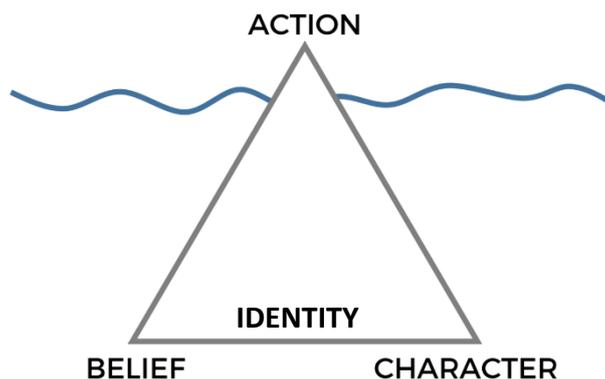
Everyone leads their own life! And so everyone is a leader, and everyone is called to grow in their influence of others for good and for blessing – to grow as leaders. A good vision of the Christian life could be: "my life is to be learning to be a follower of Jesus, following him into his world, and helping do his works". Whether we're in a formal leadership position, or just one of the team in our workplace, we can make a difference by how we live, work and speak.

Pause: Ask yourself, how do you respond when I say “God’s calling you to be a leader”

- I'm excited
- I'm nervous
- I shouldn't be here!
- I help lead in the church, but don't see how that connects to my work
- I am a workplace leader, but don't really see how that connects to my faith
- I see all of every day as an opportunity to lead people to Jesus



Growing in leadership



This diagram of an iceberg floating in the sea helps us think about how we grow holistically. Our *actions* are only the tip of the iceberg. Our *beliefs* (what we think about God), our *identity* (who we truly understand ourselves to be), and our *character* (who we are inside) are actually the more substantial matters, under the surface.

Growing as a Christian leader is not just about learning some skills (different actions), or some theology (different beliefs) but also about growing in character - growing inside. It all matters!

God works with all sorts of people, helping them to deal with the “under the surface” that they might become the leaders God created them to be:

- **Gideon the timid** (coaxed out of his winepress) - Judges 6
 - Gideon's character issue was confidence
 - A theological question ("if God is with us, why has all this happened to us")
 - God also gave him practical training - coaxing him step by step into leadership
- **Paul the persecutor** (stopped in his tracks on the Damascus road) - Acts 9
 - Theological reorientation (the mysterious 3 years in Arabian wilderness Galatians 1:17-18, also 2 Corinthians 11:32-33)
 - Re-calibration of Paul's character, as he comes back quite a different man
- **Moses the murderer** (brought back from the wilderness) - Exodus 3

Moses issue was not *competence* (he'd had a privileged upbringing and education as Pharaoh's adopted grandson) but *confidence* - or we might say, self-doubt. See the dialogue between Moses and God in Exodus 3-4.
- **Joseph the socially inept** – Genesis 37 ff.
 - An instinctive leader who excelled and was promoted.
 - Good view of God's sovereignty: “what you meant for evil, God used for good - the saving on many lives” (Gen 50:20).
 - But had character issues: e.g. he spoke arrogantly to his (older) brothers
 - His character was changed through difficult dealings of God

You can see that God works on people's character in all cases, and also on their beliefs and actions.

In STEP, you'll

- Learn some practical skills, e.g. how to lead people
- Learn some basic theology, e.g. how Holy Spirit helps us lead (understanding God's gracious and infilling help is vital for all of us seeking to grow in leadership)
- Learn about yourself

Question: Are you OK to let God change you, inside, as you do STEP?



What does the Bible say about leaders?

Jesus is our ultimate example of leadership, and so it is fitting to start in Philippians 2:1-11 (ESV):

So if there is any encouragement in Christ, any comfort from love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, ²complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. ³Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility count others more significant than yourselves. ⁴Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. ⁵Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, ⁶who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, ⁷but emptied himself, by taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men. ⁸And being found in human form, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. ⁹Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name that is above every name, ¹⁰so that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, ¹¹and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.

12 key attributes of good leadership, biblically:

1. **Character**, character, character! (1 Timothy 3, 2 Timothy 2:22-25)
2. **Love God** above all things (Matthew 22:34-40)
3. **Vision to understand what is and what could be** (Acts 11.19-26; 13.1-3)
4. **Able to communicate** (Throughout Acts and the letters! - able to envision, instruct & nurture – *family*, not *platform*)
5. **Listen** (to people, Acts 6; to Holy Spirit, Acts 13)
6. **Care** (John 10, shepherd)
7. **Pray** (everywhere in Acts, e.g. 1:14 devoted, 1:24 leadership choice, 4:31 threatened, 10 gentile mission, 13 sending, 16 prison)
8. **Serve** (1 Peter 5:1-5, Luke 16:10-12) – steward/serve/minister are really common words.
9. **Guard** (e.g. 1 Timothy 6:20) – another common word
10. **Develop** others (2 Timothy 2:2)
11. **Parent**: The church is God's family, his household (Ephesians 2:19, 1 Timothy 3:15). Thus, how you run your natural home/family is a key qualification for church leadership, in particular eldership. Leaders are seen as spiritual parents: Parents love, nurture and challenge their children – because they want them to be the best they can be.
12. **Team**: In the New Testament, we see the leaders acting in team in just about every situation. Jesus sent out the disciples two by two (Luke 10.1), and Paul went with Barnabas (Acts 13.1-3)

Think for a moment: What surprised you? What do you want to find out more about? What do you disagree with? What is God challenging you about for home/work/church?



Cooperating with God in growing

2 Corinthians 5.17 tells us that when we came to Christ we became a new creation. The bible calls us to be active in putting off who we were without Christ and putting on who we now really are in Christ: Ephesians 4.22-24, also Romans 13.12 and Colossians 3:9-10.

It is of course true that God saves us (makes us right) by grace, because of the finished work of Jesus of the cross! It's also true that God continues to restore us (make us whole) as we collaborate with him through a life of Christian discipleship.

Christian Author Dallas Willard says: "Grace is not opposed to effort (an action), but to earning (an attitude)"

In other words, there is a part for us play! Your 'old self to put off' might be: self-doubt and inadequacy, poor examples of leadership you've seen in the past, failures in your past, ...

4 growth habits that will help ...

Habit 1: Intentionally grow your God given identity

As a Christian leader, in whatever context, the greatest gift you have to give isn't your leadership skill. It's your spirituality. And so growing and developing your identity in Christ, your sonship of the Father and your flow in Holy Spirit profoundly matters.

So, take time with God and engage with people and places where your identity in Christ will be affirmed and grow, eg. Freedom in Christ. Memorise the bibles of the bible that speak into this.

Habit 2: Asking for God's help

"Help" is a default prayer for Godly elders! An approach to this is called "Examen" is a Latin word that means 'examination of one's thoughts and conduct, to weigh accurately'. This idea was developed by Ignatius Loyola (early 1500s). Commenting on Examen, Pete Greig puts it more simply: "Pay attention to your emotions in order to listen to God":

- Replay / reflect - the day, or the incident, or the emotions
- Rejoice - celebrate, give thanks
- Repent - discern where God wants change
- Reboot

A number of prayer and engaging with God resources are available at: <https://prayercourse.org/toolshed>

Question: How can you make time in your life to stop and listen to God about your inner character?

Habit 3: Mentoring (asking for others' help)

When Jesus started his ministry, he called 12 others to follow him, to be his *disciples*. "Disciple" is the main word used in the NT for followers of Jesus. It speaks of following, a change of life, and obedience.

It also speaks of a personal attachment to Jesus as rabbi. When the gospel activity moves from its Jewish origins to the rest of the world, the Jewish language of rabbi-disciple changes to parent-child - it's the same idea, but different words. Paul refers to his apprentice Timothy as 'his dear Son'.

We come back to it later in the course - but this kind of *personal mentoring/apprenticing/parenting* is what we see in the Bible, and is what we see as an ongoing norm for churches. Especially as you do STEP, we



encourage you to find that sort of spiritual personal trainer. That might be your huddle leader, or an existing personal pastor, or spiritual director, or a good Christian friend.

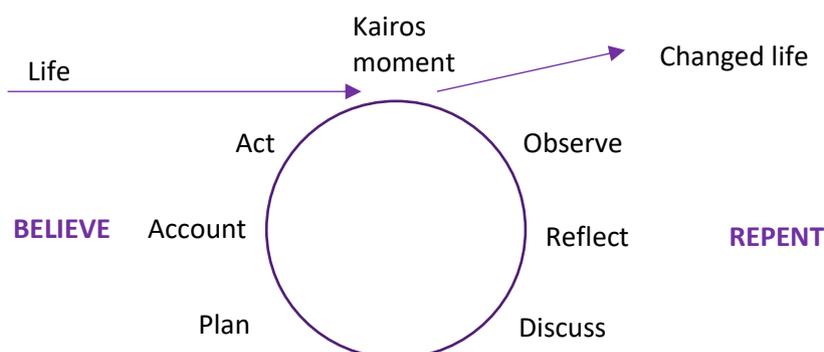
Question: Who is this person for you, or could play this role in your life?

Habit 4: Intentional Community

In Mark 1.14-15, Jesus says "The time has come. The kingdom of God has come near. Repent and believe the good news!"

- "The time has come" Greek word *kairos* for time, which refers not to chronological time but to *now* time: e.g. "It's *time* to go!"
- "The Kingdom is near." God's kingdom is his rule. It is near. Change is possible! A new way of living is at hand, if only we would lay hold of it (c.f. Matthew 11:12).
- "Repent" means a decision to change and believe or behave differently, recognising that previous beliefs or behaviour has been wrong. True repentance is not just a moment of regret, but tangible ongoing change.
- "Believe". This is the same word in the Greek as "faith" and speaks not of intellectual assent (logical agreement) but putting your money where your mouth is and stepping out.

The learning circle is [not just a Christian idea](#), but does provide a helpful vis-aid for what Jesus teaches:



- The line is your life direction before the 'kairos' moment
- In the moment God draws close and change of direction is possible
- If we take time to reflect, repent and believe

A kairos moment can be

- positive (a provision at work) or negative (a disciplinary issue at work)
- big or small
- tangible (Something happens) or intangible (we feel God speaks)
- some event or incident that leaves an impression on us

The 6 words on the circle unpack that further:

- **Observe** - ask, what is happening, how am I reacting or behaving?
- **Reflect** - why am I doing that
- **Discuss** - talk to others, get their perspectives – we all hear God differently
- **Plan** - decide what God is saying, and what you will do about it
- **Account** - decide how and when you will be accountable for this action



- **Act** - do it!

How does this work in practice? In a discipleship group using this approach, the leader will ask everyone to briefly comment on what is going on for them (*observe* and *reflect*), and then ask the group to *discuss* further. The group moves onto planning for change, working out a tangible first step that can move the person towards bigger change. Next time it meets, the group asks how it went (*accountability*).

Pause: Which of these three habits - asking for help from God, a mentor or your community - is going to be the biggest challenge for you?