

LEADERSHIP DEVELOPMENT AT CHRIST THE KING PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

Elliot Grudem, Senior Minister | Spring 2008

In the fall of 1999, I was in Orlando for two reasons: The first was to see my father. The second was to complete a last-minute, one-more-time cram session for my Florida Insurance License.

The insurance class brought me to Orlando. An annual meeting of theologians brought my father there. And, as was his habit at the meeting, he spent a chunk of his time with pastor and author John Piper.

That year, Piper gave one of the plenary addresses. And my father couldn't stop talking about Piper's address. Based on my father's endorsement, I picked up a copy of the address. And I have listened to it many times over the last seven years.

Piper's subject was training the next generation of pastors and missionaries. And Piper started his address as follows:

The greatest need of the next generation of pastors and missionaries is exactly the same as the greatest need of every generation of pastors and missionaries that has ever or will ever exist. And therefore the central task of those who would train them never changes.

In fact, this great need is so central to all of life, and so definitive for all ministry, and so relevant to all cultures, and so ultimate compared to all other values, that it should be the all-absorbing passion of every Christian scholar and teacher, especially those who train pastors who shepherd the church and missionaries who plant it among the unreached peoples of the world. The need that I have in mind is the need of pastors and missionaries to know God and to find in him a Treasure more satisfying than any other person or thing or relationship or experience or accomplishment in the world... The greatest need of every pastor and every missionary is to know God better than they know anything and enjoy God more than they enjoy anything.

The Character Required

As I think about leadership development at CTK, I find Piper's words extremely helpful. I love what Paul writes in Titus 1:9 as he instructs Titus on the qualifications for an elder: "He must hold firm to the trustworthy word as taught, so that he may be able to give instruction in sound doctrine and also rebuke those who contradict it."

As you consider further what Paul writes in the prior verses (Titus 1:6-8), confirmation of a man's holding firm to the gospel ("trustworthy word as taught") is found not just in his ability to communicate the gospel in a large public setting, but is *primarily* seen in his ability to communicate it in both words and actions in all aspects of his public and private life.

The qualifications for elders in 1 Timothy 3:1-7, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5 are primarily traits of Godly character. They are traits required of all Christians, for they are traits to be imitated (Hebrews 13:7, 1 Peter 5:3). But since elders will be imitated in the way they live out the gospel, they should possess these traits in a higher degree than most. A man should not be ordained to the office of elder unless it is recognized that he possesses these traits of Godly character with a high degree (“above reproach,” Titus 1:7).

The office of elder is an ordained office. That means it is a calling from God, affirmed by an internal call (you believe you are called to this office) and an external call (both the people you are serving and the men you will be serving with believe you are called to this office). Ordination to this office is normally for life. Being an elder is more than simply an internship or something to pad your resume. It is service in Christ’s church—Christ’s blood-bought possession. Ordination to such office is not something to take lightly.

As Theologian John Murray wrote, elders rule “the blood purchased possession of Christ, that which cost the agony of Gethsemane and the blood of Calvary’s accursed tree. It was that which was captive to sin, Satan, and death, and Christ redeemed it as his own precious possession. It is his body, and he is the head.”

Calling and Equipping

Christ calls men to be officers in his church. And he equips these men for service. That is, he gives them the traits required of an elder. The traits are not something you can manufacture. They are gifts of the Holy Spirit. Character is what Christ works in you by his Spirit, day by day, so that you can become more like him (Romans 8:29, 2 Corinthians 3:18).

What we find in the Scriptures is that Jesus has given his people ordinary, outward means of becoming more like him. They are the things that we see the Apostles encouraging the church to focus on since its inception: God’s word, the sacraments of baptism and the Lord’s Supper, and prayer (Acts 2:42). (What some call the means of grace.) These are the primary means that Christ uses to equip leaders for his Church.

Since these means are meant not to only be worked in the lives of individuals, but also as individuals work them out in the context of the church (Acts 2:42), CTK aims to provide appropriate helps and opportunities for you to pursue Jesus through these means.

It’s one of the reasons we gather together each Sunday for worship. It’s one of the reasons we partake of the Lord’s Supper each Sunday. It’s one of the reasons we encourage you to get with each other throughout the week both formally (community groups) and informally.

The primary goal in all of these activities is to equip you for the work of ministry, “for building up the body of Christ, until we all attain the unity of the faith and the knowledge of the Son of God, to mature manhood, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ, so that we may no longer be children, tossed to and fro by the waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes. Rather, speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in every way into him who is the head, into Christ, from whom the whole body, joined and held together by every joint with which it is equipped, when each part is working properly, makes the body grow so that it builds itself up in love” (Eph. 4:11-16).

When Christ ascended in his victory over sin and death and hell’s devil, he gifted his church with men and women to help one another pursue this maturity (Ephesians 4:7-8). We don’t believe Christ is stingy in gifting his church. Instead, we believe him to be generous in what he gives his church, especially as it relates to the leaders necessary to lead the church in its vision and help those in the church move toward maturity. And we believe it the church’s responsibility to develop leaders, not just for the church, but for the world.

Our Vision and Leadership Development

When we set our three-part vision for this church, we did so with all of that in mind. We took seriously Christ’s commands to “make disciples” (Matt. 28:18-20), “present everyone mature in Christ” (Col. 1:28), and “equip the saints for the work of ministry” (Eph. 4:12). And we took seriously the obligation we have toward those in the church (Titus 2:1-15) and those outside the church (2 Corinthians 5:1-21).

That is, we see our vision being worked out in the following way: As people are changed by Christ, we want them plugged into a community being renewed by Christ (the Church), so they can be involved in seeing their city and its people transformed by Christ. And we think the best way for you to work through this vision is by showing up to worship on Sunday mornings, being involved in a community group, and being involved in the lives of others. *We don't want to make it more complicated than that.*

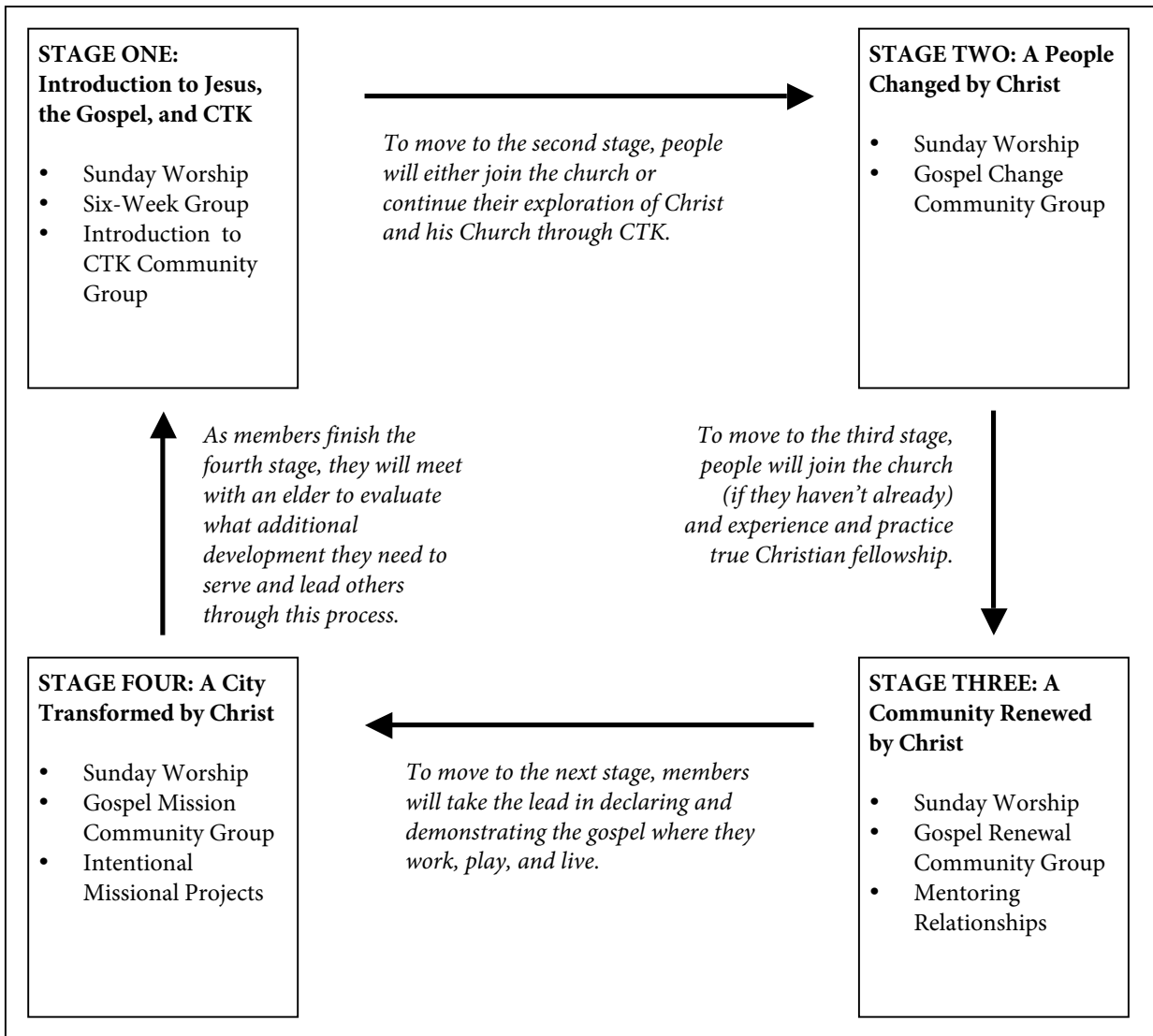
So, what does this have to do with leadership development? Absolutely everything. The primary way we hope to develop leaders for Christ's church is by making disciples (Matt. 28:18-20), working to "present everyone mature in Christ" (Col. 1:28), and equipping "the saints for the work of ministry" (Eph. 4:12).

That is, the primary way we hope to develop leaders at CTK is by encouraging our members to move along the continuum set by our vision. We believe that as this happens, leaders will demonstrate the skills and passions God has given to them. We aren't in the business of making leaders, only Jesus can do that. Instead, we want to meet those leaders as they are living out the life Christ has called them to live, and help affirm and shape the specific ways the Lord has gifted them.

That makes our community groups an essential part of leadership development. In fact, the first place we will look for leaders is in our community groups. The first place we will encourage those who aspire to formal leadership at CTK to test their ministry skills and gifts is in our community groups. The primary way (outside of our Sunday morning worship service) we will help people mature in their Christian faith is through our community groups. The first place we will train people for ministry is in our community groups.

This is illustrated through the chart on the following page titled, "Means of Leadership Development at CTK: Movement Through the Vision."

Means of Leadership Development at CTK: Movement Through the Vision



Specialized Training

In addition to the general ministry training in community groups, it is also essential to provide more specific training for specific roles. This is because God does gift people differently and calls them to different functions within the church. And as we see those gifts and callings materialize, we want to make sure we equip members with what they need to grow to maturity in Christ.

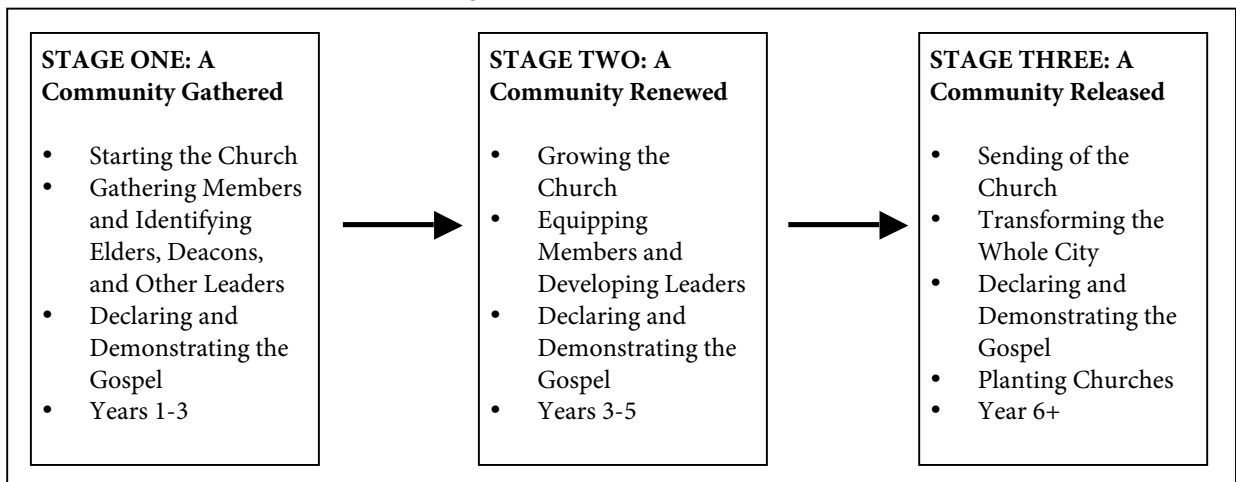
Therefore, specialized training for roles like elder, deacon, community group leader, and children’s ministry worker will be provided. This training will occur at various times during the year, based on both the needs of the church and the needs of its members. Each of these specialized training times will happen in coordination with community groups. That is, the material covered will assume involvement in community groups and will only be open to those who are involved in community groups. If you are too busy to be involved in a community group, we think you are too busy to be involved in any additional leadership training.

To review: The way we hope to help you develop into the person God designed you to be is as you utilize the means of grace and work through an understanding and application of our vision in our Sunday morning worship service, in your personal devotional life, in your interaction with others in the church, and in your involvement in a community group.

It’s the reason we’ve developed our community groups as we have. As you grasp the gospel, you began to understand the fundamental change Christ has and continues to bring about in your life. And as you experience that change, you find yourself both involved in the lives of others and allowing them to be involved in your life—so that both of you can continue to do things like stir up one another to love and good works and make sure the other isn’t hardened by the deceitfulness of sin (Hebrews 3:12-14, 10:23-25). And as you continue to grow in grace, as you continue to deepen your relationship with Christ, you realize he has called you to serve others. Not for your sake or your glory, but for their good and God’s glory. And as both the people and the places you live are changed, we hope to find Raleigh looks more and more like a place where Christ reigns as King.

And it’s the reason we’ve structured out ministry plan as we have. This is illustrated in the chart below titled “Mission of the Church: Movement Through the Vision.” We want to make sure we have properly equipped the members of the church for mission before we release them (formally) on the city. We believe this equipping is so essential for long-term ministry effectiveness, CTK (as a corporate body) won’t engage in any large, corporate ministry ventures until a good number of our members understand and are applying the means of renewal that Christ gave to his church. That doesn’t mean we think members aren’t able to do ministry until they’ve gone through our process. It does mean, however, that we want to make sure our members are equipped for the ministry they will do under the banner of CTK.

Mission of the Church: Movement Through the Vision



So, what does this mean for you?

Come to church on Sunday. Get involved in the lives of others and let them get involved in your life. Seek to apply the means of grace Christ has given his church to help his people grow toward maturity. Get involved in a community group and utilize the means CTK provides to equip you for ministry and life.

As you continue through the established process of leadership development at CTK, if you believe yourself called to servant leadership in specific areas, talk to your community group leader. Ask them what steps they would suggest you take. Develop (with them) a list of what additional training and experience you need to serve as leader in Christ's church. And then set an action plan to attain that training and experience.

Character and Gifting

The Apostle Paul writes, "For by the grace given to me I say to everyone among you not to think himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think with sober judgment, each according to the measure of faith that *God has assigned*. For as in one body we have many members, and *the members do not all have the same function*, so we, though many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. *Having gifts that differ according to the grace given to us*, let us use them" (Romans 12:3-6, emphasis mine). In that same passage Paul seems to say that leadership is only one of those gifts given according to the grace given us. So I think it's fair to say that, in part, the gift of leadership is a gift from God.

In addition, as mentioned earlier, the qualifications for officers in 1 Timothy 3:1-13, Titus 1:5-9, and 1 Peter 5:1-5 are primarily traits of Godly character. They are traits required of all Christians, for they are traits to be imitated (Hebrews 13:7, 1 Peter 5:3). Therefore, as ones to be imitated, leaders in Christ's Church should possess these traits to a higher degree than most. Specifically, a man will not be ordained as an elder until it is recognized that he has these traits to a high degree. These traits, however, are not simply things you can manufacture. They are gifts of the Spirit. Nor are they things I think I can create in you. I don't believe I can make elders. Only Jesus, through his Spirit, does that. I can help develop elders. The church can recognize elders. But only Christ can make them.

Therefore, you should remember that if leadership is a gift of God and if the traits necessary to lead as an elder are also gifts, you shouldn't consider yourself less of a person (or Christian) if you don't (now) have the gifts required to serve as an elder. Serve as God has gifted you. Let him decide what type of service is "holy and acceptable" to him (Romans 12:1). Instead of being frustrated with what you don't have, serve with what he's given you.

At the same time, if God has graced you with the gift of leadership, consider Paul's words to the haughty (but skilled) Corinthian church: "What did you have that you did not receive? If then you receive it, why do you boast as if you did not receive it?" (1 Corinthians 4:7). I can't think of much that will make a leader utterly useless to Christ's Church than unchecked pride, for "God opposes the proud, but gives grace to the humble" (James 4:6).

Serve as God has gifted you. If it's as a leader, then lead. If it's in another way, then joyfully serve that way as well. Leaders are important to Christ's Church. *But so is every other member* of the body of Christ. In fact, "the parts of the body that seem to be weaker *are indispensable*," not the parts that seem stronger and more presentable (1 Corinthians 12:22-24, emphasis mine).

There is a danger when talking about leadership development and leadership opportunities in the church—especially when talking about ordained officers in the church. It's a danger that Peter addressed in 1 Peter 5:2-3 when he encouraged elders to "shepherd the flock of God that is among you, exercising oversight, not under compulsion, but willingly, as God would have you; not for shameful gain, but eagerly; not domineering over those in your charge, but being examples to the flock."

Elders are to serve willingly, eagerly, and as examples. That means they must not view the office of elder as simply a place to define themselves or prove their leadership. Instead, they must believe they are called (willing and eager) and they must believe they are qualified (examples). If these things are not the case, there is a chance they could serve under compulsion (to meet their or another's expectation), for shameful gain (to gain things like power, fame, or fortune), or be domineering in their service (usually a sign of fear or pride).

The best way to avoid this danger is to realize that everything you have is a gift from God himself (1 Corinthians 4:7) and to believe that God gifts as he best sees fit (Romans 12:3-6).

Context

Both the Bible and our denomination, the Presbyterian Church in America (hereafter, PCA) keep the door wide for entrance to the church (membership). The Bible and our denomination keep the door narrow for entrance to the Session (eldership). That is, to become a member you have to profess faith in Jesus Christ as your Savior and Lord, resolve and promise to live in line with the gospel, commit to support the church and, agree to submit to its government and discipline. There is no Bible knowledge exam. You don't need to know much about the way the church is governed. You don't even need to agree with every point of the system of doctrine the church believes is found on the pages of the Bible.

Such is not the case for the men who desire to be elders.

A man must meet the qualifications for elder found in 1 Timothy 3:1-7 and Titus 1:5-9. Their meeting these qualifications should be evident to those who know them. Therefore, their behavior must obviously reflect the character required for elders. But they must also meet the qualifications for elder as understood by the PCA (which are taken directly from the Scriptures). This involves things like an examination by others of the man's character, his marriage, his family, his knowledge, understanding, and application to life of the Scriptures, his ability to lead and care for others, his knowledge of and agreement with the system of doctrine found in *The Westminster Confession of Faith*, and his understanding and agreement with a Presbyterian form of church government. And, since the elder will serve in a specific church (CTK), he must understand and agree with the church's vision and be committed to seeing the church and that vision flourish within its specific context: the area in and around downtown Raleigh.

These qualifications are both protection for the man and protection for the church and its members.

At CTK, we want to recognize as elders the men who are already functioning as elders. We want to recognize as elders the men who are qualified to be elders. We want to recognize the men who can serve as elders, not simply in any church, but in our church with our people in our city. It does not serve either the men or the church to have elders that are qualified in general but have no commitment to this specific church or its people.

So, please join me in prayer, asking the Lord of the harvest to provide such men for leadership in his church (Matthew 9:37-38).