

The following article is located at:
<http://www.christianitytoday.com/bcl/areas/leadership/articles/011606.html>

Where Are the Leaders?

Equipping the next generation for leadership.
by Allen Quist

Your pastor suddenly announces that he's retiring. A major industry in your community closes and your leadership moves away. Your congregation grows and you suddenly realize your current leaders are unable to keep up with the demands on their time.

These events are part of the natural flow of life. But it still leaves churches with a constant challenge—where do you find qualified leaders to replace those who have left?

There are two questions we need to answer:

- What is God looking for in a church leader?
- How can you get that leader for your congregation?

What is God looking for in a church leader?

In John 13, Christ gives us a picture of leadership. Immediately after washing the disciples' feet, he asked them if they knew the real meaning of what he had done.

Jesus then taught them an important double-edged lesson. Messages on this Scripture often focus only on the serving aspect of this lesson. But notice what Jesus says afterwards: "You call me 'Teacher' and 'Lord' and rightly so, for that is what I am. Now that I, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also should wash one another's feet" (John 13:13–14).

Although Jesus was taking the role of their servant, he was still their leader! He instructed them to serve as he did.

So how did he serve? Jesus, while keeping his role as King of Kings, Leader of Leaders, took on the role of the lowest servant to wash the feet of even his betrayer. That is servant-leadership.

Christ calls us to do the same. He calls you to a quality, godly leadership role while you are serving your congregation—even those who oppose your

leadership.

One of the key ingredients in your role as a quality godly leader is to ensure that your congregation is never without quality, godly leadership. That is a tough assignment.

How can you get that leader for your congregation?

The first question to ask is, "How did this generation of leaders come to be leaders?"

I interviewed five present-day leaders, from missionaries to business leaders, to discover how they learned to lead, who taught them, and what they learned.

The five people had different leader development experiences and different mentors/disciplers. However, all recognized the benefit of a more experienced person coming alongside and developing them—a process I will refer to as *mentoring*.

Despite the diversity of mentoring approaches and various mentor relationships, all five of the leaders testified to the same benefit of the experience. The missionary leader expressed what they all felt, "What impressed me about my leader [mentor] was his heart for God. It was like he was God's representative in my life and the lives of all around us. He treated everyone with love and respect, from the president of the country to a poor farmer in the mountains. He knew God's heart. I saw it in how he lived." The missionary's leader/mentor was the kind of "servant-leader" that Jesus modeled.

What about leadership skills? Three of the participants learned leadership from the intentional modeling, teaching, and coaching of their mentors, while the other two learned from simply watching the life of the one helping them. None of the leaders said that they took a college course on leadership. However, this does not imply that leadership skill development is unnecessary. It is quite the contrary: leadership skills should be passed to the next generation.

This survey reflects the mentoring that is typical of past generations. The key points out of this informal survey are that character, specifically a heart for God, is the primary outcome of quality mentoring, and that skills come from experiencing the lives of their mentors.

The second question we need to ask is, "How can we pass these leadership lessons on to the next generations?"

As you look at the younger generation of potential leaders in your congregation, you may realize that you don't even use the same language. How is this going to work?

How do you deal with other generations? They have such a different view of

life. They think differently, they talk differently, and they are motivated differently. It is as if they are in a different world or different culture.

Paul expresses a similar situation in 1 Corinthians 9 where he describes how he adapts his approach to the audience he is addressing, from those within and those outside the Jewish culture. Paul's message remained constant, but his packaging of the message varied from culture to culture.

The adapting Paul did to engage the cultures he was in was far more difficult than you are facing; you can do it, too. Just as Paul's message remained constant, developing a heart for God within leadership must be a constant.

In Matthew 22:37–38, when a Pharisee asked Jesus about God's greatest commandment, Jesus said that it was to love God with all your heart, soul and mind. That message will never change and must be central to a church leadership development plan.

There are other characteristics of a leader listed in the Bible which must remain constant. But how you deliver this message may change from generation to generation.

What are you facing?

There are two generations that seasoned leaders are dealing with, the group called Generation X (with ages between 25 to 40 years old) and Generation Y (with ages between 11 to 24 years old). You are probably pulling some of the Generation X members into greater leadership roles now.

Generation Xs have several common characteristics according to management consultants Corey Hessen and Brian Lewis. They need to understand the vision and mission of the organization. This group is asking the question, "Where are we going?" The connection between working decisions and values is important to them. They prefer learning one-on-one (mentoring) from someone in whom they have confidence.

Consider making a potential leader your administrative assistant. Let him learn from participating in your ministry with you. Involve him in your meetings, and then afterward discuss what he learned from the dynamics of the personalities and projects. Coach him toward greater independence with a goal of full leadership.

The members of Generation Y are more independent than Generation Xs according to Phil Kerslake, Director of Life Path. Generation Y's insist on a balance in their lives and they want work flexibility. Journalism and Communication Professor Linda Morton writes that Generation Ys are tolerant of diversity, are practical and driven by values. They do not like risk but are willing to work hard and they expect to be properly compensated for it.

Looking at both Generation X and Y and contrasting them to their parents' generation, Suzanne Soule, Research and Evaluation Director for Center for

Civic Education, points out that Generation X and Y are half as likely to seek leadership roles. Both younger generations are more materialistic than their parents.

How will you be able to train the Generations X and Y?

Freelance writer Shari Caudron says that communicating to Generations X and Y is in some ways similar to all generations.

All people need to be encouraged while they are learning. You will need to give them on-the-job challenges. They need the opportunity to try their wings at leading something.

Mark, a Generation X pastor in our church, recognized a need in his own life for specific mentoring on how to lead projects without doing all the work himself. For a year, we met together weekly for an hour and a half. Using the Microsoft Project software as a tool, he learned to select people for leadership roles, delegate responsibility to them, track their progress, and coach them to build responsibility into these leadership team members. However, the bigger lesson that Mark learned was how to use projects to build people, rather than use people to do projects. Mark tried his wings and gave wings to others.

Generations X and Y want and expect honesty, according to Caudron. You will want to be candid about the problems inherent in church leadership. Leadership is not always pleasant. They need to be told that as leaders they may be criticized, avoided, ignored, gossiped about, and argued with. Sharing potential problems is honesty.

Another aspect of developing the Generations X and Y is trying to understand their language and culture. Remember how Paul approached other cultures.

Younger leaders need various learning modes: from direct mentoring, to self-study, to learning in groups and through the Internet. Be flexible. Many churches have a hard time assigning responsibilities, especially to the younger portion of Generation Y.

A common area of ministry for computer-literate youth is the tech team. Teens have independently produced vivid power-point presentations for worship services. These young people have also helped train their peers in these tech positions.

Consider letting your youth find their wings by taking on leadership roles in the children's ministry. Many youth love to get involved with demonstrations and games on Awana night. One church in our area ran a Summer Art Camp that attracted a broader mix of young people than a traditional "Vacation Bible School." Think of the teens in your congregation who would love to be involved in this type of ministry. Think how they might try their wings.

You will need to stay focused. Remember your goal: to develop skilled

servant-leaders with a heart for God. This is not a short-term project. You will need to provide your leadership development continuously for the years it takes to equip your next generation of leaders.

Remember you will be transferring leadership before you leave, so you will likely be living under the leadership of those you develop. Make sure they have caught God's leadership vision.

God bless you as you serve.

—Allen Quist earned a Masters Degree in Pastoral Studies after retiring from 35 years in commercial banking. Experienced in lay leadership, Allen is an adjunct instructor at Multnomah Biblical Seminary, teaches with Ministry Management Seminars, and ministers to struggling churches in the Northwest and internationally. He is currently studying for a Doctorate in Strategic Leadership from Regent University in Virginia. Allen Quist and Tim Robnett are the authors of *The Spirit Driven Church* (Cook Communications, due out Fall 2006).

Copyright © 2006 by the author or Christianity Today International.

More Related Training Tools



Mentoring

Training Theme

This theme teaches leaders how to pass along what they have

learned to others. It also helps young leaders know how to find a mentor. Several articles are by Fred Smith, successful businessman and experienced mentor.

[Read more.](#)



Mentoring that Matters

Reviving an ancient teaching method that adds life to ministry.

by Fred Smith

Mentoring may seem new, but actually it is one of the oldest and best methods of learning. In times before degrees were mandatory, the mentoring system was the accepted one, not only in manual skills but in the professions, such as medicine and law.

[Read more.](#)


CHRISTIANITY TODAY
INTERNATIONAL
A Communications Ministry

www.ChristianityToday.com
AOL Keyword and CompuServe GO: ChristianityToday.com
Copyright © 1994–2002 Christianity Today International