



Leadership Letter *Passing on the baton?*

I am amazed when I think of the ministry of Jesus and how he accomplished so much in such a short time. Here I am still slogging away at multiplication, having been in YWAM basically since 1977 – that's a lot of years! Jesus started at 30 and three years later not only had he made an impact on the whole nation of Israel but also trained 12 apostles along with a whole bunch of other men and women. To top it off, he had thought about succession and fairly early on had identified Peter as the key man to head up the team after he was gone. So he spent intentional time with Peter during his very short ministry often including James and John as well. After those three years, Jesus left the apostles, minus Judas, to establish the early church. Wow! One of the principles Jesus put into practice was to not look for success but succession. He knew he was starting something that would go on for the long haul – so succession was key – making sure the ministry would carry on when he had made an exit.

What are some of the keys for us to follow in Jesus' footsteps?

- 1. Recruit leaders not staff.** Jesus looked at Peter and said, "Follow me and I will make you a fisher of men." He had a vision of who Peter was to become. He was a leader in the making. People don't generally join us ready and prepared for leadership. We have to look through some of the dysfunction and believe in people to break into their potential. Through our belief in them, people rise up to the level of expectancy we place in them. Believing in people and affirming them in the right direction is so, so powerful.
- 2. Succession thinking starts on the 1st day of the job.** If you think about succession when you're thinking of moving on it's way too late! If you have a major leadership role and have been fulfilling it for 10 years, then generally you need to be thinking of passing it on to the next generation. If a generation is defined by around 22 years, then our successor should be 10-20 years younger - the same age or younger than when we started the job!
- 3. What kind of leader is needed after me?** We have to be aware of the basic phases a ministry goes through. For instance from the initial pioneering phase where the vision is exciting and everything is new, to a settling phase where roles and responsibility are established in the team and the beginnings of some structure emerge, to a developing and multiplying phase where a model has been established and is now sending out teams to start elsewhere.

There is a need to be aware of your own leadership gifting and the phase the ministry is in at present. Then you can give attention to the gifting needed for the next leader and the phase they are moving into. These three basic phases above require different gifts. Pioneering – settling – developing. In the first phase we look to apostolic and prophetic leaders to initiate. Then we call in the operational and pastoral leaders to establish some structure and sense of community. Then there is the need for the apostolic and prophetic once more to move into multiplication. Jesus was a pioneer and apostolic leader who didn't organise and structure things too much. Everything was very flexible and his main focus was to establish foundation stones for future ministry. He was developing values of ministry with the apostles for them to carry on. Jesus figured that after him they needed an apostolic figure who would enthuse the people, a networker to connect believers across the nation and someone with a strength of character to step out to be the spokesperson in

a challenging and hostile environment. You guessed it – Peter and then Paul. Both similar giftings, except one was a fisherman and the other a scholar.

- 4. Do I look for proven or potential leaders?** If people have to prove themselves to fill your job, they seldom will. When someone takes on a role there is no way of really knowing how they will function in the job. We can look at their resume, their experience, their gifts and calling, their potential and motivation but its only when the baton is transferred that we know if they will really function well. If I am looking for someone to fulfil a role that I have been engaged in for the last 5 – 10 years, things that come easily for me, that I have grown into over the years will be a challenge for the newcomer. There has to be a belief that this new leader will make it – there's a faith element.

When Lynn called me on the phone in Scotland, back in 1984, to ask me to take on the national role in YWAM Scotland, he didn't really know me. I had been through DTS, SOE and been on staff for 6 months but that was it. Rite and I sensed confidence from him in our ability to step up to the challenge. It was his belief that helped us to rise in confidence and take the role. It was only several years later that he mentioned to me that it was a big risk that he had taken!! I'm glad he hadn't told me any earlier! That's how it is in delegation and succession. There's no guarantee. There's no proving beforehand unless you are going to have a very slow development of leaders!

- 5. Think team not individual.** Jesus identified 3 leaders – Peter, James and John. Later we see clearly how Peter and John worked well together and went on all kind of trips for the early church development. Their gifts worked well together – apostolic and prophetic. Where did James go, we are not sure. Interestingly it was the other apostle James who stepped up to the next phase of development in the early church where things began to get established. It would seem James was to oversee the church development, whereas Peter was the trailblazer heading out to new towns where the gospel was reaching and connecting them with the church in Jerusalem. Then of course the apostles begin to multiply and send out leaders to other cities, Barnabas being one of them. He thinks team and recruits Paul. No one man (or woman) alone could have done it.
- 6. Give opportunity to feel the weight.** There's nothing quite like outreach to apply what you have learned. Sitting in the lecture room you can feel confident and have an intellectual understanding of so many things. Then you hit the streets, the rubber meets the road and what you think you know is tested with real life. Jesus sent the 12 out 2 by 2 and they had to experience first hand the preaching of the gospel and the healing and miracles. They came back to report to Jesus over the moon because of what had taken place. Then he sent them out again with similar positive feedback. It's so important that in our training of leaders we get to experience what its like to feel the weight of responsibility for a short time before having to step up for the long haul real job. That's how our spiritual muscles are trained. When the base leader goes away for a week or a month someone else gets to stand in and feel the pressure and grow by it. Then he or she breathes a sigh of relief when their leader returns.
- 7. Boom and bust environment – committed until replacement.** We hate to admit it but although we form team, so much attention falls on the principal leader of the team. Usually the apostolic leader that makes things happen. When that leader doesn't multiply him or herself we are heading for trouble. We are an apostolic mission and without apostolic leaders in place we don't last long. The capacity will vary but apostolic leaders make things happen – that is the ministry booms. When they leave, unfortunately the

ministry often busts – until a new apostolic leader comes on the scene. This is why it's so important to recruit after our own kind. Apostles need operational and pastoral leaders but don't delegate the whole work to them or it will bust in time.

- 8. Delegate authority with responsibility.** Delegation is always risky because other people have different ideas than you do. The problem is, "I like my ideas best!" So what do I do with all my great ideas when someone else is doing a job I used to do very well and in my opinion isn't doing it as well? The answer is "nothing." Now there is a time for mentoring and coaching a person into a role but part of mentoring includes letting people have freedom to explore with their newfound responsibility and authority. We need to give them enough rope that they can really mess up and potentially hang themselves! That's the hard part. Generally if we have done our homework well and gone through the training of leaders, then they shouldn't mess up too bad. Mistakes will be made but they probably have strengths and weaknesses that don't match up with yours and they need to find their own methods of staffing them.
- 9. Don't let go of leadership before you leave - abdication.** The danger is always the time after you have decided to delegate. You can lose your heart for the job. It's only natural but fight against it. There needs to be continuity for the rest of the staff and ministry. They need to be led right up to and beyond the succession of a new leader. They need to know that they can trust you in the whole process and that you aren't going to just drop them once a decision has been made. Jesus had a number of crucial conversations with Peter before he left into the clouds. He was there for them and believed in them and encouraged them right to the last minute.
- 10. Don't use passive control after you leave.** In many church denominations, the pastor, vicar or minister isn't allowed to stay in the congregation they once led. Why? Because its all too easy for the people to continue relating to the old leader. After all the old leader knew their situation, is wiser, has a more mature ministry and has a rapport and friendship with so many. This is very dangerous because it will undermine the new leader coming in. If the old leader does stay, they have to "zip the lip" or stay quiet and not be up front with their opinions and thoughts, refuse to counsel people with regards to issues going on with the new leader, and give space and time for the new leader to establish themselves.
- 11. Fulfil the faith projects you took on before passing it on.** This isn't always possible but a good principle to follow. It is hard enough trusting God for something that he has spoken to us personally about, let alone taking on a faith project of someone else. The back needs to be broken in the project so that there is a workable plan for the incoming leader. Jesus had done a lot of groundwork for the early church. There were 120 people prepared to wait in the upper room and a whole lot of goodwill in the nation. All it took was an anointed message from Peter and the church was born. If however, we are dropped into a situation beyond our years of leadership and beyond our fund raising ability with finance and beyond our pastoral ability with conflicts, it will scare off the new leader like nothing else.
- 12. Success or succession?** If we go with the option of keeping things the way they have been, keep the same leadership because its been working, don't change anything so we can continue to enjoy success, we will be sorry! Succession must come and if we wait too long, the bar will be too high for so many people. That is to say, the level of leadership maturity, or expertise or gifting is so far beyond people that they give up before they start. If we

don't so much focus on success now but succession, we more than likely will have the success now and then. Jesus did.

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