

  
Chapter

## The 'L' Factor

Greenville Baptist Church had been growing steadily requiring continual changes to its programme and pastoral staff. After many years of vital growth in its two morning services, at long last the evening service was established and it was time to appoint someone to lead this potentially vital ministry. Senior Pastor Stephen Campbell was interviewing a prime candidate for the position. Roger was an architect by profession and had been active in lay ministry prior to being called into pastoral ministry. After getting good grades in his theology degree he had been asked to go to a new housing area to pioneer a church plant. It had grown well to about 100 then plateaued. Roger then decided it was time for further study and he resigned to undertake a post-graduate degree. After a number of years of active ministry he and his wife were applying to join Greenville as part of the pastoral team. What Pastor Stephen needed to know was whether Roger would make a good leader. We pick up the interview after pleasantries have been completed and they are getting down to business.

**Ps Stephen:** Roger, why do you think you were successful as a church planter?

**Roger:** Honestly, I think I was simply the right person

in the right place, at the right time. There was a small group of enthusiastic Christians who had moved into the area with their families looking for a church. It was really one big happy family. I took the Sunday service and preached regularly. When pastoral issues cropped up I tended to handle them without too much fuss. There was such a strong sense of community, everyone got involved without much direction and people were saved because the people were so infectious. I wasn't really the leader. I was more like one of them with a special gift because of my training.

**Ps Stephen:** Why did you leave?

**Roger:** Sometimes I wish I hadn't! But they didn't seem to need me and I have always had a strong desire to read and learn and thought I would grab the chance to do more study while our kids were still young.

**Ps Stephen:** When you finished your studies you sought an academic rather than a pastoral role. Why was that?

**Roger:** With three university degrees it just seemed the next logical step. I guess after prayer we thought that the Lord was providentially leading us that way.

**Ps Stephen:** The position we are seeking to fill is predominantly a leadership role. What do you think you would bring to the position that others might not?

**Roger:** I have a great love of people and am strong pastorally. But I am also a keen student of contemporary culture. I believe that in my preaching I can relate well to young people. Young people need their questions answered and I believe I can do this.

Pastor Stephen pondered over what he was hearing most of which he had heard before in casual snippets over coffee at church events. He really liked Roger and respected his integrity and spirituality and yet...

Roger got the job but only lasted a few years. Something was missing! It is what I have come to call the 'L' factor.

## The Big Picture

The next three chapters will discuss in depth the three elements of the 'L' factor which I have already identified as:

- a developed **belief system**;
- a capacity for **sound judgment**; and
- a capacity to **handle complexity**.

But in this short transition chapter I want to discuss the impact of the synergy of these three qualities.

Roger didn't struggle because he lacked gifts. He didn't struggle because he didn't relate well to people. He didn't struggle because he didn't work hard or maintain his personal spiritual disciplines. He struggled to succeed because leadership did not come easily to him.

Many people have offered definitions of leadership. Some are highly complex and others very simple. There is also the important distinction between direct leaders (who lead organisations or institutions) and indirect leaders (who lead through their ideas). My definition of leadership is 'any activity which directs, influences, or facilitates ministry by others'.<sup>5</sup>

Roger had the capacity to be an indirect leader but direct leadership extends beyond writing, teaching and preaching. It involves an individual influencing the destiny of an organisation and its members through decisions made. Decisions reflect a strongly-held belief system. Decisions must be clear and timely and deal with the future and not just the present. Decisions frequently are made in the midst of complex circumstances and multiple options. A 'direct leader' enjoys the decision making process and is frustrated with lack of decisiveness and uncertainty.

The highly effective leader seems to thrive on the opportunity to give direction and also sees ministry as important in terms of his or her calling.

Leadership comes from within whereas ministry is activity in response to external need. The following diagram is based on the passage Mark 1:32-39 which reads as follows:

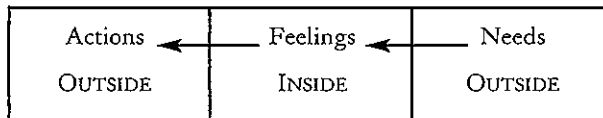
That evening after sunset the people brought to Jesus all the sick and demon-possessed. [33] The whole town gathered at

<sup>5</sup> Jagelman, I. *The Empowered Church*. Openbook Publishers, 1998, p 9.

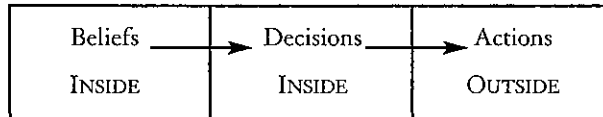
the door, [34] and Jesus healed many who had various diseases. He also drove out many demons, but he would not let the demons speak because they knew who he was. [35] Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed. [36] Simon and his companions went to look for him, [37] and when they found him, they exclaimed: "Everyone is looking for you!" [38] Jesus replied, "Let us go somewhere else — to the nearby villages — so I can preach there also. That is why I have come". [39] So he traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons.

Diagram 2.1: Leadership versus Ministry

#### Ministry



#### Leadership



In *The Empowered Church*, the focus was so much on leadership that some pastors who read it felt I was saying that leadership was more important than ministry. That was never my intention but I retain my conviction that 'ministry builds people but leadership builds churches', and that if we do not have healthy growing churches then our capacity to minister is severely restricted.

In the passage above we can clearly see the tension between ministry

and leadership in the life and mission of Jesus. In verses 32–34 the top half of the above diagram is depicted. In the evening those with needs are brought to the house where Jesus is staying. He sees the need, has feelings of compassion for them which move him to minister healing and deliverance to them.

However the next morning (verses 36–39) the bottom half of the diagram is depicted. Jesus leaves his disciples to be alone so that he might pray. While he is away the needy crowds return and his disciples seek him that he might minister to them. But Jesus now assumes the role of leader. Without losing his compassion he is aware that God has a purpose for him to fulfil. Inspired by his beliefs rather than by the obvious needs, he decides they must move on to other villages where he can preach, because, as he states, "For this purpose I have come" (cf John 18:37).

It takes a 'strong belief'<sup>6</sup> system to overcome the power of needs when the capacity to meet them is apparently present. We can see this at work frequently in the mission of Jesus. He will choose to heal a single individual when others who are equally needy are present (John 5:1–10). We see not just the presence of a belief system but decision making based on it. Equally we can see strategic decisions being made in a complex situation. He acts so that what he believes about the plans and purposes of God might be fulfilled!

From that time on Jesus began to explain to his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the elders, chief priests and teachers of the law, and that he must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Peter took him aside and began to rebuke him. "Never, Lord!" he said. "This shall never happen to you!" Jesus turned and said to Peter, "Get behind me, Satan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of God, but the things of men". (Matt 16:21–23)

The same can be said about the life and mission of Paul (see Gal 2:7–10; Eph 3:2–8, Col 1:24–29).

In Matthew 10:1–42 we see the interaction between Jesus the leader

<sup>6</sup> I have wrestled with the term or phrase to use to describe the inner convictions or beliefs which drive leaders. The terms 'purpose' or 'calling' were considered but seem to me to reflect a single focus. Whereas 'belief systems' captures the multitude of convictions most leaders have as to not just what they should do but also how they should do it! 'Beliefs', rather than 'belief system', was also considered but it does not reflect the integrated nature of the convictions of leaders.

(decisions based on beliefs) and the ministry of the 12 he is sending out. Their ministry is to be governed by his beliefs.

In Roger's case he had beliefs but a combination of the complexity of the evening service, and a fear of making bad decisions made him hesitant and unable to give focus and direction to others in his ministry team.

Stephen thought back over the initial interview. The clues were there but at the time he was still learning how to identify a person's capacity for sound judgment (intellectual firepower) and dealing with complexity. Roger also learned that he would fit best in a situation where his ministry gifts worked with the leadership ability of another.

## Chapter

### Intellectual Strength

Pastor Bob needed a new youth leader for the junior youth ministry of the church. He had reduced the potential appointees down to two (Kevin and Sue) and was struggling to differentiate between them. He suspected either one could fulfil the role but the ministry had struggled for years and he was looking for someone special.

They seemed to have similar training and experience and were equally committed to the core values of the church. They both seemed enthusiastic about the position and even after prayer he was not sure what to do. He rang his friend Ivan who seemed to have a knack for choosing the right people for leadership positions.

To his great surprise Ivan suggested he invite Kevin and Sue to dinner at a Chinese restaurant and indicated he would be happy to attend. Two weeks later the dinner took place, and as far as Bob could tell nothing much of significance occurred or was discussed. On the way home in the car Ivan shocked Bob with the statement "Sue is definitely better suited to leadership". Quickly Bob thought back over the evening but still couldn't figure out what had caused his friend to be so definite about the choice. Finally he gave in and asked his friend the obvious question "Why?"