

The Primacy of Christ-like Leadership

Why A3 develops leaders with a strong emphasis on character formation.



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Who is A3?

A3 *is a vibrant community that accelerates Christ-centered movements around the world. We exist to equip and unify visionary Christ-centered leaders to influence Spirit-led change. Why? Because there is a crying need for leaders with vision, character, and competence in our world today.*

Christ-like Leadership: A Gospel Imperative

Estimates from the *Global Alliance for Church Multiplication* (GACX) suggest that millions of new churches are springing up rapidly and are in desperate need for leaders. GACX believes that five million more churches are still needed.¹

As South African theologian Stephanes Sigemindus Loots observes: “Church planting is moving at the speed of a bullet train with leadership development following on a bicycle.”²

WEA General Secretary Thomas Schirrmacher shares, “Globally there are 50,000 new baptised believers each day, and if one takes an average of 50 believers to start a new church, that means we need 1000 new pastors every day!”³

Exacerbating the issue is the natural need for change. As Mark Dyer notes, “About every 500 years the empowered structures of institutionalised Christianity, whatever they

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—Stephanes Sigemindus Loots

¹ GACX News. (2015, November 3) *Toward a Global Alliance* <https://gacx.io/news/towards-a-global-alliance>.

² In January 2021 Dr. Manfred Kohl invited 15 key theologians and church leaders to explore how to begin such a new global initiative. It was during this meeting that Dr. Loots made his statement.

³ In his plenary at the Lausanne Consultation on Theological Education, June 2014, Thomas Schirrmacher presented the view of WEA and its Theological Commission that about 50,000 people (that do not come from a Christian background and do not have any basic Bible knowledge) are baptized each day in evangelical churches worldwide.

See <https://www.thomasschirrmacher.net/category/theology/>. Shared by Van Rensburg, Reuben. Personal Correspondence on 20 August, 2021.

may be at the time, become an intolerable carapace that must be shattered in order that renewal and new growth may occur”.⁴ Jerry Pillay further highlights the importance of change for church leadership:

Historical church structures were designed for a cultural context in which change was more predictable and occurred at a slower pace. When things happen suddenly and unexpectedly, as in the case of COVID-19, the church needs organisational structures that are flexible and flat – that is, capable of adjusting to changing needs and circumstances to allow for timely and appropriate responses.⁵

If we are going to best equip the Body of Christ for future ministry, we need to equip leaders to engage every sector of society. Os Hillman captures this for the marketplace sector:

We’ve spent too much time equipping our workplace people to do our ministries rather than equipping them to do the ministry God has called them to in the first place... The workplace is the greatest mission field of our day, and yet we do not train our workplace leaders on how to effectively integrate faith into their workplace.⁶



We do not only need more equipped pastors. We need Christian leaders who are equipped for the vast growing Church worldwide, serving in every sphere of society and every sector of the world. The church of the future must take forms that traditional equipping structures are not addressing.⁷

Christ-like Leadership: Experiential Learning with Character at the Center

The Lausanne Working Team paper on Leadership Development digs deep into the best practices for developing leaders:

⁴ Pillay, 'Jerry. COVID-19 Shows the Need to Make Church More Flexible', *Transformation* 37:4 (2020, Oct 6), p. 266.

⁵ Pillay, Jerry. 'COVID-19 Shows the Need to Make Church More Flexible', *Transformation* 37:4 (2020, Oct 6), p. 273.

⁶ Hillman, Os, 'What Every Pastor and Church Leader Should Know', *Faith` Work*, (Aslan Press, 2004), Kindle Loc, 990-993.

⁷ Moynagh, Michael. 'An Introduction to Theology and Practice', *Church for Every Context*, (SCM Press, 2012).

When growing in areas of character development, discipleship, worldview and modifying core values, however, experiential learning has a great deal to offer. Factors that make this type of learning most effective include a motivated learner:

- Who wants and needs to change;
- Who gets to try out something new, or apply it in her life;
- Who gets feedback on how she did when she tried;
- Who then has the opportunity to make sense of it through seeing results.



The leader/learner who has the opportunity to participate in this type of experiential learning has, by far, the greatest chance of actually changing her beliefs and behavior. Excellent leadership development must include, but go beyond, just acquiring information and include this type of experiential learning.⁸

A3, the mission I serve, believes key attributes that leaders who will lead the Church effectively into the future must include:

- Men and women leading the church with vision, character, and competence.
- Leaders equipped to lead Christ-centered movements in countries where Christians are persecuted.
- Leaders less likely to have their ministries to end due to burnout or moral failure.
- Leaders with a vision for multiplication that will enfold new believers around the world.

The key to developing these kinds of leaders? Nurturing within them a *deep, abiding love relationship with God*. This paradigm shift revolutionizes their personal lives, family lives, and ministries. It is the foundation for becoming a more Christ-like leader. Transformation in any venue—nations, societies, communities, churches, even families—always begins with transformation in the lives of individuals. This transformation begins with the transformation of leaders.

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⁸ Overstreet, J. pp. 4-5.

Robust Spirituality, Authentic Discipleship

Leadership development must also be infused with robust spirituality, a spirituality that builds character, formed on the bedrock of living in a love relationship with Christ. That is why leaders like Matthews A. Ojo are calling for a deeper spirituality:

There is a disconnection between Christian spirituality and the quest to provide leadership for the continent. Leadership in Africa, with the exception of a few, has not been exemplary or sacrificial. It has not been the Nehemiah model nor the Jesus' model nor the Pauline model, but that which resembles the traditional African tribal chieftaincy structure with all its privileges and power but less of trust and accountability... Unless the above disconnections are addressed, it is doubtful if Christianity could impact positively and substantially on the nation and the society in the twenty first century.⁹

David Singh argues for a stronger spirituality following the models of Sadhu Sunder Singh and Narayana Vamana Tilak from India. Singh and Tilak focused on the transforming encounter and relationship with Christ rather than prioritizing church expansion, "By moving from an institutional and polemical model of Christianity and Christian mission to one that is based on discipleship and enlightenment while engaging people personally, devotionally and sacrificially, a mission more reflective and formed by the Indian context could be realised." David Singh concludes, "Regardless of what we call it, we have seen that authentic discipleship is crucial to sustain effective mission. Mission spirituality cannot exist without authentic discipleship."¹⁰



Christ-like Leadership: Critical Focus for the Harvest

The harvest is abundant today and the need for workers immense (Matthew 9:37). I pray that we can follow the Lord's lead to mobilize and empower many new leaders for the ripening fields! As Phill Butler

reminds us:

⁹ Matthews A. Ojo, 'African Spirituality Socio-Political Experience and Mission'. In Ma, Wonsuk; Kenneth R., Ross (eds.). *Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship*, (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), pp. 47-61.

¹⁰ Chan, Kim-kwong, 'The Back to Jerusalem Movement: Mission Movement of the Christian Community in Mainland China'. In Ma, Wonsuk; Kenneth R., Ross (eds.). *Mission Spirituality and Authentic Discipleship*, (Oxford: Regnum, 2013), p. 237.

Spiritual breakthroughs are not a game of guns and money. No human effort, expenditure of resources, or brilliant strategy will alone produce lasting spiritual change. Our partnerships must be informed and empowered by God's Holy Spirit in order to be effective. The challenges of relationships, cultural and theological differences, technical and strategic issues, and sustainability can only be dealt with in a process rooted in prayer.¹¹

Developing Transformational Kingdom Leaders: The A3 Commitment

A3 is committed to developing men and women equipped to lead the Church of today, into the future. We do this by helping our leaders to realize four key outcomes in their lives:

- A deepening love relationship with God
- A growing Christlike character
- A vision to reproduce disciple-making leaders
- A passion to catalyze Christ-centered movements around the world



This is the type of leader longed for around the world and the type identified by the Lausanne Working Group on Leadership Development: Leadership infused with a strong spirituality, a spirituality that builds great character and one that is formed on the bedrock of living in a love relationship with Christ.

Ironically, we have learned that accelerating Christ-like movements throughout the world can be a slow process, working patiently with small groups of leaders. In our commitment to this process, we are encouraged by the example of Jesus, who spent most of his three active years in ministry focused on 12 people. His investment in those 12 leaders resulted in the multibillion-strong, worldwide Body of Christ of whom we are all a part. The example of Jesus' work with His disciples, and their subsequent world-changing ministry, provides A3

¹¹ Butler, Phill, *Well Connected: Releasing Power, Restoring Hope through Kingdom Partnerships*, (Waynesboro, GA: Authentic, 2006), p. 101.

with the inspiration to pursue what we believe to be our divine calling: *Changing the Few who Change the Many.*



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A3, December 2023



CHANGING THE FEW
WHO CHANGE THE MANY

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