
GROWTH POINTS

With Gary L. McIntosh, D.Min., Ph.D.

The Structure of Leadership

The church business meeting finally arrived at the time to vote on whether to purchase the property that bordered the current church facility. Moments before, the lead pastor had challenged the church to vote to purchase the property as an act of faith. A well-respected member of the church board had reminded the church that the former, founding pastor had always dreamed of the church owning the piece of land next door. But, as both men spoke most eyes were on the small figure of a woman who sat in the second row from the front. Joyce was a quite, elderly widow in her early eighties. As both the pastor and the board member spoke, Joyce slowly turned her head from side-to-side, signaling in a quite way her disagreement. As you might guess, when the vote was taken, it went down to defeat.

What had happened? Why had the proposal to purchase the property been rejected? Key leaders of the church had spoken in favor of the purchase, the need for the land has been presented, and the budget was able to handle the loan payment. What had happened? The answer is found in the structure of leadership in a local church.

The Primal Leader

All movements have a primal leader, that is, the person who founded the particular movement. For Christianity, of course, the primal leader is Jesus Christ! Another way to say this is that Jesus Christ is the *absolute* leader of his Church. Paul wrote, “he is the head of the body, the church” (Colossians 1:18). This is a fact that remains true today. Jesus Christ is THE leader of his church, both universal and local. Peter calls him the “Chief Shepherd” (1 Peter 5:4).

This is a fact that human leaders need to put into direct practice in most churches. For example, as we develop vision for the future, it is not *our* vision we seek but Christ’s vision. As we make plans for the next decade, it is not *our* plan we seek but his plan. As we set goals, it is not *our* goals we seek, but his goals. This is an attitude we must take seriously by putting into practice direct inquiry through prayer and application of Scripture to our churches.

Looking for a coach? Our team is available. Email Dr. Gary L. McIntosh at cgnet@earthlink.net or call 951-506-3086 for full details.

Three Types of Leaders

Leadership authority in a local church comes from Christ the Chief Shepherd. Peter commands the elders to “Shepherd the flock of God that is among you.” They are to exercise oversight (1 Per 5:2), which is a clear reference to leading the flock. Since this command comes in the context of Christ being called the Chief Shepherd, it gives credence to the concept of elders being understood as “under shepherds.” Christ, as the primal leader of the church, exercises his leadership through human leaders.

There are three types of human leaders.

First is the *Responsible Leader*. This is the person who is called to account when things go wrong. In numerous churches the responsible leader is simply a front person who has no real authority to do much of anything. Yet, he or she is often held responsible for things out of their control. It is literally a person with responsibility but no (or highly limited) authority.

Second is the *Emotional Leader*. This is the person who is held in high regard by the long-term members of a congregation. He or she can be old or young, dead or alive, male or female. In the mind of the people the emotional leader embodies the qualities the congregation admires, such as, fearlessness, faithfulness, forgiveness, etc.

Third is the *Effective Leader*. This is the person who is most likely to be followed. He or she gets their questions answered and their suggestions fulfilled. Otherwise, they are able to get things done.

Understanding these three leadership types helps us understand what happened in the church scenario above. The pastor was the responsible leader, the founding pastor referenced by the board member was the emotional leader, but the effective leader was Joyce. It is the effective leader who makes the actual decisions and sets the overall direction of the church. He or she may or may not hold an actual position or role in a local church.

All three leadership types may be found in the same person, or all sorts of combinations of individuals. For example, new church plants are often fruitful because the founding pastor embodies all three leadership types at once. But, new pastors, who follow a long-time successful pastor, are often handicapped because they are just a responsible leader, while the former pastor maintains the roles of emotional and effective leader. Then again, some pastors are both the emotional and responsible leader, while another person in the church is the *de facto* effective leader.

Think it Through

How is your church submitting to Jesus Christ as the primal leader of the church?

Which of the three leadership types do you have as a pastor? Who has the others?

Growth Points is published twelve times a year. Subscription price is \$20 (US Funds) per year. Permission is granted for use in a local church. For other reprint usage, advance permission must be obtained.

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Church Consulting

Picture your church in the not-too-distant future. Imagine a gradually changing attitude reflecting a new sense of expectancy. Imagine new people with a contagious enthusiasm for Christ and your church. Imagine ministries pulsating with new life. Imagine a new heart for mission in your church.

Is it possible? The answer . . . a resounding YES! It is possible. Indeed, God very much wants to see it happen. Just think about it. God wants your church to grow! And, the McIntosh Church Growth Network stands ready to assist you through personal coaching and/or your church through consulting to see growth take place.

Gary L. McIntosh is considered one of the premier church consultants in the United States today. Here is what others are saying about his church consultations and guidance.

“I cannot tell you how much I appreciated your consultation with our elders. You are a wealth of help and guidance. And you do it with such grace! As I sat there listening to you describe the challenges of growing from 400-800, I noticed the elders faces. They were lighting up with understanding about things that I would have found difficult to say. You did a masterful job.” —**Jerry Reub, Cornerstone Church**

“It was wonderful to return from my time in England and Indonesia and to receive the McIntosh Report. Thank you for its clarity, brevity, wisdom and insight. Everybody so far has received it with enthusiasm, which is no mean feat in the Midwest! May God richly bless you in your ministry of strengthening and supporting the Church.” —**C. John Steer, Autumn Ridge Church**

“I have had the opportunity to meet and speak with Gary individually on several occasions, and he has been a tremendous blessing to my life and ministry. Gary is a very wise, stable, insightful and capable Christian man. The counsel, guidance and direction Gary has offered to me over the past two years have been extremely helpful.” —**John W. Tastad, East Hills Christian Church**

“The impact has been incredible. Through his insight and recommendations I have grown as a pastor in ways I never thought possible. We appreciated not only Gary’s expertise but also the spirit by which he worked with us. He was compassionate, sensitive and personable as he interviewed our people, brought recommendations and continues to lead us through the growing process. Each conversation has been an encouragement to me as a pastor to continue in the work to which God has called me.” —**Robert L. Bletcher, Faith Evangelical Church**

If you could replenish the spiritual dynamic of your church, would you be interested?

If you could enhance the guest welcome of your church, would you be interested?

If you could improve the growth environment of your church, would you be interested?

If you could increase the outreach potential of your church, would you be interested?

If you could align your staff in a more productive way, would you be interested?

Dr. Gary L. McIntosh can help you with these and other aspects of fruitful ministry. For full information email Gary at cgnet@earthlink.net or call 951-506-3086 for details.