



## How to Develop Leaders in your Church

Dr. Aubrey Malphurs

Bill Hybels once said, "The church is the hope of the world, and leaders are the hope of the church." Who among us with any local church experience would disagree? I'm not aware of any church that would post a sign on its marquee out front announcing, "No leaders needed!"

### So why don't churches develop leaders?

The number one reason is that most simply do not know how. A second reason is that many simply do not have the time. It is difficult, if not impossible, for the senior pastor to find the time as well as have the expertise to develop and maintain such a vital process—especially in a large church. And if you leave their development up to the leaders themselves, it may be sporadic at best, if it happens at all. A third is that Satan does not want churches to develop leaders because of the positive impact such a process will have in promoting God's kingdom over Satan's.

### So what's the solution?

Leadership development is the primary role of the ministry staff as led by the senior or lead pastor. If it does not happen at the staff level, where else can it happen? I would task the church's staff with the "hands on" responsibility for developing its leaders. The solution is to train your ministry staff to equip your laypeople to lead.

I do realize that I am promoting a whole new staffing paradigm. The reason is that most churches hire staff to do some aspect of the church's ministry. And while the staff will always be doing ministry to some degree, in recent years many of us have argued that staff need to be equipping lay persons to do ministry as well because Scripture argues the same (Eph. 4:11-13). However, what I am arguing is that not only are staff to do and train laypersons for ministry, but they are to train laypersons to lead these ministries.

I would go so far as to argue that leadership development is a primary responsibility of all your ministry staff and a requisite for hiring them. However, some of you are thinking, "That could never happen in my church!" As one pastor confided in me, "We have some staff in our church who don't have a leadership bone in their bodies!" But maybe the problem is that they've never been trained as leaders. After all, where would they get this kind of training?

### How to develop leaders

What would such a new paradigm approach to leadership development look like? I'm convinced that a good strategy is two-fold. It begins with staff development that, in turn, leads to lay leadership development. First train the staff, and then let them train the leaders, because the staff development process should serve to mirror and model your lay leadership development process. You begin by designing a unique, consistent development plan for each staff person. What staff desperately need is a personal leadership development plan that takes who they are—their uniqueness—into consideration. This plan itself consists of the three Ds.

The first D is design. It helps the staff person to discover his or her divine design or how God has sovereignly and uniquely “wired” them. It specifically addresses the person’s natural and spiritual gifting, passion and temperament (I would include both the DiSC and the Myers-Briggs temperament tools). This is a reasonably simple approach that will guide one’s initial exposure to the divine design process. At the Malphurs Group we use a number of tools that will help staff persons understand their divine designs. And these tools can be found in my books, “Maximizing Your Effectiveness” and “Being Leaders” (Baker Books).

The second D is direction. Once the staff person understands his or her divine design, they have a much better read on God’s ministry direction for their lives. For example, if one discovers that he or she has a gift of leadership, then it is obvious what God wants them to do—lead! If they have a gift of evangelism, God is telling them to do evangelism. If they have a gift of teaching, God’s will for them is that they teach.

Equally important is their passion. Passion will often provide a direction for the exercise of their gifts, such as with children, adults or college students. And in some cases what this does for staff is to signal that they are not doing what God has designed them to do. Therefore, this serves both the staff person and the church as a ministry corrective by moving them to a position that’s much more in tune with where they should be serving, whether in the same or a different ministry.

The third D is development. This is where we place staff and lay leadership development. Once the staff person knows who he or she is and their ministry direction, they are ready to pursue their ministry development.

We at the Malphurs Group believe that there are no less than five developmental dimensions. They are character, knowledge, skills, emotions and the physical side of one’s being.

Someone on the team, such as the pastor in the small church, the executive pastor in a large church or preferably a trained consultant, should meet individually with each staff person to set up an initial plan that addresses these developmental areas. Then that same person should meet twice a year (or even quarterly) with each staff person to see how they are progressing in their development and to hold them accountable for the same. Otherwise, the process will fall through the proverbial cracks.

One reason I recommend that you use a trained, experienced consultant is that the staff will listen to and trust someone from the outside when they may not be as open with a pastor or an executive pastor for fear of losing his/her job. They tell consultants things they would never share with their pastor or another staff person for fear of consequences. Another reason is the consultant can head off or address problems that may exist between the staff person and the senior pastor.

Once you have a staff development process in place, it becomes much easier to do the same with church laypersons. I would challenge each staff person to select and recruit those who work in their particular areas of ministry and develop them. Start with one or two as time allows. Once these people are trained, they, in turn, will multiply their efforts by developing others in the same manner. What you will discover in a very short time is that the process will replicate a number of leaders all across the ministries of the church.

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