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Truly Christ-Centered Leader Development

The ConneXions Model of Healthy Leader Development

God's ultimate purpose in all things revolves around His Son:

having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth – in Him. (Eph. 1:9-10, NKJV)

The Son of God, Himself, is the final and complete revelation of God (Heb. 1:1-2). He fully reveals the Father (John 1:18; 16:15; 17:10, 26; Col. 1:19). In Him “are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge” (Col. 2:3).

Everything is “under His feet” (1 Cor. 15:27). All things were created through Him and for Him, and all things are held together by Him (Col. 1:16-17). In everything, He has the preeminence (Col. 1:18).

Accordingly, the biblical model of *leader development* revolves specifically around the *Person* of the Lord Jesus Christ. Healthy leader development must be *entirely* Christ-centered, Christ-focused, Christ-absorbed. The Son of God is all in all!

For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. (Col. 2:9-10, NKJV)

In previous Letters, we have examined both [the goal](#) and [the process](#) of Christian leader development. In everything, leader development must revolve around the Son of God.

First, [the goal](#) of leader development must be *Jesus Christ*. All five of the necessary elements of healthy leadership are connected directly to Him:

- **Christ** (John 15:5; Gal. 2:20; Col. 2:6). Apart from union with Christ, we will accomplish nothing of any eternal value. “Apart from me you can do nothing.”
- **Community** (Eph. 1:23; 2:21-22; 3:16-19; 4:11-16; 5:31-32). Spiritual maturity is a corporate experience. First, [Christ builds community](#); the leader’s union with Christ will be expressed in the leader living together with others in the Community in self-giving love, in true servanthood. Second, [community builds Christ](#); it is in

nurturing and accountable relationships with others that the leader will fully experience the indwelling life of Christ.

- **Character** (Phil. 1:11; Is. 64:6). Human righteousness, apart from His indwelling life, is “filthy rags” in God’s eyes. True righteousness “comes through Jesus Christ.”
- **Calling** (1 Cor. 3:11-13; Gal. 1:1). Neither man nor ministry should be first; in all things, Christ must have the preeminence. Today, so much is done in the church to serve either man’s need or his ambition; but God is only glorified through His own vision, He is only pleased with what He initiated.
- **Competencies** (2 Cor. 3:5-6; Phil. 3:4-11; 4:13; Col. 1:10-12; 1 Pet. 4:11; Zech. 4:6). All of man’s greatest accomplishments are “rubbish” compared to that which comes from Jesus’ indwelling life.

We could build our emerging leaders to shine brilliantly in every human capacity, but if we have neglected to bring them into deep union with Christ, from Whom the whole person is properly built, they will ultimately experience failure in both life and ministry.

Second, [the process](#) of leader development must be *Jesus Christ*. He is the Source of power in all four of the Dynamics of Transformation:

- **Spiritual** (2 Cor. 3:18). There was a veil in our hearts of separation between us and God. In Christ, God has removed this veil. Now, inwardly, we can see Him, we can hear Him, we can touch Him. As we look inwardly at Him we are transformed into His likeness, by His Spirit, from one realm of glory to another.
- **Relational** (Eph. 4:16). Corporately, we are united with the eternal self-giving fellowship of the triune Godhead. The Father loves the Son who loves the Spirit who loves the Father and the Son – through us! It is “from Him [that] the whole body... grows and builds itself up in love.”
- **Experiential** (2 Cor. 1:8-9; 12:7-10). Challenges and sufferings take us beyond our own strength and we are forced (often for the first time) to look away from ourselves and to truly rely, with deep surrender, on Him; that is how we are changed.
- **Instructional** (2 Tim. 3:16-17). “All Scripture is God-breathed” – this is not only a proof text for the doctrine of the inspiration of Scripture; it is a revelation of specifically *how* the Word changes us. Our interaction with the Word of God must go beyond human intellectualism. It is through the breath of His Spirit upon His Word that we are transformed.

Our training programs might harness the latest and greatest of human wisdom and methods, but if we do not bring our emerging leaders into face-to-face encounters with the Son of God (1 John 1:1-3) – through spiritual, relational, experiential and instructional dynamics – their lives will not be transformed.

Thus, leader development must revolve around Him in everything.

It is an extraordinary and utterly disastrous error to ignore, neglect or assume the intentional centrality of the Son of God in practical Christian leader development in both its goal and process. Jesus, Himself, *is* the Goal and He *is* the Process.

Today, in many nations, Christian leaders are returning to their first love – to Him. Burned out and frustrated, they are recognizing that they have been absorbed in His work more than in His Person, and that they are much better equipped in knowledge about Him than in living union with Him.

Of all of the many necessary paradigm shifts that Christian leader development is currently undergoing, *this* is the deepest, the most profound, the most vital.

Let us return to the centrality and the preeminence of the Person of Jesus Christ, the Son of the Living God, in Christian leader development. He, Himself, is our Process and our Goal; He, Himself, is our Journey and our Destination.

For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever! Amen. (Rom. 11:36)