



# Cultivate

A Christ-Centered Way of Life

*... as you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him, rooted, and built up in him and established in the faith... Colossians 2:6-7*

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## THE FIVE C'S OF A HEALTHY LEADER

By Marius Gradwell

This is a summary of an article by Malcolm Webber Ph.D.

An effective leader possesses a blend of three special elements:

1. Calling.
2. Character.
3. Competence.

All three elements are found in the description of King David in Psalm 78:

*He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skilful hands he led them. (Ps. 78:70-72)*

Verses 70-71 reveal David's calling:

*He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people*

Verse 72a shows his character:

*David shepherded them with integrity of heart*

Verse 72b describes David's competencies:

*with skilful hands he led them.*

Just as a stool has three legs, there are three foundations of effective leadership. All three must be *present* and in *balance* for the leader to succeed. The three foundations are calling, character and competencies.

What would happen if one element were missing in the life of a leader?

1. If a leader possessed a strong *calling* and strong *character* but had weak *competencies*, he would produce a big mess! There would be lots of great ideas, good intentions, passion, zeal, sincerity, and godliness, but nothing much actually accomplished by the organization.

2. If the leader had strong *character* and strong *competencies* but was weak in the area of *calling* and vision, the organization would run like a well-oiled machine, but it would not accomplish anything of significant value.
3. To think of a leader with a strong *calling* and strong *competencies*, but who was weak in *character* is the very worst scenario! This combination would spell inevitable disaster for the leader and for everyone in the organization. In the words of Howard Hendricks, *"The greatest crisis today is a crisis of leadership. And the greatest peril of leadership is a crisis of character. Think about it, to give a person management techniques and leadership skills without integrity is simply to enable him to become a better rip-off artist."*

We need all three. Thus, the three necessary capacities of effective leadership are character, calling and competencies.

But is this sufficient? Is this model sufficient to describe a mature, balanced, and effective Christian leader? Is there anything missing?

There are two elements missing in our model: Christ and Community. These are the two great commandments Jesus gave us:

*One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt. 22:35-40)*

The leader must be in right relationship with God and with his brothers.

So, there are actually five elements that must be present in the life of a healthy Christian leader: Calling, Character, Competencies, Christ and Community.

**Now, let us put these five in order.**

Which should come first? Of these five, which produces which?

Here is the order. Our model of the holistic Christian leader starts with his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The leader must know God.

Christ *Must* Come First.

*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 3:11)*

*And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. (Col. 1:18)*

*True leadership is not possible without Christ first! Without Christ first, the other four elements will not work - like a body without a head!*

Without Christ first in the life of the leader, he will never get along in community with others:

*At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated, and hating one another. (Tit. 3:3)*

Without Christ first, the leader's character will be sinful:

*So, I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. (Eph. 4:17-19)*

Biblically, Christian leadership is not character-based; it is Christ-based. While character is vitally important in Christian leadership, it is not first. Christ is first!

In Christian leadership, everything does not proceed from character and values; everything proceeds from union with Christ. This is not mere semantics, but it goes to the very heart of how we understand the Christian life and Christian leadership.

To make this distinction is not to undermine the importance of character and values. On the contrary, this establishes true character and values, proceeding not from human effort but from the indwelling life of Christ!

*...If a man abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit... (John 15:5)*

*so that you may be... filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ - to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:10-11)*

Without Christ first, the leader will have no calling other than hopelessness and futility:

*remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. (Eph. 2:12)*

Sadly, many Christian leaders put their callings first and then try to use Christ to fulfil their own ambitious, self-centred visions. But He will not accept second place in anyone's life. We should not pray for power without first praying to know Christ. We should not use the Word of God for teaching, without first using His Word to know Him. Ministry must not be first; in all things, Christ must have the pre-eminence.

Finally, man's competencies are useless apart from Christ. Without Christ first, the leader is capable of nothing of any value in God's eyes:

*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags... (Is. 64:6)*

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)*

True competencies come from Him:

*Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant... (2 Cor. 3:5-6)*

Christ must be first! The leader *must* know God. He must walk with God, and out of his relationship with Jesus will proceed every other aspect of his leadership.

This is not just the “best” way; it is the *only* way to true Christian leadership. Everything else is mere fleshly works.

Second, the leader’s personal relationship with Jesus must be expressed and worked out in the daily life of his various communities: his family, his church community, the teams he is a part of, and the broader community of the world.

In this context of Christ and community, character will be formed in the life of the leader. The indwelling life of Christ expressed and worked out in community will develop godly character.

Since God now has someone with character, He can trust him with a calling. Once the leader has a calling, he will need the competencies to fulfil that calling.

This is the logical progression of the elements in our model of healthy Christian leadership: Christ, Community, Character, Calling and Competencies.

Leaders with wrong priorities will never be satisfied and all they will ever produce will be like filthy rags in God’s eyes (Is. 64:6), useless works of wood, hay, and stubble:

*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man’s work. (1 Cor. 3:11-13)*

The foundation must be right, and then the building on that foundation must be right. The four elements all come from Christ.

If men put community first, a shallow, humanistic social club will result. If character is put first, legalism and self-righteousness will result. If leaders put calling first, competition and gift-identification will result. If competencies are put first, self-reliance and mere human achievement will be the results; the leaders may outwardly succeed, but such success will be empty and transient.

Leaders with the wrong first priority will never be satisfied. Moreover, they will always be insecure in their leadership because only Christ brings true security. Insecure leaders, sadly, often become abusive leaders, using others to build their own value, and meaning.

That is the logical progression of these elements of healthy Christian leadership. But we should not think that we must address each of these sequentially – as if a leader must first be mature in Christ before he begins to address his need for community, etc. The leader should grow in all five areas concurrently. Consequently, the following is a better way to visualize the relationships of these five elements:

Christ and community are the *contexts* of the healthy leader: he needs to live in Christ and in community. Character, calling, and competence are his *capacities*: they need to be in him.

Christ is the Source of character, calling and competencies. Christ is also the broader context of true community. Truly, He is the Centre and Circumference of all things (Eph. 4:4-6)! In community, character is formed, vision is clarified, and competencies are developed.

## Indicators of the 5 C's

("He" and "His" also includes "She" and "Hers")

1. "Christ" refers to the leader's spiritual life. A leader who is strong in Christ:
  - a. Spends time with God on a regular basis.
  - b. Trusts Jesus for his eternal life and has been baptised in water.
  - c. Demonstrates in his attitudes, words, and actions that he trusts Jesus in his everyday life.
  - d. Is consistently guided by the Holy Spirit.
  - e. Talks about Jesus in regular, day-to-day conversation.
  - f. Deliberately takes up the cross daily, treating the old nature as dead, and walking in new life in Christ.
  - g. Surrenders his life to Jesus, putting His Kingdom before his own personal desires and agendas, and submits to Jesus's authority for his beliefs and decisions.
  - h. Has a healthy fear of God.
  - i. Lives in continual inward fellowship with Jesus by His Spirit.
  - j. Is secure in Christ's love.
  - k. Is engaged in spiritual warfare, resisting the enemy.
  - l. Lives for eternal reward, not temporal blessing.
  - m. Experiences the manifest presence of God.
  - n. Prays consistently.
  - o. Turns more deeply to God, drawing strength from Him in times of difficulty and suffering.
  - p. Meditates regularly on God's Word.
  - q. Has his prayers answered.
  - r. Avoids idols and every form of the occult.
  
2. "Community" refers to the leader's relationships – in marriage and family, in church, with other leaders, and with people in the world. Please think of all four of these areas as you make your observations. A leader who is strong in Community:

- a. Treats other as he would like to be treated.
  - b. Is merciful, kind, and courteous.
  - c. Accepts and applies healthy correction without self-pity or complaint.
  - d. Treats his spouse, parents, children and/or siblings with self-giving love and respect.
  - e. Is a generous giver.
  - f. Forgives those who have wronged him, keeping no record of wrongs; is not resentful. He blesses those who curse him, turning the other cheek rather than defending himself.
  - g. Does not start unnecessary conflict; when conflict occurs, he prayerfully and actively seeks to resolve it, working always for unity.
  - h. Is not self-seeking, preferring the good of others before his own.
  - i. Graciously shares ideas and feedback with those in appropriate authority and ultimately submits to them, with respect, whether he agrees or not.
  - j. Does not engage in malicious talk or gossip.
  - k. Questions others when appropriate and gives correction discreetly and tactfully.
  - l. Leads and manages his own family well.
  - m. Is unprejudiced and inclusive toward others.
  - n. Gives affirmation and support to strengthen others.
  - o. Oversees his ministry responsibilities faithfully and effectively.
  - p. Acts hospitably to all, especially the stranger and needy.
  - q. In the workplace, obeys his employer from the heart and not with "eye-service." If he is the employer or manager, he genuinely cares for his subordinates.
  - r. Meets regularly with other believers to fellowship, worship, share the communion of the bread and cup, pray, and study the Scriptures.
3. "Character" refers to the leader's personal integrity. A leader who is strong in Character:
- a. Has a good reputation.
  - b. Is joyful - thankful to God and positive toward life.
  - c. Perseveres during adversity, without complaining or arguing, with hope resting in God.
  - d. Takes responsibility for his own physical care, well-being, and fitness.
  - e. Recognises others for their accomplishments without personally taking the credit.
  - f. Is truthful and honest; not lying, cheating, or stealing. He pursues what is right above what is expedient or popular.
  - g. Is faithful and trustworthy, keeping confidences and following through on responsibilities and commitments.
  - h. Refrains from lust, sexual immorality, pornography, profanity, immodesty, and all forms of impurity.
  - i. Is not greedy, covetous, jealous, or envious but is content with what he has.
  - j. Manages his own life well, including his time and his possessions.
  - k. Exercises self-control financially and is not irresponsible with debt.
  - l. Is humble - not overbearing, rude, proud, or boastful.
  - m. Exhibits patience and self-control; is not impulsive.
  - n. Does not gamble.
  - o. Does not take advantage of his authority, using it for personal gain.
  - p. Is not given to gluttony, drunkenness, or addictions.
  - q. Is slow to anger.

- r. Does not blame others when things go wrong but takes responsibility for his own decisions and actions.
4. "Calling" refers to the leader's vision and purpose in God. A leader who is strong in Calling:
- a. Serves God zealously out of a strong sense of destiny and divine purpose.
  - b. Helps others grow and fulfil their calling from God.
  - c. Possesses spiritual authority that is recognised by others.
  - d. Seeks the approval of God for his ministry, not the approval of man
  - e. Is motivated by vision from God rather than the mere requirements of position.
  - f. Selflessly pursues God's purpose rather than his own self-centred ambition.
  - g. Regularly and prayerfully reflects on his life, recognising that God uses people, events, and circumstances to prepare him for his ministry.
  - h. Seeks out relationships with mature believers and leaders to learn from them
  - i. Has an increasingly clear understanding of God's will for his life.
  - j. Expresses his vision with clarity, passion, and credibility.
  - k. Ministers at a level of authority appropriate to his gifting, maturity, and favour.
  - l. Has a vision that extends beyond his own local community.
  - m. Pursues his own calling to build up the church, not promoting himself.
  - n. Evaluates the fruitfulness of his ministry in order to discern and confirm his calling.
  - o. Exercises the giftings of God, while seeking to grow in them.
  - p. Continually learns and grows, intentionally exploring a variety of ministry opportunities.
  - q. Does not compromise his calling out of fear, or pressure from others.
  - r. Stays focussed on his calling, avoiding the distractions of other opportunities.
5. "Competencies" refers to the leader's knowledge and practical ministry skills. A leader who is strong in biblical competencies:
- a. Believes that the Bible is the true Word of God.
  - b. Has extensive and accurate knowledge of the Bible.
  - c. Is knowledgeable about the church's established and historically accepted doctrine.
  - d. Interprets the Scriptures soundly.
  - e. Carefully guards his own doctrine and that of those for whom he is responsible.
  - f. Is committed to believing, obeying, and teaching the entire Bible, not just certain parts.
  - g. Distinguishes and prioritises important biblical issues from minor ones.
  - h. Is not content with a purely academic knowledge of the Scriptures, but instead seeks to experience and share its life-transforming power.
  - i. Relies on the Holy Spirit to illuminate the Word of God.
  - j. Does not spiritualise the Bible, but takes the natural, originally intended meanings of the terms and ideas that are used.
  - k. Teaches the Word of God in a positive and engaging way.
  - l. Gently and effectively refutes those who are in doctrinal error, including the cults.
  - m. Is practical and relevant in his teaching.
  - n. Submits to the biblical revelation as the final authority on every subject it addresses.
  - o. Pursues further learning of the Word of God.
  - p. Allows other believers the freedom to determine their own convictions on minor issues.
  - q. Looks to the Word of God for direction and answers to his daily questions.
  - r. Shares his life as well as his teaching with those to whom he ministers.