

Multiplying Life: The Square

If we are going to be discipling people it means that we will be leading them – yet we have no real model of how to do it.

I guess we have to assume that Jesus was the best leader there has ever been and that we should copy him.

We need to clear the decks!

Let's deal with "Servant Leadership" first. I will start telling you that leaders have to be directive, but we are congenitively disposed not to direct people! Western culture is deeply suspicious of directive leadership so most people work with a consensus, hoping that momentum will come from consensus.

This is not what Jesus did, and we assume that he knows best.

Here's what I would offer - everyone knows that Jesus was a servant leader and the servant king. But Jesus who washed his disciples' feet also cleansed the temple. He kicked the tables over and removed the people who did not agree with him! (Not good advice for pastors).

'Gentle Jesus meek and mild' also called the Pharisees, blind guides, vipers and white washed sepulchres. This doesn't quite fit does it?

A servant leader is one who is prepared to lose his reputation in order to do the right thing at the right time. It will be a long and arduous journey to get beyond the consensus model of leadership!

In the scriptures I believe Jesus offered at least four styles of leadership and these are the ones I am going to use for the rest of my life.

Let's look together at Mark 1: 15-20.

¹⁵"The time has come," he said. "The kingdom of God is near. Repent and believe the good news!"

¹⁶As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen.

¹⁷"Come, follow me," Jesus said, "and I will make you fishers of men." ¹⁸At once they left their nets and followed him.

¹⁹When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. ²⁰Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. (Mark 1:15 – 20)

Here we have the beginning of the ministry of Jesus. He has come out of the wilderness, John is now in prison, and the time has come.

Jesus, fully human, starts his ministry by building a community; gathering a group of followers. He calls them to "Follow Me" and offers them his life transferred to their lives.

If Jesus is our model, our mentor, why don't we start ministries and churches this way? Why don't we pioneer new frontiers this way?

Our Consensus Model – "Hi guys, I'm Jesus, you probably don't know me but lets have a discussion about an idea I have had called the Kingdom of God. A vision that everyone can contribute to, wouldn't want to put myself above you! Maybe together we can do something wonderful?"

If this had been his model, Jesus would still be on the shores of Lake Galilee. In fact, there is no consensus building at all.

What did he do? He simply declared, "This is my vision, come follow me!" yet most of our culture tells us that this is not the way to do it.

In response I would suggest that we have not been very successful using this model so maybe we ought to change it! We start with a democratic view of consensus building but Jesus never did this and nor did his disciples.

D1 – people at the beginning of the process are excited and enthusiastic. They are confident but this confidence is not based on any degree of competence!

What did you do on the first day of work? We usually have a disproportionate level of confidence relative to our competence! Our sails have been filled out by the excitement of the moment.

When Jesus called Peter, do you think Peter had any idea what fishers of men were? Honestly, he has no idea, nor did the others, but they all join in! They chose to follow.

As time went on, the disciples begin to realise that they don't know what they are doing. They got put under pressure. We are all a bit like lemons, squeeze one and lemon juice comes out. The same is true for oranges. What should you get when you squeeze Christians? Squeeze Christians and you are supposed to get Jesus!

The Galilee campaign has gone amazingly, they had seen miracles galore, thousands of people were following and yet now the pressure was building.

The Pharisees were breathing out threats against Jesus. Worse still the Pharisees and the Herodians had got together to hatch a plot to kill Jesus. These two groups were as far away on political spectrum as it was possible to be. If the Pharisees and the Herodians were against them then the whole world was against them.

They had left their jobs and families at home, and now they were beginning to wonder what was going to happen to them.

Jesus was not being that helpful! "Woe to you blind guides." He actually had seven woes!! The disciples were thinking, Jesus please stop, 'he doesn't mean it honest, we don't think that!' We are all going to die!

Then Jesus addresses the disciples in their moment of fear. "Don't worry about the people who can kill the body, don't fear them. Fear God, he can kill your body and your soul as well!"

What a comfort those words must have been. Imagine how that would have made you feel. Jesus was making it worse to bring reality home. The reality they needed to grasp was that reality is not defined by people but by God.

If they were going to follow God they had to realise that it was God's rule and Kingdom first second and third. Everything else was to be squeezed out; they had to be brought to the realisation that they were completely incompetent!

When Jesus had said, "The Kingdom of God is at hand", they all cheered! "Lets do it, cheerleaders with pompoms, Capernaum is for Jesus! When the Pharisees came out to meet them they shouted, "Defence, Defence".

Yet Jesus says, "No defence guys!" It's God you have to worry about!

They were low in competence, low in experience, low in enthusiasm and low in confidence. **Everyone gets to D2!**

At St. Thomas' this has become the language of leadership – If someone comes into the office and says, "I am in D2!", we can help them because we all know where they are.

Having told his disciples to be afraid of God, something which squeezed out every last vestige of human will and determination, he said these amazing words.

³²"Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. ³³Sell your possessions and give to the poor. Provide purses for yourselves that will not wear out, a treasure in heaven that will not be exhausted, where no thief comes near and no moth destroys. (Luke 12:32 – 33)

You think it's about you, but it's about God. You can't bring in the Kingdom but you are going to get it anyway!

In D2 Jesus offered a reiteration of the Vision and Grace.

"I am going to help you understand that it's a gift. You can't do it! Grace apprehends you. It is still going to happen because God is doing it."

In D2 the agenda changes – Jesus withdraws from the crowds at this point.

Some have suggested that maybe he was afraid of the Pharisees, but this was hardly his style. When he stood before Pilate he let him know that if he wanted to, he could call up a legion of angels. Jesus was not an insecure guy.

He spent time with his disciples because he wanted to spend time with them. If you have a team, please take note of this. There is a huge difference between a team who work for you or those who can take on the ministry from you.

Slowly but surely the disciples come out of D2; they skirt Galilee and move into the Decapolis. It is here that Jesus is transfigured before Peter, James and John. This is the pivot point in the gospels. He talks about his exodus or departure with Moses and Elijah and from here on sets his face towards Jerusalem.

Geographically and spiritually it was all downhill from here as he walked into the valley of death. Down from the mountains and then following the Jordan valley down to Jericho and then eventually up to Jerusalem.

Jesus literally spent all his time with them:

¹²My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. ¹³Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. ¹⁴You are my friends if you do what I command. ¹⁵I no longer call you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, for everything that I learned from my Father I have made known to you. ¹⁶You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you to go and bear fruit—fruit that will last. Then the Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. ¹⁷This is my command: Love each other. (John 15:12 – 17)

There is not much of this teaching in D1 or D2. It is not that Jesus didn't live it, nor that he didn't foster a community of love; but he did not communicate it until D3.

Their lives had been integrated through the pressure of D2. They were no longer master and servants. They were going to do this together as friends. **This message is tremendously important.**

We bring it too early and wonder why people don't get it.

Having reached this state of being friends, not servants, Jesus almost immediately starts to prepare them for his departure! Saying things like "in a little while (Micron) I will be gone."

The disciples were confused. "What do you mean? Well in a little while I will be gone but don't worry I am going to send someone else to look after you."

No, we want you! We don't want someone else!

Yet Jesus patiently explains "Don't worry, the one I am sending is another Paraclete to accompany you along the road."

"We want you!" You can't really blame them. Tertullian had not told them about the Trinity!

The Stretch begins immediately in D3. Jesus declares:

¹⁸Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. ¹⁹Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. (Matthew 28:18 – 19)

Most churches have put the ministry into the hands of the professionals.

Jesus told the disciples to "teach people to do everything I have taught you".

Everyone changes society, everyone heals the sick, raises the dead, everyone brings in the Kingdom; this is not the preserve of the elite. Everyone has it delegated to them if they have learnt enough from Jesus.

So, what does it mean to be a leader the way Jesus was?

L1 – High on direction, low on consensus and explanation, high on example.

No real teaching on the Kingdom

Come follow me – who are you? Just come follow me?

Why don't we do it this way? Because most of us do not have confidence in the clarity of our vision to ask people to follow us.

It is the same thing to stand before the congregation and say this is what I think God is calling us to do! There may even be a parting of the ways!

John uses a rhythmic note – “and there was a division among them”.

Churches grow because God makes them grow! Somewhere leaders have got to get to the point where they believe God really wants their Church to grow. It's His responsibility and commitment.

Life in the Kingdom means God is in charge and I am not! – God says, “You obey and I say it.”

This is a real issue for leaders taking people through this process – You have to allow God to break your heart to the point where you can say, “This is the direction I am leading in, do you want to come with me?” I will be at the front and catch the first bullet. **This is task of the L1 Leader!**

L2 – Jesus recognises that the disciples are in trouble. They are low on enthusiasm, confidence, competence and experience.

We see Jesus adjust his style of leadership. He now gives them a huge amount of time. At the beginning there were 1000's following! When Jesus asked, “Who touched me?” the disciples almost laughed - how would we know?

In the beginning they were little more than crowd control in D1.

Time is the most precious gift we can give people in D2. Most leaders do not have enough latitude in their diaries to give to people in D2. If your team are not the most important thing you do, you will struggle to give time!

When somebody comes in who is in D2 we have to be prepared to change our diary completely – What are you doing for breakfast tomorrow? What are you doing for lunch tomorrow? Cancel everything you possibly can!

If you do that, people begin to climb out of D2 because of their connection with you. You have the vision and people catch it more than being taught. Being with you means people begin to catch it too.

Still high on direction, now high on discussion; continues to be high on example but now also high on accessibility.

Caesarea Philippi narrative – Who do the people say that I am? The beginning of discussion, what do you think? New, more interactive, human relations model of leadership.

In the context of high accessibility – lots of time in the Decapolis, away from the crowds. Let's sit by the camp fire and hang out together.

D2 is the time of revelation, and you can only get revelation through retreat.

There are times when we can engage with one another in a different way, and times when we pull back and admit our lack of success.

Pull back because you are fruitful and because you are not!

Consider the Semi-Circle - one solution for everything is to prune it – this is inevitable because you need to abide!

When you feel in D2 you need to pull back and allow the pruning to happen.

Jesus asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" – Peter replies "The Christ, the Son of the living God." Well done Peter, flesh and blood has not revealed this to you!

Jesus is still directive. When Peter says, "don't talk about all this death stuff!" Jesus says "Get behind me Satan".

Jesus is still the example – there is more consensus building. D2 was also the time of transfiguration; this is my Son, Elijah and Moses. Peter, James and John decide they should build altars! It was not something they would ever forget!

The second Peter says – we heard the voice on the holy Mountain "This is my Son"

D2 needs time and explanation, to go through the process. It needs a coaching style of leadership, to come alongside the person who wants to improve.

It's a chance to think through strengths and weaknesses. USA has a model of coaching, where Europe struggles with this.

Time spent together in D2 leads to a pastoral model of leadership. Jesus begins to address them as friends rather than servants. Ironically this is often the place where most of us start!

We use a pastoral, consensus model which Jesus definitely uses. However we use it in the wrong place. We often start in this way. He is committed to it in a stage that is very different from where we use it!

The **D3** disciple requires an **L3** leader – Consensus style, he still washes their feet but asks their opinion. How are you going to do this?

He encourages them to be committed to one another and love each other. The disciples really thought they had arrived in the upper room. It can't have

got any cooler. Passover meal, washing feet. They thought, 'we are the only ones who get it! Jesus is telling us everything'.

At this point Churches are in danger of achieving nothing. Why? Because everyone loves this point, they never want to leave! From this high point of community Jesus immediately starts to try and move people on!

I do it you watch, I do it you help, you do it I help, you do it I watch!

"Lo, I am with you always" but Jesus now takes them onto the next stage by using the language of departure.

Go to the cross – it's not your baby; your ministry is God's!

The difference in ability is not the same as when Jesus handed things on to his disciples.

We need to get out of the culture of excellence that messes up our ability to grow people!

If its worth doing it's worth doing badly! – People can't just come in and start doing things well.

We would love our Churches to be bright and shiny – I want the world to be bright and shiny. But it will be chaos a lot of the time!

If its worth doing, its worth doing badly – our job is not to create a culture of excellence but to disciple people to do things better than I do!