



ALLELON WEBINARS

Introduction to Missional Leadership

1. Frameworks for Missional Leadership

January 5 & 6, 2009



1. Frameworks for Missional Leadership

This session offers a framework for understanding the basis of missional leadership by introducing the Missional-Shaped Leadership Matrix.

2. Personal Foundation Attributes

This session focuses on basic attributes of effective missional leadership in term of personal character traits.

3. Forming People

Missional leadership is about cultivating a way of life among a people; it's not primarily about programs or tactics. It is about forming people rather than organizational or planning processes. Strategic plans, vision and mission statements will not form a missional community. Missional imagination is among the people of God. Missional leaders are like midwives who call it forth God's future from among the people. It is emergent rather than the result of a strategic plan.

4. Forming Systems

Organization and structure are important to the formation of a missional community. Local churches, parachurch organizations, denominations - all need structures through which to achieve their goals and purposes. Mission-shaped leaders are skilled in forming systems that innovate creativity and enable people to flourish.

5. Engaging Context

A mission-shaped leader invites a community of Christians to see their local context as the primary location of its life and witness. The term we use for this is moving *back into the neighborhood*. Local churches and para church ministries need to be rooted in the social contexts of neighborhoods and their interrelationships. Mission-shaped leadership is directed at the formation of a witnessing people shaped by an outward journey of gospel engagement with their unique context.

FRAMEWORKS FOR MISSIONAL LEADERSHIP

In a changing context of ministry Mission-Shaped Leaders will need new kinds of frameworks.

Frameworks are structures constructed to supporting something. Our body's skeleton, for example, is a framework. A more technical definition: A framework is the set of assumptions, concepts, values, and practices that constitute a way of viewing reality.

Our current leadership frameworks aren't working. This is why we see headlines like this:

Church facing leadership crisis, warns Evangelical Alliance

The church is facing a crisis of leadership and we need to act – that was the challenge facing 60 leading evangelicals at the Evangelical Alliance council this week... thinkers on leadership appealed to the council ... to address the problem of an aging church leadership, being depleted through factors including exhaustion and depression, and a lack of younger leaders to replace them.

Christianity Today, Monday, September 22, 2008



This session looks at two kinds of frameworks:

1. Those that contribute to this situation
2. Those that shape missional leadership skills.

1. Missional Leadership Frameworks

'... do not try to call them back to where they were, and do not try to call them to where you are, beautiful as that place may seem to you. You must have the courage to go with them to a place that neither you nor they have been before.'

Vincent Donovan

The terms **missional**, or, **mission-shaped** express the conviction that the church must turn from a focus on itself - becoming attractational or seeker sensitive - out toward the world.

Missional leadership is about local communities of God's people becoming missionaries in their own contexts. The questions we have to ask about leadership, therefore, are:

- What skills do I need?
- Do I have to jettison my tradition?
- Are current forms of church leadership (pastoral care, preaching, teaching, worship and sacrament) irrelevant?

First, we still need many of the ministry skills and values practiced through the centuries.

Second, the frameworks that shaped leadership in modernity are no longer adequate for the challenges we face.

Several of these frameworks are:

1. The **universal principles model**. Leadership practices are distilled from the dross of everyday life then applied in all places with equal effect. Like interchangeable Lego pieces, modernity assumed leadership is about skills and programs that can be unplugged from one place and plugged into another without the slightest hic-up or pause. This framework worked in the 20th century because things didn't change all that much, so much about leadership was predictable, based on what had been done before. But our world has changed dramatically.



2. The **leader as hero** model assumes leadership rests in the person who can inspire people to join a vision and achieve great goals. This heroic leadership framework assumed there were a few people who had the great skills and everyone else was deficient so had to be led. Peter Senge described it in this way:
... in the West, leaders are heroes...great men (and occasionally women) who rise to the fore' in times of crisis... At its heart, the traditional view of leadership is based on assumptions of people's powerlessness, their lack of personal vision and inability to master forces of change, deficits which can be remedied only by a few great leaders (Fifth Discipline, 1990, p. 340).

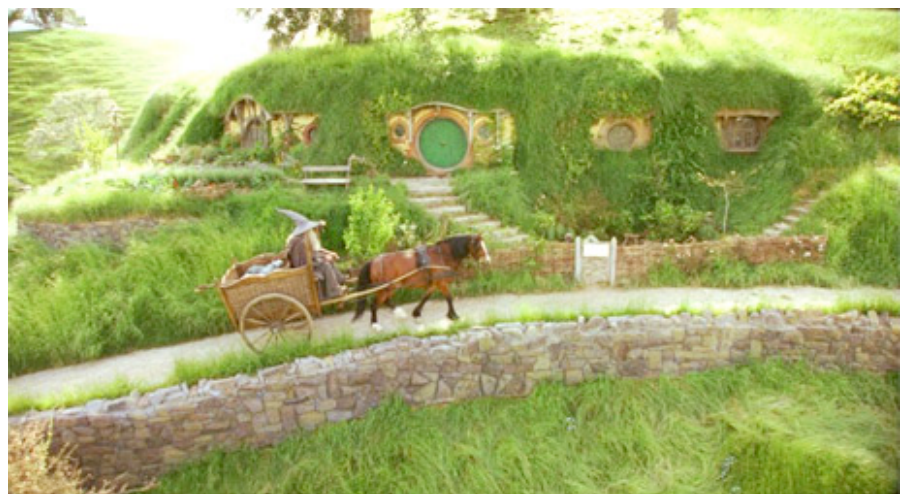
In the 21st century a new understanding of leadership has emerged. It is one that sees imagination residing in people. It sees that in this place of huge transition the future emerges from the bottom up among people not from heroic leaders. This is what we need to develop in mission-shaped leaders.

2. We're in a place we've never been in before

What does that mean?

Imagine a place where, for generations, your people have lived. In Tolkien's, *Lord of the Rings*, the Hobbits live in such a place; they call it the *Shire*.

Imagine a place filled with familiar faces and stories from generations gone before you. The shape of houses, the rhythms of life and bends of road are all familiar. Its been this way for so long that its just as things ought to be.



Its roads are second nature. We don't need to think about where roads lead or pause to think about the rules of the road. They just are. One day, while traveling one of these

roads, suddenly, without warning, you enter an open space you've never seen before. You tell yourself you're on the familiar road but inside is a disorienting sense of being in a place you've never seen before. That happened to me sitting in an airport late at night waiting to catch a red eye. I headed toward what I thought was the terminal for my connecting flight. I'd done it all before so the map of the airport was stuck in my head. But, suddenly, nothing about me correlated with the maps in my head. My inner maps were telling me I was in LAX but I was somewhere else in the world. For an extraordinarily disorienting moment I couldn't make sense of where I was. I tried to place what I saw into my picture of LAX until it came to me I was in a different airport.

This is what's happening to us. We're in a clearing we've never seen before. It's terribly disorienting. The frameworks of modernity wont will misdirect us in this strange new place.

3. When frameworks stop working we need practical help to navigate the new space not pie in the sky ideas.



When the plane crashed in the TV series *Lost* no one wanted a diatribe about why the plane was a lousy model that should never have been in the sky. They didn't want fancy formulas or 'up in the clouds' ideas. They needed to deal with the demands of the moment. They didn't need big ideas and stories decontextualized from what was happening to them right then.

Lots of leadership books today excite us with great ideals about being missional. They tell stories about what happened far away in another country. But when you're on the ground, in your own patch, suddenly aware the taken-for-granted roads are no longer there; these ideals, stories and formula seem very thin. On the ground you need practical, concrete help.

4. The Bible's counter-imagination

...the Bible provides nothing like a map that charts the precise path for us to follow into the future. What it does give us is the travel itinerary of God's people, that is, the story of their pilgrimage as strangers and foreigners through this world toward the kingdom of God... An itinerary, by contrast, consists of a series of performative descriptions designed to organize our movements through space: 'to get to the shrine you go past the old fort and then turn right at the fork in the path'.

Barry Harvey, Can These Bones Live?

Another one of modernity's erroneous frameworks about leadership is the belief that the Bible supplies a universal template or itinerary that predefines leadership for all times and all places. All we need to do is rediscover and re-apply these universal patterns for today.

The Bible offers a counter proposal. The New Testament says that if we take the Incarnation seriously the place where God meets us is in the local and the ordinary. We are to form church and practice leadership around the conviction that God is known in the local and particular. It's in local contexts where we work out the questions of leadership in a time when the old maps no longer make sense. The counter imagination of the Bible invites us to ask questions about leadership such as:

- What is God up to in the neighborhoods and communities where our people live?
- What does it mean to form a people who create welcoming spaces for the people of the neighborhoods where they live?
- What kind of leadership skills and practices do I need to form this kind of people?

The Bible keeps pushing and nudging us in these directions rather than this habit of buying into the abstract, universal models and idealized stories that don't land on the ground in the midst of everyday life.

5. Mission-shaped leaders cultivate local communities that are moving back into the neighborhood.

God is calling the church to move back into its neighborhoods and communities as the sign, witness and foretaste of the Good News. This requires a new kind of leader - a mission-shaped leader - who assists in turning the church inside - out.

If we take seriously Jesus' Incarnation then God is known in the pitching of tents in the concrete particularity of place. Missional leaders are found in the tension and messiness of ordinary life.

Because the Spirit of God is among the people of God then the place where this is best practiced is in the local - the neighborhood. We recognize emerging generations meet in affinity groups beyond the boundaries of neighborhoods. This being the case, we believe the contemporary emphasis on networks creates homogenous groups meeting on their own terms in places of their own choosing. This is why we focus on the neighborhood - it causes us to deal with the other and the stranger we would not automatically choose or isn't our kind of person.

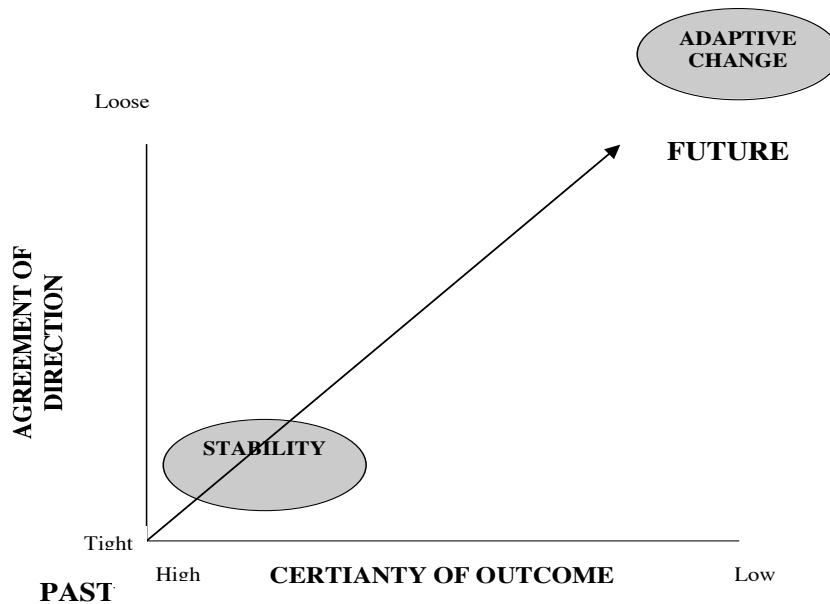
This call back to the local and the neighborhood is not a nostalgic desire to recapture some lost past but an attempt to form a missional life that engages our diverse, pluralist society to rebuild broken walls, cross boundaries with strangers and seek the justice.

6. We need missional leadership frameworks because we're in the midst of unprecedented change.

Our churches, denominations and parachurch movements were never designed to ride the waves of change now confronting them. Our leaders weren't given the tools and don't have the frameworks to understand how change process work in the midst of discontinuity. It's no longer enough to learn the A, B, C's of a program or follow the old guide book. The management of what is wont sustain a mission shaped community.

The challenge in forming mission-shaped leadership is illustrated in the following diagram. The bottom left-hand corner indicates that the less change a group goes through the more agreement and commonly owned the values, goals and purposes it shares and the more performative the leadership skills, practices and habits become. Leadership is a matter of following what others have done before you. The rule book or the operations manual is all one needs because what is required is more of the same.

On the other hand, the more we find ourselves shifted toward the upper right-hand corner, the less certainty there is and more the need for adaptive leadership skills. These are usually skills we weren't trained for in seminary.



In this new space of unprecedented change:

- Churches no longer have a privileged place in the culture.
- There is huge confusion about the outcomes, values and goals of leadership.
- With the confusion and uncertainty comes increasing disagreement among various groups in an organization about direction and purpose.

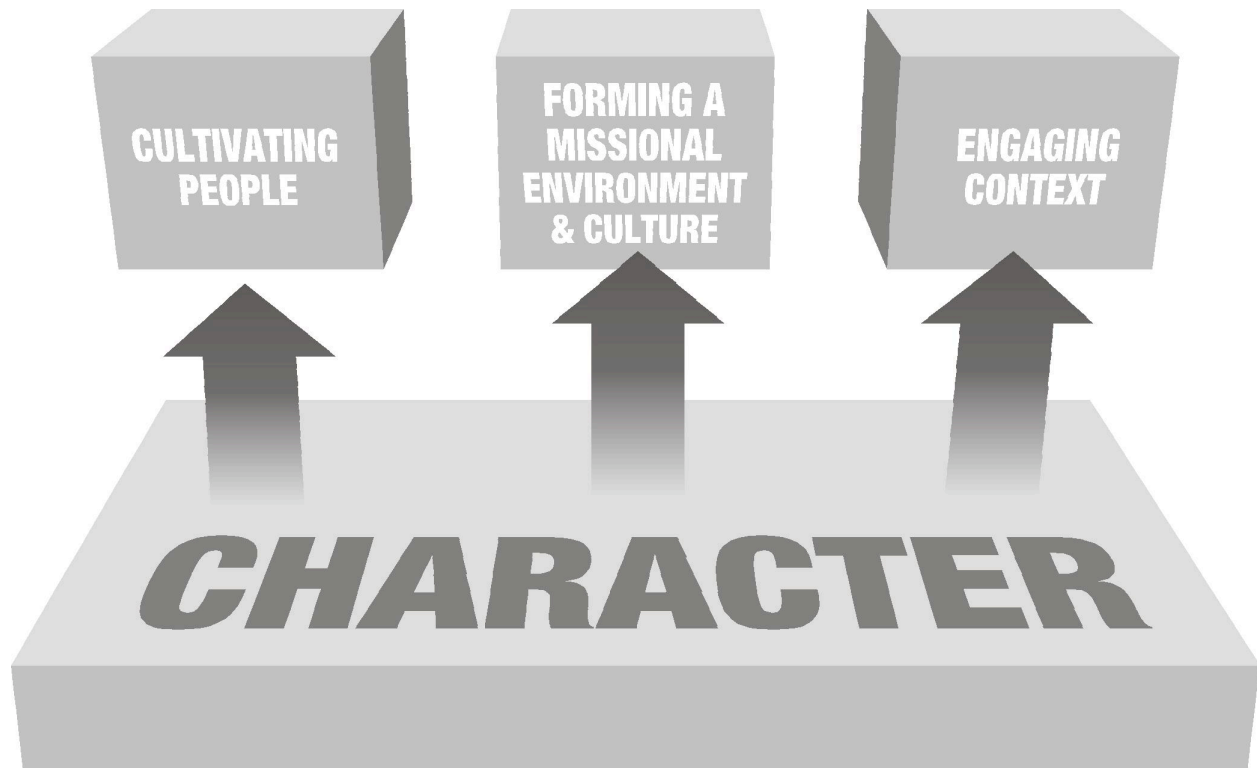
We need leadership skills for forming mission-shaped local churches. They'll be different from those required in the left hand side of the diagram. We need to understand how change works in a world where mission, vision and value statements are assigned to people's mental wastebaskets as soon as they are printed.

We have developed the **Four-Phase Leadership Matrix** as a key tool for developing missional leadership skills.

7. Four-Phase Leadership Matrix

The 4-Phase Matrix describes four primary areas in which a mission-shaped leader must operate. Together they are a powerful and practical way for forming mission-shaped leaders in this new place where the old maps will no longer work.

The four elements are diagramed as follows:



The Four Elements of the Matrix

Personal Foundation Characteristics (Character)

Missional leadership that shapes a people for more than just a few years or until the next program comes along is based on character. We describe as the **personal foundational characteristics**. While abilities and skills in the other three areas are vitally important, they won't result in lasting change unless the leader demonstrates high levels of credibility, trust and skill in this first, basic area.

Forming People

Missional imagination is among the people of God – it is to be called forth. The focus of a missional leader is the formation of a people. Within this formation the Spirit calls forth the experiments and imagination for mission. God's imagination for the missional life of your local church is among your people. Therefore, leadership is about cultivating people, without manipulating them with pre-arranged plans or packaged programs from the outside.

I spend significant time working with church systems around the world and observe how leaders in different contexts communicate what they believe is important. One way to do

this is by attending to the direction of communication in announcements, or weekly bulletins. Most leaders practice a one-way communication about how I as a member, visitor or adherent can contribute to the programs and resource needs of the organization. One hears about how to fit into what is already going on in terms of programs and groups. Some of this is necessary. This communication, however, betrays a basic value, namely, people are resources for pre-determined programs.

If one listens closely enough to this communication almost all of it is about how one can serve *inside* the local church or para church organization. Few leaders, when this is pointed out, understand the implications. When I tell them I'm not interested in joining another group or program they are genuinely confused and apologetic. They talk to me about commitment and responsibility. I tell them I really want to be committed and responsible but, I just don't have much interest attending a small group or keeping programs going.

Missional leaders are more focused on creating environments that focus on calling forth what the Spirit is doing in persons than getting people into programs. No program, no matter how good, can pre-determine the myriad of ways the Spirit is calling people into dreams and experiments of moving back into the neighborhood. Mission-shaped leaders call people to the joy, dignity and responsibility of discovering what the Spirit is calling them to be for the sake of their neighborhoods and communities.

Shaping Systems

Organizations, structures and hierarchies are how we form a social community shaped by a way of life and ends. We need organizations, structures and hierarchies to achieve thrive and achieve our purposes. People are formed together in such systems. Mission shaped leaders, require skills to form their systems in ways that innovate the creativity and the ability of people to flourish in the midst of change.

The myth of modern leadership has been management and control but when people interact with one another over time individuals become interconnected and interdependent in ways too complex to predict and control. Any system will have sub-systems – groups, departments, and programs – that create growing amounts of differentiation (some systems seek to minimize differentiation by demanding conformity or trying to fit everyone into the same set of programs and belief systems). The power of a system is the interconnectedness of all its parts; the whole is more than the sum of its parts. Systems have “personalities” and habits, ways of life and expectations that are bigger than and more than any of its parts. Organizational systems, no matter what labels we put in front of them (parachurch, institutional, emergent etc) take on a life and character of their own. Effective missional leaders understand the processes of systems change and have the skills to lead in this environment.

Engaging Context

The final area of the matrix is about how a leader shapes a community of Christians to see their local context as the primary location of their life and witness. The short hand term we use for this is *moving back into the neighborhood*. Christians life is lived, first, in local contexts and so leaders of local churches or para church ministries need skills in forming a people shaped by an ongoing journey of gospel engagement with their unique **context**.

8. Conclusion

This **Allelon Webinar Series: *An Introduction to Missional Leadership*** will look at these four areas in the Matrix.

You are invited to join us for the next Webinar where we will talk about the *Personal Foundation Characteristics* of a missional leader, January 19 & 20.

Visit www.allelon.org for more information and to register.

Alan Roxburgh & The Allelon Team
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