

Jesus' Model for Growing Healthy Leaders

By Mike Breen with Steve Woods

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Mike Breen is the creator and developer of the *LifeShapes* material (formerly called *LifeSkills*) and the eight shapes as a memorable method of discipleship.

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Introduction

Durham is the epitome of England as Americans think of England. It's an island of quaint, ancient buildings encircled by the river. The history of Raby Castle rolls back to the fourteenth century; it has towers and turrets and medieval rooms – the whole bit. And then there's the cathedral, which has been a place of prayer and pilgrimage for more than 900 years. It's one of the most beautiful buildings in England, surrounded by colleges of all sorts. I went to seminary there.

My supervisor's office was at the top of an ancient staircase on the cathedral green. One day in my last year, I sat at the bottom of this stairway with another final year student, looking past our graduation target and talking about our hopes and dreams. I wasn't at all sure what my future looked like. I hated to admit it, but I didn't think I was ready for what was coming, even with a seminary education. This was my third theological degree, and while the theological establishment had successfully convinced me that I was quite something, under that veneer was a creeping feeling that I was useless. Sitting on the steps that day, I knew I was thoroughly unequipped for the reality of ministry.

I asked my fellow student, "What are you going to do? You know, when you get out there?"

He had a better answer ready than I did. He said, "I'm going to gather ten to twelve men in the parish and disciple them."

"Er...what?"

"I'm going to get ten or twelve guys together," he repeated. "I'm not comfortable doing this with women yet, but I think I could disciple ten or twelve guys."

I was shocked. We were sitting in one of the most traditional ecclesiastical spots in the entire world, and this guy was spouting countercultural ideas about church work. Who did he think he was? Who was he to be discipling people? Who was he to tell them what to do with their lives?

"You can't do that!" I protested. "That's incredibly presumptuous. You can't disciple anybody!"

"But that's what Jesus did, didn't he?"

Now I've known some dense people, but this was unbelievable. Now he was comparing himself with the Son of God. "Jesus is the Son of God," I reminded him. "Who are you?"

He shrugged. "I know I'm not very good at most things, but I thought this might be the best way to get started. Jesus told us to do the same things he did."

I was not convinced. "Well, maybe he did, but that doesn't mean you should do this." And then I tore into him. I don't really want to repeat it here, but I let him know what I really thought about the whole idea. He would have to

have been a dunce not to see how offended I was by his presumption to be like Jesus.

I didn't talk him out of anything that day, but the conversation offended me enough to stir me into action. I began reading and thinking and praying about leadership.

And then I launched out in the real world of 1984, employed as an assistant pastor. I still had no idea what I was doing. That creeping feeling that I was useless took on an existence of its own, and it took up residence in my work. Things were not going well, not well at all.

One of the church elders, Malcolm Wiley, was astute enough to see what was happening and came alongside me.

We sat in a pub one night in Cambridge—another classic picture of the way Americans view England. In your mind's eye you see a smoky interior with people playing darts in one corner. In another corner others play pool. Some old men prop up the bar telling jokes and solving the world's problems. (I find American Christians are a little suspicious of pubs. English Christians generally have no problem with pubs; many revivals have started in pubs.)

So Malcolm and I sat in that pub that night. I'd been reading a book called *Discipleship* written by David Watson. He said that discipleship is fundamental to being a Christian, and that Jesus did discipleship in four stages.

I do it; you watch.

I do it; you help.

You do it; I help.

You do it; I watch.

I could see the logic. This is how it was supposed to be, but my own experience was nothing like this. My experiences as an assistant pastor had taught me that discipleship was important (I wrote my seminary friend a letter to apologize!), but I still had no idea how to go about it. I told Malcolm about the book and admitted I was stuck in a rut.

"If we're going to disciple people," I said, "it means we've got to lead them. But I don't know that I've ever been given a model of *how* to lead. I've got more degrees than a thermometer, but I don't have a model of leadership. This is crazy."

"It's interesting you say that," replied Malcolm. "We're being trained in a whole new way at work. They're moving away from training us in a management model and moving into leadership. Take a look at this." Malcolm pulled out an envelope and drew a square on the back side. Over the next few minutes he explained the picture. When he finished, he handed the envelope to me. A few days later he gave me some of the handouts from his leadership seminars.

I took the envelope and went to the Bible and began looking at Jesus' leadership styles. I realized that they seemed to fit tightly with what I could see in the square Malcolm had drawn. Soon I began teaching what I believed were the leadership styles of Jesus, using the square as the memory aid.

Ten years later, in 1994, I was leading a church retreat at a convent in a small rural community just outside of Kansas City. I had spent ten years thinking about the square on the back of an envelope and used it regularly when training others about leadership. I'd published several articles and book chapters on the subject. At the end of the retreat a young man wearing a sharp suit approached me

"Mike, have you ever heard of Ken Blanchard?"

"The One Minute Manager?"

"Yes, but do you know about his stuff on situational leadership?"

"Er, no, never heard of it."

The man drew a picture of a square and talked about situational leadership. I thought it was great, really interesting teaching, but soon forgot about it when I returned to England. I continued to teach and train people in the Square as part of our LifeShapes material wherever I worked or taught.

Fast forward another ten years, to 2004. I met Walt Kallestad. As I worked alongside him in Arizona and we discussed leadership, I introduced him to the Square. But for Walt, it all sounded familiar. He suggested that the square I first met on the back of an envelope in an English pub actually originated from the work of an old friend. Guess who his old friend was – Ken Blanchard.

As I looked into Ken Blanchard's work, I realized that my dear friend Malcolm probably was sharing with me what Ken Blanchard or someone associated with Blanchard had taught him. I had no idea! I now realize Blanchard's work is where all this stuff came from and obviously I give due credit!

It was also exciting to discover that Ken, probably the best-known name in leadership and management development, taught the situational leadership square as the model for the leadership styles of Jesus. He has a whole series of materials called, "Lead Like Jesus" (www.leadlikejesus.com).

Twenty years ago I knew nothing of Ken Blanchard's work. Yet since then I have trained thousands of people in what I call the leadership Square. I have encouraged them to take the model of Jesus' leadership and apply it to every dimension of life.

The Square has been one of the most flexible teaching tools I've had. I've used it teaching in churches in urban settings, disadvantaged areas, middle class areas, cross-cultural settings. And it's not limited to talking about ministry. The Square goes anywhere. People are constantly building bridges to family challenges, work place roles, raising kids, marriage, and friendships. The Square sheds insights on complex situations, but also on everyday conundrums.

Meet Steve Woods

I first met Mike at the New Wine Summer Conference in Shepton Mallet, U.K., the summer of 1998. Our paths crossed fairly early on, and it became evident that each of us had found a “person of peace.” Looking through the listings of seminars, I noted that Mike and his wife, Sally, were leading a four-session seminar entitled, “Rhythms of Life.” On the basis of my limited personal interaction with Mike, as well as being piqued by the title, I attended. I discovered in those sessions a new LifeShapes vocabulary to help me process life issues as well as give others effective tools for them to do the same. As I prepared to return to the States, Mike gave me copies of the material so that I could continue working this out in my life and the life of my congregation.

Over the next years our paths would continue to cross; a conference in South Carolina, a teaching mission in central Ohio. Ultimately, having worked out the material in the church where I served as senior associate, I persuaded my senior pastor to invite Mike for a series of meetings with the staff and leadership teams of our church.

During this visit Mike mentioned to me that a parish in South Carolina was looking for a senior pastor, and he felt that I’d be a good fit. At first I dismissed the idea. I was only 36, too young to be the senior pastor of a multi-staff church. I’d lived all my life in the Midwest, and I’d be going to the heart of the South. Our families and circle of friends were all within a one-hour drive of our home. We had three young boys and didn’t want to separate them from extended family. However, because of my respect for Mike, coupled with another clergy recommendation, I contacted the parish search committee and placed the matter in the Lord’s hands.

A few weeks later I received a packet of material in the mail from the parish. As I looked through the profile packet, several factors stood out. First, the church had lost more than 300 people and over \$300,000 in a three-year period. Secondly, it was a classic program church. The profile listed over 100 programs. The word “busy” summed up the parish life. Finally, the church had developed a provider-client philosophy of ministry. Nowhere was this more evident than in the children’s ministry. Early efforts to develop this ministry were rebuffed with words to the effect, “When I came here I was told that I’d never have to help in the nursery or classroom.” These factors added up to a dismally limited pool of leadership.

The short version of the long story is that I accepted the invitation to become pastor of St. Andrew’s Church. As you might imagine, the first priority was leadership development. One of Mike’s favorite axioms is that everyone is a leader, even if you’re only leading yourself. He encourages emerging leaders by noting that from the front everyone looks like a sheep, while from the rear, everyone looks like a shepherd. Within St. Andrew’s, the primary obstacle to developing effective leadership was a model that reinforced a concept of one leader “up front” with hundreds of passive participants listening.

We started with teaching LifeShapes with the staff and board, then expanded to ministry leaders, and then finally to every new member of the parish. Five years later we've transitioned through each stage of the Square and are beginning to go around again.

Me? A Leader?

A quick browse through a library will turn up dozens of books and theories about leadership. But only one theory really matters: What does Jesus teach us about leadership? Do you consider yourself a natural leader or follower? Actually, we're all leaders from time to time, whether we realize it or not. Once you accept the reality of your leadership, you may have varying degrees of comfort with that role. But the truth is that following Jesus is all about relationships. Jesus commanded his disciples to go and make other disciples, or learners. Our most important job is to help people learn what it means to live in the kingdom of God. We're not all gifted international evangelists, but we can all be equipped to lead as effectively as possible in the individual relationships that God puts in our lives.

As we explore the different spheres of relationships where we interact on a daily basis, it will become clear how important it is to gain a better understanding of our roles as leaders and learners. What we can expect at each stage and how to maneuver through it. How to encourage at the appropriate time, and when it's best to stand back and allow a learner to stand on their own. How to learn for each stage and come out the other side with incredible blessings. Let's take a closer look at Jesus' teachings, focusing on this perspective, for he provides the needed guidance that is still incredibly relevant to our lives today.

Chapter 1 - Cry for Leadership

Who is a leader?

Who is a hero?

What's the difference between a leader and a hero?

Americans like their heroes. Whether inventors, pioneers in civil rights, philanthropists, teenage entrepreneurs, or athletes, heroes are part of the culture. In the movies, the underdog is the hero who overcomes incredible obstacles – the little guy against the enormous conglomerate – to achieve justice for the masses. In the wake of events such as the destruction of the World Trade Center in 2001 or Hurricane Katrina in 2005, law enforcement, firefighters and medical personnel heroically risk their own lives. American soldiers heroically serve their country around the world for the cause of freedom, the most treasured of all American values.

But leaders? That may be a different question. Leaders get bad press, their decisions always subject to the scrutiny of armchair spectators with nothing to lose. Parents think the school board doesn't know what it's doing. Employees are convinced the executives have lost touch with the real world and are leading the company into the ground. Sports fans are sure they could coach a team to the Super Bowl more successfully than that idiot with the clipboard. Individuals who never made it to the polls nevertheless have strong opinions about the president's every move.

In Western Europe and North America, we have become leery of leadership. Questionable leaders have paraded through the last several centuries, especially in the last hundred years. Names like Stalin, Hitler, and Mussolini ring in our ears. War is their legacy, and remembering them prods us to be sure another one cannot happen. Democracy is one of the safeguards. Whole nations have trusted individual leaders who turned around and abused that trust, but now, many displaced dictators have been cleared away, allowing people to be in charge of the decisions that affect them. The moral failures of presidents make headlines. So leaders are a dubious bunch.

National events profile heroes who selflessly rise to the need, while casting shadows on leaders. At the same time that law enforcement and rescue teams worked for days without sleep in New Orleans, digging through the rubble of Hurricane Katrina, the masses screamed for someone to be held responsible for the unpreparedness that allowed the devastation to happen in the first place.

Even the church has given people reason to hold leadership suspect. Prominent evangelists or preachers push the failures of Christian leadership into the public eye when affairs become public or the Internal Revenue Service suddenly becomes interested in their financial records.

Every week in the cities of Europe and North America, pastors show their humanity. People get hurt in the church on a regular basis. Leaders they trust let

them down in serious ways, either by their own failure or their hesitancy to step in and set things right when something is clearly wrong. New churches have even organized around the vision of ministering to people who have been hurt by the church. Sadly there are enough such people to fill them.

Fathers leave, families break up, parents neglect their kids. Trust evaporates. Kids grow up determined to have more control over what happens to them than they had when they were young. No one is going to tell them what to do. They may spend their whole lives trying to compensate for what was withheld from them as children.

Enter consensus, a natural extension of democratic process. Even better than a majority vote is a unanimous vote. A good leader can “facilitate” the discussion process so everyone feels included and thus motivated to participate. We keep discussing and making accommodations until we have a banged-up version of the original topic, but the important thing is that everyone is happy. When everyone is finally on board, it's time to go to the next stage. That's great leadership, right?

Not long ago, the magic word was “management.” Executives went to seminars to be better managers. Pastors imported management principles into the church. Management consultants popped up all over the place. Now looking for a management consultant is like speaking Latin in daily life. No one does that. Now it's all about leadership, and good leadership is about achieving consensus. We don't want leaders to lead if that means they're going to offend us, so political leaders become perpetually mindful of whom they might alienate with a particular decision.

But when a crisis comes, “Give us leadership” is the first cry. Where was FEMA when Katrina ravaged the Gulf Coast, with Rita right behind her? Why weren't state and local authorities more on the ball? The time for leadership theory is past; it's time for action, and fast. Somebody needs to be in charge and tell others what to do so the job can get done.

A Cry for Leadership

On a personal level we look for mentor- leaders who can help shape out careers. We attach ourselves to the people who give the best advice and have the best connections.

We attend seminars to learn how to be more effective in our positions of responsibility so we can advance up the ladder.

Coach-leaders know how to pull a better personal best out of us than we knew we had. They can take a motley group of athletes and turn them into a team that works together toward a common goal.

Supernanny swoops into a different home every week and points out that the parents have surrendered home leadership to the four-year-old. Now there's a serious picture of leadership lost and followers crying out for it! Nanny Jo's weekly advice is for parents to set clear boundaries and consistent responses. "Who is the parent here?" she says.

Young women with shopping addictions and young men with drug addictions populate the talk shows, looking for someone to lead them out of the messes they've created for themselves. "Dr. Phil, can you help me?" they say into the camera. They're reaching out, looking for someone who can help them find their way back to some semblance of a life. And TV personalities are all too willing to step into the role of life coach. "I've written a book called ... and everyone in the audience will get a copy today."

The market for self-help books is huge, no matter what the subject. The Christian book industry is no exception. Readers want a degree of leadership – the author tells them what to do – but they remain in control of how much advice they take. If they don't like what they're being told, the book ends up at the Goodwill store.

If you drive a long distance on the Interstate and finally stop at a rest area, you may feel disoriented for a while. Your legs don't feel quite right when your feet hit the pavement. For many of us, life feels this way a lot of the time. We start out on a quiet country road and suddenly find ourselves on the freeway. Everything comes at us so fast we can hardly keep up. The environment changes faster than we can adapt to it.

The head of the Japanese stock market was asked about forward planning. He replied that the Japanese all believe in forward planning. "We have short-term, medium-term and long-term plans," he said. When asked what a long-term plan was, he responded, "Ten minutes." But the fast pace of our society today produces incredible levels of stress.

Most of us think of stress as the nasty enemy. One positive result of stress, however, is the urge to get out of what feels like a burning building. We recognize that something has to change, and fast. Managing the status quo is irrelevant. Now we want leadership to show us the way out.

At moments of crisis, we look for guidance and advice from the experts. The questions are legion. Who has the answers?

Leadership Looks Like...

In the church we are especially sensitive to everyone's happiness. We don't want anyone to be upset, and we sure don't want to be the reason anyone is upset. Leaders in the church get sucked into the culture's theories about how to lead. We have monthly committee meetings and only take a vote when we are certain it will be unanimous. The power of consensus. Christian unity.

But is this what leadership is really about? Should leadership in the church look like leadership in the world? Or should leadership in the church look like leadership in the gospels? The church in sin a unique position to show the world true leadership through pictures of Jesus.

Jesus was the best leader the world has ever seen. If we reflect on his lifestyle of training, we see that he goes through a particular pattern with his trainees – his disciples. Jesus sets out a definitive model for our discipleship, measuring our progress as we grow and mature. But his model also includes learning how to lead others. He incorporates a balanced mixture of serving, instructing, envisioning and caring for his followers, but he also enables those who follow to launch into new areas of responsibility themselves. This takes on its fullest expression at the end of his ministry on earth when he commissions his disciples to do everything he has done.

Everyone has leadership qualities. Yes, you! You have leadership qualities. Jesus' last words to his disciples were to make disciples – learners – out of people all over the world. While we're not all international evangelists, God does call us to be ready to help others know him and be part of his kingdom. That means being a leader, perhaps just to one person at a time.

I have three theological degrees. I should know something about leading a church, right? What I learned on my academic journey was not adequate to help me lead and did not reflect the kind of leader Jesus was. But then, even the disciples had some trouble figuring this out.

“Then James and John, the sons of Zebedee, came to him. ‘Teacher,’ they said, ‘we want you to do for us whatever we ask.’

‘What do you want me to do for you?’ he asked.

They replied, ‘Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.’

...When the ten heard about this, they became indignant with James and John. Jesus called them together and said, ‘You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.’”

– Mark 10:35–37, 41–45

Did you get that? James and John wanted to tell Jesus what to do. The other ten were not too pleased with the notion of James and John being elevated – because they wanted to be elevated as well. Jesus used the opportunity to teach his radical version of leadership.

Jesus says, *“Whoever wants to be first must be the slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many”* (Mark 10:44). Many people recognize that Jesus teaches about servant leadership.

But what did he mean by servant leadership? Let's not make the mistake of thinking servant leadership is gentle and tender. Jesus washed the feet of his disciples, but he also knotted cords into a whip and chased merchants out of the temple courts. He kicked over tables without waiting for any kind of discussion with the goal of consensus. So should we tell aspiring leaders, "Come into the church, start kicking tables over, and drive out people who don't agree with you"?

Matthew's gospel shows that Jesus was moved with compassion for people because they were "sheep without a shepherd" (Matthew 9:36). But he wasn't afraid to challenge people. He describes the religious leaders as "blind guides, vipers, whitewashed tombs" (Matthew 23:7, 23:16, 27).

This sort of thing doesn't quite match the generic picture of Jesus with a faraway look in his eyes who never says anything unpleasant to anyone. A servant leader is not one who meekly gives, because servants have nothing *to* give. They have nothing of their own; they only have what the master gives them. Servants must receive before they can give. Jesus was a servant leader because he received a vision from God and put that vision into action. Jesus as a servant leader was prepared to suffer the loss of his reputation—even his life—to do the right thing in a set of circumstances. In other words, being a servant leader is surrendering yourself to doing the right thing at the right time. In the great majority of situations, that does *not* mean negotiating consensus.

Jesus modeled servant leadership by:

- stepping into the line of fire, and deflecting/absorbing the shots fired at those he led
- washing the feet of the disciples, thus removing the grime and filth that was part of their lives
- leading in a clear and visionary manner
- braiding cords to whip those who mistreated his Father's house

Jesus was not simply one kind of leader. He served those he led with four distinct styles of leadership, each appropriate to a different setting.

Sheep and Shepherds

All of us are leading someone. We all look like sheep from the front and shepherds from behind. Someone is looking to us to lead, and we are looking to someone else to lead. Parents and children. Teachers and students. Big brother and little sister. Employer and employees. Coach and team. Friend and friend. Everyone is a leader in some circumstances and a learner in others.

Jesus calls us to make disciples of others. That requires leading them. So we need to understand the distinct styles of leadership that Jesus used. They are simply broken down into:

- I do; you watch.
- I do; you help.

You do, I help.

You do, I watch.

These four small sentences are the structure of the LifeShapes Square.

Chapter 2 - A Tour of the Square

St. Thomas' Church in Sheffield was a phenomenal church with a fantastic heritage, and I felt honored to be asked to serve there. God had done wonderful things at St. Thomas' over the years. The congregation welcomed Sally and the kids and me warmly, and the leaders were excited about the new possibilities ahead. "Let's move forward!" they said to me. "Let's hire some staff and get these ministries up and going."

I admired their enthusiasm for expanding God's work, but "moving forward" wasn't about new staff and new programs. I had good reason to believe that if I pulled up the carpet at St. Thomas', I would find not only dust, but, gossip, division, and a lack of submission to authority. Moving forward had to start with healing relationships. For the first few months, I generally ignored the organization of the church. The main need was to establish relationships with church and staff. I asked God for a specific insight to help me with the situation, and the Lord led me to Matthew 18:15: "If your brother sins against you, go and show him his fault, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won your brother over." That verse and the ones that follow are clear about how Jesus wants us to handle the difficulties we have with one another.

In the course of things, we held a meeting for workers in the children's ministry of the church, where volunteers enunciated pointed concerns about staff members and children's ministry leaders. But they hadn't talked to the individuals involved – they waited for this public meeting to raise their issues. The meeting was supposed to be the first step toward forgiveness and restoration; instead, it disintegrated into a competition to determine who could throw the most darts. People were getting hurt, not healed.

I looked at the volunteers who had been speaking up. "Thank you for sharing with us what's on your mind," I said. "Now, are you able to publicly forgive these people in the same way you have publicly accused them?"

Awkward silence.

I began to teach the principles Jesus taught in Matthew 18. I told the staff when someone approached them about a problem with another person, send the complainer to the other individual involved to sort it out. Of course I had to be an example. When I knew people had problems with me personally, I had to talk to them personally. And I did. The result was to remove the fuel of gossip and division, and the fire that threatened the church burned out quickly.

This wasn't as easy as it sounds. I loved this new church. It was a great opportunity for ministry, and, honestly, I wanted people to like me! Coming into a new situation and being so clear and direct meant I was risking popularity. But as the leader of this fantastic congregation, I knew what I had to do. In order to serve them, I had to be direct. I had to tell them what to do. I had to lead by example.

Non-suspect Leadership

North American culture is deeply influenced by broader Western culture, and Western culture is deeply suspicious of directive leadership. But culture is not our standard. Jesus is our standard. And while Jesus used directive leadership when it was the right thing for the situation, it wasn't the only leadership strategy he used. Let's step back and look at the bigger picture of how Jesus led and see how the direct approach fits into the larger goal of developing leaders.

Jesus' last earthly words to the disciples were to "go and make disciples of all nations." So he knew the big picture: he knew he would leave them and that they had to be ready to carry on kingdom work. His job as a leader was to prepare them to be leaders themselves.

"Come, follow me," Jesus said to the first disciples. Following Jesus is all about relationships. In some relationships, we are learners. No matter how accomplished we are in some areas – even many areas – we can always learn something new, and in those situations we are followers, we are sheep looking at the shepherd's back. In other situations, we know what we're doing, but the people around us look a little lost. We're the shepherd looking at the sheep's face, and we know we need to love and guide this sheep to safety. We have to look at ourselves from both directions and be willing to take on the roles that both sheep and shepherd require.

Leaders don't always like to be sheep. We're used to being out in front, blazing the trail. So in situations where we haven't got a clue what we're doing, the last thing we want is for anyone to discover that! But the truth is, we don't know everything, and the sooner we admit that, the better.

Sheep sometimes don't like to be shepherds. "I'll help, but I don't want to be in charge." How often have you heard that when you're looking for a Sunday school teacher or ministry coordinator – or even someone to do the landscaping around the church building? Or at the first meeting of the Christmas party committee at work? Or when the PTA is looking for new officers? In some situations, individuals genuinely don't feel they can take on the responsibility of leadership and still maintain balance in their lives. In many other situations, though, people simply don't have a clue what to do and don't want to be pushed out on a leader's limb all by themselves.

And they shouldn't be. You don't go from being a learner to being a leader because someone slaps a new nametag on your chest. Jesus didn't expect that of his disciples. He took them through four distinct stages of learning that prepared them to be leaders: Directing; Coaching; Discussing; Delegating.

*

*

Stage 1

(D1) Disciples are confident and incompetent.

(L1) Leaders are direct and set an example.

When Jesus says to the fisherman, “Come, follow,” they put down their nets and follow. Somehow they have confidence in his leadership and this confidence allows them to follow. But do they have good reason for this confidence? Not really. It’s caught up in enthusiasm. *He chose me! This fellow doing amazing things wants me to go with him!* Go with him and do what? The disciples don’t have a clue, but that’s not really the point. They’re just going because they were chosen. We can easily imagine they’re nervous, but they go anyway. We might wonder whether they would have started this journey if they had had a realistic picture of what it would be like. But they don’t have that realistic picture, so with enthusiastic confidence, they follow Jesus.

After a while, Jesus has got twelve guys together. Now they’re ready to get down to business. They’ve all heard him say, “Repent, for the kingdom of God is near.” They’re going to be in the inner circle of the kingdom of God. They’re going to help build the kingdom of God. This is an incredible opportunity. How much better does it get than that? Let’s listen in on their first committee meeting.

Jesus says, “Guys, I’m glad you could all make it. James son of Alphaeus, sends his regrets. He had a personal conflict, but he’ll catch up the next time we meet. We’ve got some exciting stuff to talk about today. I’ve got this idea about the kingdom. Maybe I could try it out on you, and you tell me what you think. Okay?”

And Jesus goes on to describe something of what he means by the kingdom of God and what it’s going to look like. God has given him the kingdom, and now he wants to pass it on to the disciples.

Peter jumps in, “Hey, I have a better idea. Why don’t we really do this in a big way? We can make a big splash that lets people know what’s what. Even the Romans will have to back off then. After all, that’s what we really want, isn’t it?”

Nathaniel is the skeptic. “We have to be careful how we go about this. We have to be sure it’s going to work, because if it doesn’t, we’ll have mud on our faces in our hometowns and no one will ever want to hear another word about the kingdom.”

The wheels are turning in Judas Iscariot’s head. “This is going to take some money. We need a major infusion of cash. How about we have a spaghetti supper to raise some money? We can do it one evening when the Sabbath is over. Everyone will be really hungry, and they’ll dig deep.”

Bartholomew suggests they need to have a special meeting to write a focused mission statement.

Philip knows of a great leadership training seminar.

Simon the Zealot proposes a survey to find out what kind of kingdom the people would like to have.

James and John think an organized effort will require officers, and they nominate each other as co-leaders to assist Jesus.

Andrew reminds everyone how he ran to get his brother, Peter, when he first met Jesus. They're going to need a membership drive. The more people involved, the better the kingdom will be.

Jesus pulls out his planner and says, "This is all really great input. It sounds like we'll need regular meetings. Let's try to find a date and time that works for everyone. How is next Tuesday?"

"Tuesdays are no good for me," Thomas says. "I have a standing commitment."

"Thursday?" Jesus asks.

"I can't do this Thursday, but the next two would work," Bartholomew says.

It takes some doing, but they finally find a day that works for everyone present – about five weeks away.

Jesus says, "Can I have a volunteer to contact James son of Alphaeus and find out where he stands in all of this?"

Judas son of James raises his hand. "I'll see him tomorrow at work. Actually, I'm not sure Thursdays are good for him, but I'll ask him."

"If it doesn't work, I'm sure we can find another date," Jesus says. "We've had a lot of good ideas today. Let's all be praying about this until we can get together again. Then we'll develop a fuller strategy that takes into account all the concerns you've mentioned."

Are you laughing yet? Just substitute the names, and this could be any committee meeting you've been to in the last year. And how do you feel about committee meetings?

This scenario couldn't be further from the truth. Jesus didn't try to get any of these fishermen or tax collectors to agree with his strategy and tactics, much less suggest their own. He did not call for a vote on his teaching of the kingdom. If he had, the whole matter would still be in committee discussions!

Instead, Jesus speaks directly. He's the one giving the instructions. "Come, follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." This is clear, directive, assertive language. Jesus knows the disciples' enthusiasm won't take them far. They have a lot to learn. Jesus leads by example in this early stage of his relationship with the disciples. He goes around preaching, healing, casting out demons. He doesn't spend a lot of time talking about it, either. The disciples wouldn't have been paying much attention anyway.

*

Stage 2

(D2) Disciples are unenthusiastic and incompetent.

(L2) Leaders becomes coaches.

Eventually Jesus' disciples become aware that they really have no idea what they are doing. The fun starts to fade away. The pressure mounts. Worse yet, they realize they are following a man who receives opposition from everyone who is anyone. The leaders of society see Jesus as a curse, so the disciples are guilty by association. Jesus starts to send them out to do some of the things he has been doing: preaching, healing, casting out demons. But the environment is not all that friendly to their efforts. The disciples become overwhelmed; confidence is a distance memory. They're thinking about quitting. Maybe their fathers would still take them back into the family fishing business. Or they could start their own business. That would be exciting.

Jesus changes his style of leadership to fit the situation. What the disciples need now is a coach, someone who can give them a vision and encouragement. They're ready to listen now. All those explanations that seemed irrelevant come into play. Jesus spends more time alone with his followers in order to relieve their fears and help them focus on what it means to live a kingdom life. Experience comes before explanation, and now that they've had some experience – even if it was discouraging experience – the disciples are ready to understand the job. They know it's going to take a little more than blind enthusiasm. They'll have to listen to what the coach is saying and figure out how to carry out what he says to do.

*

Stage 3

(D3) Disciples have growing confidence.

(L3) Leaders are open to discussion.

The disciples are starting to get the hang of things. Enthusiasm is back, but this time it is based on real knowledge of what the task is. They've seen Jesus in action, and his example has made the job clear. His coaching has encouraged them to believe they can learn to do the job. Confidence in their ability may wax and wane, but their general sense of competence is moving upward. Jesus talks with them quite a bit – not just lectures but real discussion. The Twelve are spending a lot of time with Jesus. They become good friends, with a level of intimacy with Jesus and with each other that they haven't experienced before.

This kind of experience would have been too much for the disciples earlier on. In Stage 1, jumping into discussions would have confused things even further. But because they've been through the trenches together, and because

they've listened to the coach, they're ready to try their hand at things again. They're in a groove where they feel happy and productive, and they hope things will never change.

At this point, Jesus again changes his leadership approach to fit the situation. He lets the disciples know that he will be leaving them soon, and they've got to be prepared to carry on without him. All the time he has been spending with them is meant to prepare them for what is ahead. Jesus is less directive now, and invites discussion. What questions do they have? What stories do they not understand? Now it's time to talk and process together.

*

Stage 4

(D4) Disciples are confident and competent.

(L4) Leaders give low direction, low examples.

The discussions of Stage 3 have helped the disciples catch the vision. They're experienced now, so confidence and enthusiasm are based on something solid. This is not fluffy fervor – it has deep roots in something real. The disciples are feeling competent because they have the experience that makes them that way. They have worked with Jesus, paying close attention and learning from him. Now they have fewer questions, but it's still great to have him around.

Once again Jesus adapts his leadership to the situation. He spends less time on being an example, because at this stage the disciples begin to do the work. It's time to delegate, and that's what Jesus does. After spending more time with the disciples after his resurrection, Jesus is ready to return to heaven. So he gives his last instructions – for the disciples to make disciples of all nations and teach them to obey everything he has taught them. Now it's their turn to be leaders, and they're ready for the role.

The Square of Life

The Square is complete. We've seen the disciples go from the "Come, follow me" stage to the "Go out to the world" stage. Because Jesus adjusted his leadership style to the changing situations, they are ready to do the job.

The Square is true for all of us in whatever phase of life we're in. If we're learners in a particular situation, we can look at the Square and see ourselves on it. Are we bubbling with fresh but untried enthusiasm? Are we discouraged by reality? Are we ready to listen and learn? Are we ready to go out and get the job done?

If we're leaders in a particular situation, we can look at the Square to see what kind of leadership is required. Should we be directive as we're launching into unknown territory? Are we giving enough examples of how to do the job and what it really entails? Are we spending enough time with learners to build

intimate relationships and process together? Is it time to let go and delegate, with confidence that the learners are ready to become leaders themselves?

You may be thinking of all the situations you find difficult: “I want to be a good father to my kids, but how do I lead them through all the pressures they face?” “My husband’s going through a tough time. How do I encourage him?” “I need to train my assistant to take more responsibility at work, but it’s hard to let go.”

Or you may be thinking of your weaknesses and are convinced you can never be the kind of leader Jesus was. “I can’t be a directive leader. I have no idea how to do this!” It’s easy to become discouraged – but the Bible teaches us that God’s power is made perfect in our weaknesses (2 Corinthians 12:9). We need to bring our weaknesses to God and put them in his hands so he can make them strengths. Put your questions, failings, and weaknesses into the hands of Jesus. He’ll lead you around the Square, again and again, with every lesson he wants you to learn. Are you able to see yet how widely this applies to our lives?

In the following chapters, we’ll look closely at each of the four stages of the Square. We’ll identify with the stages of learning that we all go through in major areas of our lives, such as marriage, parenting, work situations, and ministry settings. And we’ll see how the leadership style of Jesus teaches us to adapt and bring the right kind of leadership response with us into each situation.

We begin with the first side of the Square, which coincides with the planting of Jesus’ ministry. How did Jesus get his ministry off the ground, and what principles can you apply in your own kingdom work?

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Chapter 3 - "I Do; You Watch."

Learners

- High enthusiasm
- High confidence
- Low experience
- Low competence

Leaders

- High direction
- High example
- Low consensus
- Low explanation

The pastor called a special meeting of the church board to share his vision for the coming year. They met in the church library around a large oak table. The board listened attentively as the pastor passionately and diligently shared his vision. Outside, rain peppered the roof and thunder grumbled in the distance. As usual, after the pastor finished his speech, the church chair said, "Thank you, Pastor, for that helpful presentation. We shall now take a vote. All in favor?"

Only one hand went up, and it was the pastor's.

"All those against?"

All fourteen board members raised their hands.

"Thank you again for sharing, Pastor," the chair said. "However, your suggestions have been defeated 14 to 1. Perhaps you'd like to close our meeting in prayer."

The pastor stood to pray. "Lord, this is not my vision. It's your vision! I ask that you would show some sign. Rend the heavens and come down!"

Suddenly a lightning bolt cracked through the window and ripped the oak table in two and threw everyone to the floor.

The board members gathered themselves. As the chairman dusted himself off, he said, "Okay, Pastor, that's 14 to 2."

Fresh Enthusiasm

Leadership is not about orderly process or majority votes. Good leadership adapts to the setting. This does not mean abdication or resignation; it means recognizing that different situations call for different approaches to leadership. When Jesus began leading the disciples, he did not look for consensus or even a majority vote. He aimed his first stage of leadership at the first stage of learning; he aimed it at the disciples, wherever they were.

At the beginning of any process, people are excited because they have just joined and it's something new—everyone has their own notion about what is going to happen. Enthusiasm comes from anticipation. It comes from a dream of unlimited possibilities, from the thrill of being part of something from the start. Because enthusiasm runs high, so does confidence.

*

We've all heard the statistics about teenage drivers, and if you're a parent you know the reality of insurance premiums based on those statistics. Teenagers are inexperienced drivers. They do well enough on a lightly traveled road in clear, dry weather, as long as they don't have any friends in the car and the radio is off. But if you change any one of those variables, the outcome changes as well. One seventeen year old said, "Teenagers are idiots." He was one of them, but he recognized a piece of the truth.

New drivers have no clue about the kinds of situations they'll face behind the wheel. They've been dreaming of driving since they were thirteen and started saving for a truck before they had a learner's permit. With that new license in hand, the world is at their feet. You can't find any higher enthusiasm. But the experts tell us that teenagers consistently overrate their driving skills. On a scale of 1 to 10 for being a good driver, they'll rate themselves as a 9 after the first time they've been on the road. **Enthusiasm creates false confidence.**

Can you remember the first day you went to school? Not college or high school, but kindergarten, or even preschool. You had your backpack strapped on, and it was stuffed with brand-new crayons and glue. Remember how excited you were to be big enough to go to school? Of course, after a few years, elementary school becomes humdrum, but you have high school to look forward to. New friends. Independence. You're a little uncertain what is going to happen, but you're excited and convinced you can handle whatever comes.

I remember the first day after I was ordained. I went into the office, sat at the desk and thought, "Nobody told me what to do on the first day!"

Everything is fresh in this stage. The new job. The new team. The new baby. You lie awake at night fantasizing about the great things that are going to happen. (Except if you have a new baby; then you fantasize about how great it will be when the baby finally sleeps through the night!) The possibilities are endless. This is going to be so great! And this has nothing to do with age. Every new experience takes us back to this first stage of learning.

Stage 1: Disciples are confident and incompetent.

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

As Jesus walked beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen. 'Come, follow me,' Jesus said, 'and I will make you fishers of men.' At once they left their nets and followed.

When he had gone a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John in a boat, preparing their nets. Without delay he called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him."

—Mark 1:15–20

The disciples are human beings, and Jesus knows that they have to begin at this stage. He doesn't choose them for their experience or skills set. He doesn't choose them for their personal charisma or spiritual maturity. They don't come to him already prepared to lead. They come to him as learners, and he meets them at the beginning of the learning process.

Jesus says, "Come, follow me," and the disciples follow. "I'll make you fishers of men." He doesn't say, "Here's a flyer about being a fisher of men. Why don't you think about this for a day or two and let me know?" He says, "Come, follow me" and casts a vision before them just as clearly as they had been casting their nets on the sea. Peter and the others have no idea what being fishers of men means. Not one clue. But they have an idea that this Jesus fellow knows what he is talking about, and it sounds like a great idea to get in on this kingdom business from the ground up.

Followers have their highs and lows. In Stage 1, enthusiasm and confidence run high. They feel like they know what they're doing, and that's an exciting place to be. But running low are experience and competence. Confidence soars, but likely they are overrating their abilities. In Stage 1, confidence and enthusiasm are based in what they *hope* will happen rather than in what they know can happen because of successful experience.

Rachel was part of a children's ministry team. The pastor asked some of the team members to begin some work in an inner city community, and Rachel got excited at the prospect of starting something new. She helped recruit other people to help. This was going to be so great – ministering to children who might never hear the Gospel any other way. The kingdom of God was going to break into the inner city and transform it.

Of course Rachel had no idea what it would really be like. After all, she had never been part of an inner city children's ministry before. When the time came to minister, she learned the reality—that the kids' behavior went beyond bad and into the realm of unbelievable. Although the team touched the lives of about a hundred children, attendance was erratic, and sessions with the kids were long and tiring. None of it played out the way Rachel imagined. If someone had described this reality to Rachel in the first place, she might never have signed on. But she didn't start out with reality; she started out with vision and enthusiasm, and that carried her through the difficult times.

*

Stage 1: Leaders are direct and set an example

Jesus is direct and clear at this stage of leadership. He doesn't ask the disciples what they think should be done. Jesus had come to bring the kingdom of God, and the subject is not up for group discussion or individual interpretation. He tells the disciples what to do, and they do it because they are full of enthusiasm for this great new cause.

People need to know what to do, especially at the outset of a new project or experience. "This is the first thing to do. Do it this way. Watch what I'm doing before you try to do it." However, the kind of directive leadership Jesus shows us is not always welcome in our day and age. We've seen too many corrupt or abusive leaders in recent history, even in the church and families. The cultural message is: "It's up to you to take care of yourself, because you can't trust anyone else to do it."

Consensus, or getting everyone to "buy in" to a new plan, has its place in leadership. But this is not it. This early stage of learning is a period of adjustment and orientation. Things are not in a settled state. Whether you are mentoring a new disciple, training a new employee, or potty training your toddler, directive leadership works well during this phase. The leader announces a clear direction, not being pushy or unpleasant, but remaining consistent and visionary. The vision gathers the people around any new project, just as Jesus' preaching of the kingdom gathered the disciples. When we start out on a new trail, we need a strong, confident leader to show the way. We like to have someone with us who knows where the trail will take us, where the rough spots are, where the pretty spots are. Jesus started with the kind of confident directness that today's leaders too often hesitate to use.

Our urge to get everyone to buy in can lead to too many explanations. The issues that spurt from the learner's enthusiasm may be valid issues, but it's better to address them at a later stage. In the beginning, the leader lays out the plan and sticks with it. Instead of explanation, focus on example. Model what you teach. We tell our kids not to yell at each other, but how often do we yell at our kids? Which behavior are they learning? The one they see, of course. All the explanations in the world about using inside voices and kind words don't mean anything if kids hear the adults in their lives raising their voices at each other or at them. At this stage, the leader's job is not to explain but to be an example.

*

Steve's Story

A key question at the first stage of leadership is, "Who will I invest in?" Jesus chose twelve people to travel with him, stand beside him, watch everything he did. He kept this up for three years – this was no rapid return investment.

Margaret sat in my office at the church. "Aren't you tired of selling drugs?" I asked. Margaret was a successful pharmaceutical representative. I was trying to persuade her to take on leadership of the children's ministry. I made a great offer – fifty percent less pay, no travel opportunities, and no company car. But I had seen her working with kids and knew she was gifted. "Why don't you invest your life in something eternal, something that will last?" I urged. Two weeks later, Margaret submitted her resignation to the pharmaceutical company and took up the task of building a future generation of leaders.

Out on a Limb

James and his wife were worship leaders with a team of about thirty people. The standard was high: these people were top quality musicians, some even professionals. In many ways, the worship team functioned as a small group, but with only one dimension – worship. James and Angela had a vision for a different kind of small group. They came to me and said, “We want our worship team to be more of a small group. We want to build community together and take on some mission work – then our worship will come out of that.”

I said, “Sounds great! Go for it. Talk to your worship team, outline the vision you have and tell them what you want to do.”

So that’s what they did. Within two weeks, twenty-seven out of thirty members had left the team. James and Angela and one other person were left to lead the worship music. They went into shock pretty quickly. This was not at all what they had envisioned. They had ruined the music ministry, and for what?

They came back to me and said, “We made a big mistake. What do we do now?”

“You didn’t make a mistake,” I said. “You’re the leader. That’s the vision God gave you. It fits with the wider vision of the church. Just stand firm.”

It wasn’t easy, but they did stand firm. Gradually over the next six months people who shared the vision joined the worship team and they were back to thirty members. The quality of music may have declined a little, but the quality of worship surged. The group spent time in each other’s homes, shared a bank account for people who were in need and led people to faith.

This first stage of leadership may well be the hardest one. It’s counter-intuitive and it’s risky and it requires courage. It takes faith! The nature of leadership is complex, but complexity is resolved by simplicity, not by greater complexity. The simple solution for leadership quandaries is to look at the finest leader the world has known. Jesus is our model for leadership, and his example includes directive leadership.

Jesus said, “*I am the good shepherd; I know my sheep and my sheep know me – just as the Father knows me and I know the Father – and I will lay down my life for the sheep*” (John 10:14–15). As followers of Jesus, we are all sheep who are getting to know his voice and learning to follow him. He leads us in kingdom living that allows us to make disciples of all nations. We learn from him, then we teach others.

It’s easy to be a servant and not be directive. It’s easy to be directive and not be a servant. The challenge is to be both. Are you wondering how in the world it can be done? Next we’re going to go back to our inspiration for this leadership model to see exactly how one can balance being both a servant and directive.

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Chapter 4 - The Disciples Learn to Follow

Wherever Jesus is, the crowds are there. Lame people walk. Blind people see. Victims of leprosy run to the priest to be pronounced clean. Pharisees stand speechless in the streets, while tax collectors rush to tidy their homes for an unexpected guest. Multitudes sit on hillsides eating food that seems to come from nowhere. When Jesus speaks, people listen. They stay for hours. Sometime he tries to get away from the crowd, but they always find him. After generations of oppression and Roman occupation, something new is happening. Jesus talks every day about the kingdom of God. The crowds are not sure what the kingdom of God is, but they know it has something to do with this fellow Jesus. And they know that wherever he is, amazing stuff happens. Maybe he really is the Messiah who is going to overturn the Romans and return rule of the land to Jewish people.

When Jesus is not with the crowds, he's with his disciples – and they're a little starry-eyed themselves. Whatever this kingdom of God business is all about, they are that much closer to it because they are part of Jesus' inner circle. Jesus *chose* them! They go with him everywhere he goes. They don't always understand everything he says, but they keep listening and trying to figure things out.

Enthusiasm is skyrocketing. Jesus is the best thing to happen since water from a rock. Confidence floods the group. Whoever he is, Jesus is sure to change things.

This is the world of Jesus. It's a D1 world – it's so early in the learning process that the disciples and crowds don't even realize they have something to learn. They're ready to rush out and change the world. With Jesus in charge, they can't fail.

Jesus *is* in charge, but not in the ways the disciples and crowds think. He came for a purpose. He brought a vision. Things *are* going to change; the disciples have that much right, and Jesus is going to make sure they're prepared for success rather than set up for failure. He recognizes their fluffy enthusiasm for what it is and knows that the disciples are just around the corner from desperation. So he chooses his leadership strategy carefully. He holds their enthusiasm in check with his directive approach and demonstrates such a consistent example that they can't miss the point.

Let's Not Talk About This

Jesus is an L1 leader. He doesn't say to himself, "Wow, the people really seem to like me. Maybe I should see how far I can go with this popularity. I think I'll find out what the people think and see how I need to tweak my message." He doesn't worry about popularity at all. In fact, he makes a habit of saying things that are certain to make him lose points in the polls.

The crowds settle in for a long sermon. Time doesn't matter, because it's Jesus doing the talking. He talks about the kingdom of God like no one ever has. He has a convincing air of authority; he really sounds like he knows what he's talking about. Somehow the kingdom doesn't sound far off and theoretical when Jesus talks about it. Matthew, who would become one of the disciples, keeps a good record of Jesus' words. He may want to write a book someday, after all, and this would be good solid research.

However, Matthew and the others can easily think of some people who are not going to like what Jesus has to say.

The Pharisees, for instance. "I have come to fulfill the law," Jesus says.

Oooh. Inflammatory stuff. "*Who does he think he is?*"

And people in the crowds. "Unless your righteousness surpasses that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law," Jesus says, "you will certainly not enter the kingdom of heaven."

"What? You're going to shut me out because I had some passing thought about my neighbor's wife? You're making this even worse than what the Pharisees expect."

And the teachers of the law. "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven."

"Your Father? You're turning everything we ever learned upside down and inside out."

No, popularity is not Jesus' concern. He is bringing the kingdom of God to earth. No one else is qualified to do that. Just Jesus. God has given the kingdom to Jesus, and Jesus takes it to earth. Capturing votes is not the question. Showing how it's done is the thing to do. Jesus takes a leadership approach that is strongly directive and full of examples.

In his hometown of Nazareth, Jesus makes one of the strongest statements the gospel writers record. Let's put this in context: Jesus has been all over the countryside, and news about him has spread rapidly. Everybody knows what Jesus has been doing. So now he's home, in the town where people know him as little Jesus, Joseph's son – they probably can't wait to see what he's going to do. They know his parents, his brothers and sisters. Maybe the boys Jesus used to kick rocks around in the street with are there, or the boys he went to Hebrew school with, or the customers who used to come into Joseph's carpentry shop. All eyes are on Jesus. He stands up in the synagogue to read from the Scriptures, and an attendant hands him the scroll of Isaiah. He opens it and reads a short passage.

*The Spirit of the Lord is on me,
because he has anointed me
to preach good news to the poor.*

*He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners
and recovery of sight for the blind,
to release the oppressed,
to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor.*
— Luke 4:18-19

Then Jesus rolls up the scroll and gives it back to the attendant. Everyone stares at him— they've hardly gotten settled in their seats before he stopped reading. Now he says, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

This is no obscure passage to this group of listeners. This is the passage that makes everyone's hearts beat faster with anticipation. This is their prophecy of hope, the promise that God was sending a deliverer to free them. While they wait to hear what Jesus will say, the crowd holds its collective breath. And then he says something so startling. He claims to be the fulfillment of this passage. He claims to be the deliverer they've been waiting for.

"This is it," he says. "I'm that person. I'm the one you've been waiting for."

They don't take turns reading verses and saying how the verses applied to their own lives as we might do in a small group Bible study. They don't look up verses in a concordance or read the notes of a commentary. Jesus doesn't even explain what the passage means. "I'm it!" That's all there is to say.

Bold. Directive. Assertive.

A Leader in the Temple

John gives us another great Stage 1 Jesus story in chapter 2 of his gospel. It's close to Passover time, so Jesus is going to Jerusalem for the feast. When he gets to the temple courts, he sees the area meant for Gentile worship has been turned into a marketplace. Cattle, sheep, doves— get your sacrifice here! And if you don't have the right currency for the temple, then step right this way and we'll help you with that— for a small additional fee. The line starts right here. Let us make your sacrifice experience all you ever hoped it would be.

The temple courts were the only area where Gentiles could pray, and now it was overrun by unscrupulous people abusing the temple system for a profit. Jesus is incensed— he isn't going to turn a blind eye to this. He grabs some cording, braids it together into a whip, and starts snapping it around. Sheep are bleating, cows are mooing, doves are flapping their wings as fast as they can. This is their chance. They get out of there, pronto. Coins fly in every direction when Jesus heaves the table on its side. "*How dare you turn my Father's house into a market!*" (John 2:16).

Does Jesus have a committee meeting first to gather opinions about what action might be appropriate to take? Does he survey the disciples to see if they would back him up on this? Does he calculate the political cost of taking this position?

Jesus sees what was wrong and does what was needed to make it right.

Later he feeds five thousand men and their families (John 6:1-15). And these families have more than the 2.4 children that American families average. This was a good-sized crowd – and an excited one. These people have seen Jesus heal the sick again and again. They know that wherever Jesus goes, something amazing is sure to happen. They want a piece of the action, to hear more, to experience more of Jesus. This crowd is so enthusiastic that they follow Jesus everywhere, apparently without a lot of forward planning.

Jesus has thousands of people on the hillside listening to him, and it's been a long day. They need to eat! Jesus doesn't say, "What should we do about all these hungry people? Let's brainstorm some ideas." He simply tells the disciples to feed the crowd. He was that direct. Clearly he expected them just to give the people something to eat. No problem.

The disciples have a different perspective. It would have taken more than a Wal-Mart Supercenter to feed this crowd – and even if one was available, the disciples didn't have that kind of money, discounted prices or not.

They point out the obvious obstacles of the excess of people and the lack of cash. But Jesus doesn't say, "Oh, you're right, I didn't think about that." He instructs the disciples to have the people sit down and he feeds them. Then he goes farther and tells the disciples to gather the leftovers, which are more than anyone could imagine.

John tells us that the people realize God was working right there among them. We can imagine the enthusiastic comments.

"This guy is really something. He's the one God promised. He should be running the country."

"This man is king material. We need to get him in charge of things."

"He can't be anything but good for Israel."

"Let's keep following him until we can persuade him to see things our way. He'll see he has a responsibility to his people."

Sounds like a coup in the works. But that wasn't Jesus' way of doing things. The enthusiasm needle goes higher still. Jesus knows they want to grab him and make him king – the kind of king they are thinking of – so he slips away across the lake. The next morning, the crowd hires every boat they can find and heads to Capernaum. Sure enough, they find him again. But Jesus isn't interested in their political enthusiasm. He wants to set them straight.

Jesus begins talking about a different kind of bread than what he had fed the crowds the day before. They need this new kind of bread even more than they needed to eat the day before. He himself is the bread. *"I am the living bread that came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever. This bread is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world...unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink his blood, you have no life in you"* (John 6:51, 53).

Whoa. What did you say? Remember, this is *before* Jesus introduced communion at the Last Supper. The crowd wonders what in the world he is talking about. The people are even more confused. So we're not having a coup? We're not going to overthrow the Romans? We're just going to eat your... flesh? Drink your blood?

The Kingdom Come

When Jesus was baptized at the beginning of his ministry, heaven truly came to earth. And now, everywhere Jesus goes, this is the message he preaches: the kingdom of God is here. God has spoken to us through his Son. The time has come for people to respond with repentance and become part of the kingdom. Mark tells us of a man with leprosy who begs Jesus to heal him. And Jesus does it. After that, the man goes all around town and tells everyone the good news. Mark tells us, "*As a result, Jesus could no longer enter a town openly but stayed outside in lonely places. Yet the people still came to him from everywhere*" (Mark 1:45).

The people responded to Jesus' directive style of leadership. They didn't understand the ramifications of most of what he said, but still they followed. Without any idea of what they were getting into, they followed. Inspired by the challenge to be fishers of men, the disciples followed. Amazed at the signs and wonders Jesus performed, the crowds followed.

The leader who is prepared to be a Stage 1 leader will attract people who are in Stage 1 of learning. The leader must recognize this stage of learning and respond to it appropriately. A good leader knows this honeymoon period will not last forever – it could be over tomorrow. The leader who follows Jesus' model of ministry will stay in the L1 mode until the learners are ready for the next stage. Jesus was direct and assertive.

He did not try to get anybody's agreement.

He was not democratic; he led by example rather than majority vote.

Even if we are not used to this kind of bold, directive leadership, we must recognize it as the best choice for this stage of learning and welcome it.

In order to increase our understanding of the relevance of these teachings to our modern lives, the next chapter will demonstrate some of the practical applications of the first stage of the Square to our personal lives: our marriages, parenting, work and churches. As you're reading, see if you recognize some of the responses as being similar to your own experiences, at least in the initial phases of a particular challenge.

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Chapter 5 - This Is Gonna Be Great!

Stephanie stepped out of her parents' car and walked toward the college dorm that would be her home for the next year. A young man approached her. "Hi, I'm Patrick. I'll take your bags for you."

Patrick showed Stephanie to her new dorm room and later showed her around the college campus. In the months that followed, they became great friends. Eventually they started dating. It was perfect. They were best friends and in love. A few years later, they married.

As far as Stephanie and Patrick were concerned, life just got better and better. Life was like a permanent honeymoon. In the first three years of their marriage, they were thoroughly smitten with each other, selfless in their love for one another – or were they? Although they'd known each other for a long time, they were completely inexperienced when it came to married life. They had to learn about sharing chores and keeping a joint bank account. They had to learn about giving each other space and forgiving the daily annoyances. But they had enthusiasm, and out of that came confidence that they were going to make it. This young couple was in a D1 stage of learning about married life.

In some situations, we are the learners; in other, we are the leaders. If Stephanie and Patrick were to hit a rough patch – and let's face it, all marriages have those moments – it might be that the best thing that could happen to them is for an older married couple to say directly and assertively, "Tell her you're sorry," or "You have to let him know how you're feeling."

The learning and leadership stages of the Square are not just for the church or ministry organizations. They are for real life, for the kinds of situations we all face every day.

Stage 1 leadership in the personal arena is not any easier than in the ministry or business arena. Sometimes you make decisions you know are unpopular, but with good reason to believe they are the best choice. Sometimes you say those words you promised you would never say to your own kids – "Because I'm the parent and I said so." Your spouse may not want to hear a direct challenge to a particular behavior or attitude. Kids may dispute the values you're trying to teach. The ministry team you lead may need more structure than you usually like to give. People may perceive you as domineering or controlling or inflexible, and you don't like that because you want people to like you. As we look at our D1 experiences and L1 responses, we'd better understand the work that God is doing in us.

Leaders Learn

Even leaders have to be learners. For instance, Scripture says husbands are to lead their wives in the same self-sacrificial way that Christ serves the church. This doesn't mean that husbands always have it all together in flawless

leadership. From time to time, husbands need to learn something, and wives may be the ones to lead them through the learning process.

I've been a church leader for a long time. Periodically I become discouraged or feel I am under attack. I find myself in a state of discombobulation, and it's hard to know the next step. Sally steps in with firmness and consistent direction. She points me forward instead of allowing me to fall back. She becomes my example in attitude and demeanor. She reminds me of things like God's calling and his faithfulness. This doesn't mean I am abdicating my responsibility as the husband or that Sally is acting in an inappropriate way. It merely reveals the need to be open to the Lord's leading as we take equal but different roles in our partnership.

Square Parents

The experience of parenting is perhaps the best model of the Square that we have on the home front. We welcome into our arms squalling bundles of confusion, with the goal of sending them out on their own eighteen or twenty years later. One general overview of the process might be:

Young children:	D1 and L1
Adolescents:	D2 and L2
Late teens:	D3 and L3
Young adults:	D4 and L4

But parenting is not one large square. We go round and round the square in those twenty years as kids hit different stages and find themselves in situations they are not yet equipped to handle independently.

The L1 stage of parenting is most obvious in the early years. When a couple decides to start a family, they are full of ideas, enthusiasm and dreams for family life. But they really have no idea what it's going to be like. They may read all the back issues of a parenting magazine or listen to talk shows on the topic of parenting, but until they're in the throes of it, they don't really know. Nevertheless, they feel confident because parenthood is something they've wanted and planned for. They think you're going to be terrific parents and raise the perfect kids. They're entering a whole new world of possibilities, and the enthusiastic wind in their sails keeps them going. Six months or a year after the birth of their first child, they may wonder what in the world they were thinking. How could they have thought it would be easy, that a magazine article would have the answer for everything? The baby won't nap, or the baby is allergic to milk. The toddler refuses to let mommy out of her sight. And it only gets worse once the child discovers the word "no." But at the beginning, when they first dreamed about starting a family, their outlook was enthusiastic and confident. When children are toddlers, we tend to be low on consensus and high on direction. The child whose primary means of communication is "no" does not have an equal vote with a parent about when bedtime is or what constitutes a healthy lunch. Did you know that the typical four-year-old child asks more than

four hundred questions a day? How many of those can you reasonably expect to discuss? Most require a directive yes or no answer. Can I have a cookie? Can we go to Billy's house?

When children are a bit older, perhaps twelve or so, it's tempting to opt out of L1 leadership. They're too strong-willed, we don't have the energy; we figure they'll learn from their own mistakes so we risk letting them make some huge ones. At the other end of the spectrum, we can overdo L1 in order to retain control, when kids really are ready for the next step and need the experience of making decisions if they are to become independent.

As our own children grew older, Sally and I wanted to give them a strong sense of what the family is and how we operate. We were clear about our values and what we stood for. We ate meals together. Our kids could participate in only one activity a week, and nothing that would take them away from Sunday services. We made it clear even in their teens that they needed a certain amount of sleep. Our children have different abilities and qualities we love, but their individualism did not dictate the family schedule. The L1 parent has to be secure enough to say, "This is what we do in our family" even when it makes you unpopular with the rank and file of your home.

But as L1 parents, we have to be high on example as well. We can't tell our kids they can only join one activity if we are constantly overextending ourselves. We can't tell them to eat in healthy ways if we live off of junk food. We lead our kids in the things we know are important by being a good example when it comes to rest, living in community, being accountable, spending money wisely, and growing in our relationship with God.

As children grow older, we communicate Stage 1 leadership differently. By the time they're full-fledged adults, it's a different story. When kids leave home and are on their own, with their own careers and families, L1 happens only if they invite you into a particular situation. If they call in the middle of the night and ask what to do for the colicky baby, you can give some direct instructions. If they overextend themselves financially and ask for help, you can show them how to stick to a budget. But you cannot stay in an L1 mode all the time. Kids grow and change, and their need for parental leadership changes as well.

Finally the empty nest stage comes. Your youngest is starting college; the older ones are beginning their careers and perhaps have gotten married. You're looking forward to more time and space for the first time in twenty-five years. Time for hobbies, time for you as a couple, time to spend money with less anxiety. But a lot has changed since before you had children. You're entering a stage that you know nothing about, just as you knew nothing about marriage or parenting in the beginning. You haven't been in this position before, and there will be lessons for you as well as for your adult kids.

Learning and Leading at Work

You've been in the same job for five years. You feel it's time for a change, or an unexpected opportunity presents itself. You interview for a new job, and it's looking very good. You really clicked with the interviewer, and you're pretty sure the job is yours if you want it. The more you think about the new opportunity, the more excited you get. You'll have a fresh start, the chance to do something different and more challenging, perhaps a new role as leader of a work team. You'll get to travel, which you've always wanted to do. The skills you've developed over the last five years have made you confident of success in the new setting. People in the new place will probably appreciate you more than your current coworkers. You're going to have a chance to do something that really matters, and you're one hundred percent sure you'll be good at it. This is a great feeling, a great place to be.

Congratulations! You're in D1! The truth is, you don't know what the new job will be like. It may be a lot tougher than you think. The learning curve may be a lot steeper than you expected. The person who interviewed you didn't explain to you about the vice-president's finicky personality. The travel may be more exhausting than you ever imagined. What you need is an L1 leader who understands your D1 enthusiasm and will harness it by keeping you on track.

Or perhaps you are the L1 leader to someone new in your workplace. The new guys are watching you to see what to do and how to do it. Or you're the new team leader for a work group that has been tossed to and fro on the waves of corporate whimsy, and it's your job to rally them around a vision. You might be tempted to offer a vision that makes everybody happy so they like you. But what if they need to swallow a tough truth? What if you need to give the group a vision they don't yet understand, and it will make you look like a know-it-all boss?

Doug had his own business making and selling graphics. He started out applying decals to the sides of trucks for another company. But Doug always had a vision that was one step ahead of where he was. He was the kind of person who wanted to push the boundaries and had the vision and motivation to do it. Eventually he opened his own shop and began designing and manufacturing the decals that went on trucks and billboards. All around town, he could point out the vehicles he'd worked on because they bore his designs. However, he knew the business could grow even more. His staff was running out of space to do the work they had, much less take on more. He needed more space, more staff, more equipment.

Doug called his team together and cast a vision for the future of the company. He didn't explain every detail – how much it would cost, how long it would take, where the new building would be, what the new equipment would be like. He simply communicated a vision of growth and expansion and called

for every staff member to get behind him. He knew everyone would have to make adjustments.

“So are you with me?” he asked.

The team was more excited than Doug had imagined they would be. A period of change that could have been incredibly stressful became a period of energizing growth for everyone.

Doug was the kind of person who always had new ideas. But this change came because he honed his ability to hear God. His confidence did not rest on his own abilities or skills but on a clear sense of calling. When he communicated that sense of calling to the team, they were ready to move forward.

L1 leadership can put people off. It puts people under pressure and forces them to make a choice, and some will choose to walk away. Whatever your vision, it's not for them. If you're the leader, you have to make the tough calls, even if it makes you unpopular.

Leading Disciple-makers

Bible study and prayer – that's all we need to get a ministry going, right? It sure seems like it ought to be that simple. Gather a group of people who love the Lord and want to do kingdom work and get moving!

A group of volunteers met to discuss launching a new children's ministry in their church.

Lindsay said, “We have to teach children to love Jesus. That's the most important thing.” Everyone murmured agreement.

Chris said, “Today's Christians are biblically illiterate. We must teach children to know the Bible.” Who could argue with that?

Tia suggested, “Wouldn't it be great if church was the place where kids found their best friends?” Of course.

Joannah added, “We can't forget about the families of these kids. We have to look for ways to minister to the whole family.” Great idea.

Lisa was a teacher and said, “All the latest brain research shows kids learn better when they're having fun. It has to be fun.”

Mark said, “The main purpose has to be outreach. Most people who become Christians come to faith before the age of 14. We have to think beyond just the families in our church.” The Great Commission, yes, yes, yes.

Who can argue with any of this? But you can see where it's going. Enthusiasm couldn't be higher, each lofty idea reinforced by the next. This magnificent team is going to storm the church, turn children's ministry on its ear, and change the world for Christ.

But what's the first step? Lindsay, Chris, Tia, Joannah, Lisa, and Mark all have different answers. What we have is a committee full of D1 followers and no leader. Now imagine the team leader sitting at the end of the table, waiting her

turn to speak. All eyes turn toward her. If she's an L1 leader, no matter what she says now, someone is going to be unhappy. Probably several someones.

*

It's hard work to be the leader during Stage 1. It's costly. Much of the time the leader is misunderstood, and the followers are not ready to listen to explanations. They've already got things figured out. Nearly every L1 leader I meet says to me, "It's killing me to do this L1 thing."

It's supposed to be that way. Jesus didn't lead the popular way; he led the hard way. Casting a vision and then giving firm and assertive direction is the Jesus way to lead.

But following an L1 leader shakes thing up. It rattles confidence. The leader doesn't do what the followers expect, and the followers start to wonder if they've picked the wrong guy to follow. They think, "It wasn't supposed to be like this."

Yes, it was. "It wasn't supposed to be like this" is the portal to the Stage 2 of learning and Stage 2 of leading. We can't get to Stage 2 unless we've come through Stage 1 first, and we can't get to Stage 3 any other way than going through Stage 2. If we don't ask the questions that arise during the transition between Stage 1 and Stage 2, the learner doesn't move toward the independence of Stages 3 and 4.

On to Stage 2.

Chapter 6 - Brixton, Here We Come!

I was twenty-nine years old with a wife and two small daughters when I became the senior pastor of a church in Brixton, a disadvantaged area of London. For the first six months or so, we settled in well. The ministry was growing, especially the children's work and youth ministry. We had facilities that would serve us well as we expanded. However, a private childcare organization had been renting space in our building, so to accommodate our own growing ministry, we had to politely ask the childcare folks to begin looking for another location. It wasn't long before the relationship soured.

The owners of the childcare center mobilized a campaign of parents to resist the move. They just weren't going to move. Mind you, we didn't ask them on Friday to vacate by Monday. We weren't trying to put them on the street or run their business into the ground. They were serving the community well and we had every hope that they would continue to do so in another location. We offered a generous amount of time for them to make other arrangements. But they weren't moving. On Mother's Day, placard-carrying parents swarmed the church, picketing our heartlessness. The evening news picked it up and broadcast it all over London. We were on the front page of the local papers and received a stream of hate mail and intimidating phone calls. Not exactly the kind of publicity I wanted. I felt forlorn and solitary.

Eventually, the notice period ran out, and the childcare center still had not moved. We were forced to change the locks, which again incited a media frenzy I didn't want.

By God's grace the church grew during this period. However, the emotional strain of these major events compounded the physical toil of leading a growing church that was active in the local community. The stress began to expose some deep-rooted pride I had, as well as spiritual fragility. I was afraid I had fallen into hands of forces far greater than me. Either I would burn out or catastrophically fail in some way. At that time God began to teach me a deeper appreciation of his grace at moments of my greatest weakness.

Two other pastors wrapped themselves around me to bear me through: Rev. Canon. Sir Nicholas Rivett-Carnac from St. Mark's Church in Kennington, a legendary pastor in the inner city, and Dick King, pastor of Indian Hills Baptist Church in North Little Rock, Arkansas. Sally also offered support, reminding me to cling to God. She often read me verses from Psalm 61.

*Hear my cry, O God;
listen to my prayer.
From the ends of the earth I call to you,
I call as my heart grows faint.
For you have been my refuge,*

a strong tower against the foe.
— Psalm 61:1-3

The events of this season of my ministry chipped away at my pride, leaving me broken in the hands of God. I could not depend on myself; I had to depend on God. The work was too much to bear in my own strength. Fortunately, I didn't have to. God was gracious and faithful, giving me everything I needed to see me through. This wasn't the last time I would need this lesson, and I'm sure I'll need it many times still ahead of me. God brings it in a fresh way every time I need it.

Steve's Story

Unlike most seminarians in the Anglican stream where I swim, I was appointed to pastor a mission congregation immediately after graduating from seminary. What a great start!

When I got there, I presented my vision for the church to the leadership there and everyone was on board. It was an exciting time — this was going to be fantastic!

Eighteen months later, the picture had become drastically different. Church attendance had dropped by fifty percent. Giving had fallen. My vestry, or board, was angry with me. The diocese notified me that based on the current trends, I would be reassigned and the mission closed within another eight months. I had sunk to depths of frustration and bewilderment. It seemed as if everything I touched would blow up.

What happened? I was trying to be the good pastor. Clearly I had misapplied Paul's injunction to be "all things to all people." Trying to do this, I'd redefined my vision for the church so many times that my congregation was rightly dispirited and confused.

Compounding the stress I felt from my failure at work was the pressure of a growing family. As I tried to salvage something from the ministry, I spent less and less time with my family. I told myself, "If I just work harder, do more, communicate better — whatever, I'll figure this out." I became an absentee husband and father.

One afternoon I found myself walking the halls of an empty church, overwhelmed and clueless. Walking into the sanctuary flooded me with emotions.

"This isn't what I signed up for, Lord."

How had it come to this? I became a follower of Jesus Christ because I was attracted to his beauty. The Christian community described in Acts 2 tantalized me; that's what I wanted. How could I have failed so badly? That afternoon, I pulled off my clerical collar, placed it on the altar and told the Lord, "You can have it back." Then I left the sanctuary.

At home that evening I told my wife, Jacqui, that at the end of the summer I intended to resign and pursue a law degree. Wisely, Jacqui counseled me to hold off announcing that to the church or the bishop. Instead, she suggested we take our vacation, focus on our family life, and see what the church looked like when we got back.

"Why don't you do what you said you were going to do?" Jacqui asked, referring to the original vision I had presented to church leadership two years earlier.

"What if I fail?" I countered. I had lost confidence in both my leadership abilities and the vision I had articulated.

"Well, you're already failing," Jacqui said. "At least you'll know if your vision has wings. And if it doesn't, you can walk away knowing that you tried to lead the church in the direction you felt the Lord impressing on you."

Returning from a vacation with nothing to lose, I called a leadership meeting and followed up with a series of church-wide meetings. I talked about my "vision of the month" approach to ministry and how that hadn't worked. I apologized for my failure to lead and returned to the vision the Lord had placed in me. I invited the church to move together into the future.

Over the next three years, we accomplished much of what I articulated in the church-wide meetings. What satisfied me most was seeing the emergence of a leadership community that continued after my departure as vicar. St. Anne's had been a mission of the diocese for more than ninety years. Under the guidance of my successor, one year after my departure, these same leaders attained parish status. It was a great day of celebration for the church.

Out of the Doldrums

Both Steve and I went through some serious D2 stages in ministry. We started out with incredible enthusiasm and confidence and got hit smack in the face with reality. Real life didn't bear a remote resemblance to what we pictured.

* When D2 hits, it's like someone pushed you into frigid waters. All you want is to get out. Swimming around to explore the environment isn't on your list of things to do. You either have to get out or drown – and sometimes drowning looks like the more attractive option.

* Stage 2 is the most important stage in the development of a disciple. It's the hardest lesson to learn, yet the one with the greatest transformational potential. This is when the excitement begins to die down and you realize you're incompetent and inexperienced. Thoroughly. Absolutely. You have nothing of your own strength to offer. It's a shock to realize – and admit – you can't do the job. What if other people find out this dreadful secret? Panic sets in. You get scared. Opposition seems to rear up everywhere you turn. You forget the vision – that's what got you in this mess in the first place, isn't it? You're just trying to survive.

*

D2 might be all right if some highs balanced out the lows, but they don't – **this stage has no highs**. The choices are only low and lower. And just when you think it can't get any lower, you find that it can! People begin to notice you're not really handling the job, and you get anxious about how much truth they're going to discover if they keep looking.

What happened to D1? What happened to enthusiasm? Confidence? "I want to go back there," you say. In fact, many people do go back and forth between D1 and D2. It's easier to quit and start something else – and thus have the opportunity for a fresh D1 stage – than to live through D2 and come out on the other side. If the job goes sour, find another job. Find a new volunteer project. Search out a new gym or team to play on. Go shopping. Change churches. Take up with a new best friend. But soon enough we crash into D2 again. After a few months, the new job feels just like the old one. The credit card bill arrives for your shopping extravaganza. No church is perfect. Your new best friend has a different new best friend. D2 always comes after D1. We can run, but we can't hide from D2.

When God calls us to grow in a new way, we have to be ready to face D2. In D2 we receive the word of grace that Jesus speaks to us. It's not about what we can do, but what the Lord wants to do through us. It's not about our strength, it's about offering God our weakness. It's not about having it all together, it's about admitting our need for God's grace. D2 is hard, and there is no pretty way to go through it. But God's grace brings us through to the other side.

Before proceeding to a fuller exploration, think back on your own Stage 2 experiences in your marriage, parenting, work, or church. Reflect on how you handled the disappointments of reality setting in. Did you flee from the challenges or persevere? Now read on to learn more about this most challenging of stages, and yet most utterly rewarding.

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Chapter 7 - "I Do; You Help."

Stage 2

Learners

- Low enthusiasm
- Low confidence
- Low experience
- Low competence

Leaders

- High direction
- High discussion
- High example
- High accessibility

Megan pondered her bedroom and decided it was time for a paint job. The room definitely needed help. In particular, her wardrobe cabinet needed freshening. The murky brown had to go in favor of something more vibrant. Red! The perfect color. And she even had some red paint in the basement. A few minutes later she had the paint in one hand and a brush in the other, ready to attack the job. A few minutes after that, paint was splotted on the carpet, splattered on the wall behind the wardrobe, and spread all over Megan. To top it off, red looked atrocious on the wardrobe.

When she started, Megan thought this would be an easy job she could quickly feel good about, but in almost no time, she realized she had no idea what she was doing and had only succeeded in making things worse. Now she faced the unpleasant task of cleaning up and trying to undo the damage she'd done to the cabinet. The journey from D1 euphoria to D2 despair was short.

Sound familiar? Painting a wardrobe may seem like a small thing. In your own mind, you may be substituting some other home improvement project gone awry, or a work project that didn't turn out the way you expected. Whether it was a small project or an enormous one, the feelings are recognizable.

How about this scenario? You've been to church and the worship is wonderful. Oh yes, that's good. The music makes you feel great. Even the announcements sound exciting. And the sermon! The pastor essentially says, "God loves you, and he's got every reason to love you because you are pretty terrific." On the way out the door, even the ushers compliment you. So there you are, Super Christian, striding through the halls of the church with all of God's glory on you. Leaping across church history in a single bound. Catching speeding sinners in your teeth. Nothing can ruin this day.

On the drive home you see lights flashing behind you. A police car is trying to get your attention. Surely you weren't driving *that* fast? Your wife seemed to think so. Unfortunately the police officer agrees with her! The rest of the journey home is slower, because you are accompanied by a speeding ticket, a fine, and a frustrated wife.

Pop! All you hear now is the sound of air rushing out of your balloon. Super Christian becomes Quasimodo Christian. "I'm sorry. I'm no good. I know I'm no good. I've never been any good."

That's the fast version. The slide from D1 to D2 can happen in an instant or over a long period of time. For the disciples of Jesus, it was the latter.

Stage 2: Disciples are unenthusiastic and incompetent.

When Jesus calls, the disciples answer. They follow him around and watch everything he does, listen to everything he says. Jesus is doing great stuff, and the crowds are loving it. This group of twelve guys couldn't be more charged up about being in his inner circle. Then the day comes that he begins to say, "I'll do it, but you help." He sends them out to do the things he himself has been doing: preach the gospel, heal sick people, throw out demons.

Then the Herodians and the Pharisees come together in opposition to Jesus. That's like having the ACLU and the Christian Coalition find common ground and take up a cause together. The Herodians, a Jewish political group, supported Roman rule. The Pharisees, a religious sect, were at the other end of the political spectrum. But in Jesus, the Herodians and Pharisees had a reason to unite: the Herodians feared Jesus' surging popularity might pose a political threat to the Romans, while the Pharisees wanted Jesus' religious popularity squelched. Two powerful forces came together with different motivations but the same goal – to get rid of Jesus.

The disciples are starting to feel the heat. Put yourself in their spot. You're a soft-bodied individual. You've left your livelihood to follow this guy, and now you don't understand a thing he's doing.

Jesus doesn't try to cool things off – he just heats them up more. He speaks bluntly to the Pharisees. He says one radical thing after another to the Sadducees. "You're hypocrites! You're like a dish that's clean on the outside but dirty on the inside. Woe to you!" (Luke 11:39)

But Jesus doesn't stop with one accusation; he has seven woes to hurl at the religious leaders. As a disciple you're thinking, "Stop. Stop. *Stop!*"

You turn to a Pharisee and say sheepishly, "He's doesn't mean it. Everything will be all right."

But the Pharisee is unmoved. "No, everything will not be all right."

You turn back to your fellow disciples. "We're all going to die," you mutter under your breath.

Peter and the gang are looking over their shoulders, afraid of guilt by association. What is Jesus doing? Does he expect them to do this? The early enthusiasm is gone. The reality of following Jesus is setting in. It means hard stuff. It means self-denial. It's not at all the kind of power they thought it would be. Confidence is out the window. The disciples are thinking, "Man, he's making

them mad! Doesn't he realize they're going to kill us?" The disciples keep following, but they're starting to wonder if they've made a good decision.

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Stage 2: Leaders become coaches.

How does Jesus respond to the disciples' confusion? He's still directive. He'll still say, "Now, guys, you're tired. We need to get some rest. Come on. Let's get away from everything for a while." But he's also introducing a new element. He's looking for ways to spend more time with them. When they have questions, he gives answers. Even when they don't have questions, he offers explanations. Jesus spends more time with his disciples in order to relieve their fears and help them focus on what it means to live a kingdom life. And the disciples are finally ready to listen.

In Jesus' leadership style, experience comes before explanation. Jesus doesn't try to protect the disciples from the dangers of following him. He exposes them to the danger. The disciples are there when he confronts the Pharisees in Luke 11. They can see plainly that by the time Jesus is finished, the Pharisees and teachers of the law are incensed and determined to do something about Jesus.

Soon after this, when Jesus gets his disciples off on their own, he tells them:

"Do not be afraid, little flock, for the Father has been pleased to give you the kingdom. Sell 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. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

— Luke 12:32–34

"Those people?" Jesus is saying. "You're worried about those people, the Pharisees? Don't worry about them. Fear God. He can kill your body and your soul."

And that's supposed to help? It feels more like Jesus is making it worse. And of course the reason he's making it worse is to bring reality home to the disciples. Reality is not defined by people; it's defined by God. And if you're going to follow God and advance his kingdom, you need to understand that. It's God's rule, God's kingdom. The truth is finally sinking in for the disciples; they are completely incompetent at this kingdom business. They can't do it by themselves after all.

Jesus is telling his disciples to let go of their old securities and find their security in him. In their earlier stages of enthusiasm, the disciples thought they would usher in the magnificent kingdom of God in a flamboyant way. Now they're scared. They certainly can't do this job.

Jesus pulls away from the crowds more and more, creating private time for the disciples. The disciples are in a new stage of learning, so Jesus enters a new stage of leadership. In the early days of Jesus' ministry, it seemed like there were always thousands of people around. The disciples followed and watched and listened, but their opportunities to engage in discussion were limited. That's changing. Jesus now gives the disciples huge amounts of his time. Talking with the disciples is his top priority.

Vision and grace are on Jesus' mind now. He is telling the disciples, "I'm going to help you understand that it's a gift. You thought it was work that you could do and you were excited about doing it. And now you know you can't do it. It's not about work, it's about grace – grace that I am giving to you."

In D2 we understand grace for the first time. Grace captures us. We understand that while we can't do this thing, it's still going to happen. God is going to do it. If you do a detective job through the gospels, you'll see that Jesus withdraws from the crowds at this stage. Many commentators have suggested he does this because he was frightened of the Pharisees, and Herod was breathing serious threats against him. I don't think that's the case at all. Jesus wasn't afraid of anybody. Remember, this is the guy who would soon kick over the tables in the temple courts – running away isn't his style. Rather, he is purposely creating time to spend with his disciples. That's what they need right now – time with him, for the teacher to be available, to talk about things together.

When a member of my team comes to me in a D2 quandary, I take out my planner and begin making changes.

"Let's spend some time together."

"What, now?"

"Have you got something you have to do?"

"No."

"Then let's spend some time together now."

"But what about other stuff?"

"I'll cancel it, or think of another way to do it."

Obviously you can't cancel a funeral or a wedding, but you can work out adjustments to your overall schedule. Then I say, "What are you doing for breakfast tomorrow?"

"We've just spent two hours and we're going to meet tomorrow?"

Then you do breakfast and ask, "What are you doing for lunch tomorrow?"

People will start to climb out of D2 because they're getting what they need – a connection to their leader. God gives the leader a the vision, and it is more caught than taught, so being with the leader means others will begin to catch it as well.

Jesus continues to be high on direction, but now he's high on discussion as well. He continues to be high on example, but now he's also high on accessibility. He invites discussion. "Who do people say that I am?" he asks his disciples. He

listens to the answers and then asks, "What about you? Who do you say I am?" Jesus is shifting to a leadership style that is interactive.

Peter catches a glimpse of the vision and boldly says, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God."

Jesus says, "No human being revealed this to you. You know this because my Father has told you."

Peter essentially responds, "Now, Jesus, don't get morbid. Don't start talking about your own death," and Jesus immediately says, "Get behind me, Satan!" (Matthew 16:13-23)

How many pastors call the chairman of the board by that name?

Jesus doesn't hesitate to be directive when the situation calls for it. Jesus is still the example. But now the disciples have a much greater level of interaction with Jesus. From this point forward, Jesus is still preaching and healing, but the disciples can see now that he is headed for Jerusalem. The hard times are only going to get harder.

This second stage of discipleship is a stage of revelation. The kingdom of God is not about a coup or any other action that the disciples could take in their own strength. It's about what God is going to do in his power. D2 is when we realize that grace is what matters, not performance. We can't just try harder, work longer hours, have more meetings. We learn now that we live in God's grace. Yes, we have a vision. Yes, our lives have direction, and we are working in that direction. But it is God who is working in us by his grace. Up until now we thought the vision was work, and we were excited to do it. But now we know that we can't do it, and we're never going to be able to do it. We learn grace. We find ourselves captured by grace. We can't do it, but it is still going to happen, because God is going to do it.

Stage 2 is the most important stage in the learning process. If we give up and bounce back to D1, we miss the grace that comes in D2. Eventually we realize where the grace is, and we're ready for it. In Stage 2 we learn that we cannot simply lift ourselves up by our bootstraps. We learn we're not really in control, as much as we might like to be. God is in control. Confidence begins to return because we are confident in God's grace, not our own strivings.

The leadership style that meets the needs of the D2 stage of learning is a coaching style. The leader gives directions and demonstrations, but now the leader also invites discussion. Is the learner really understanding? Do we need to clarify before we take the next step? Does the learner feel free to ask questions? Is the leader making himself or herself more available on a personal level?

Leaders need to be there to offer God's grace and encouragement on a personal, individual level. While the disciples are falling from Stage 1 enthusiasm to Stage 2 despair, the leader can offer a ladder so the disciples can climb out of the pit. The two rungs on this ladder are vision and grace.

*

Dangers of Stage 2

Leadership at this stage has its dangers. The first is the danger of indulging others. People in D2 despair want to be understood and pandered to. The last thing they want is a challenge. The L2 leader has to wrestle with whether to sympathize and offer affirmation without challenge, or to do the tough thing. Whether the learners are children, spouses, colleagues, or ministry teams, indulging them does not help them to become effective leaders themselves.

Eli the priest had two sons, Hophni and Phinehas, who served alongside him in the temple. Things may have started out well, but they went badly wrong. Eli's sons were corrupt; they took the Lord's offerings for themselves and slept with the women who served at the temple. They may not have recognized it, but this was the D2 stage of their ministry as priests. It wasn't long before word got back to Eli and he censured them and made sure they understood what he expected. But even though Eli knew the impact his sons' sins had on the wider community, they were allowed to remain in office. Nothing changed.

A man of God arrived to confront Eli. God wanted to know why Eli was putting up with what his sons were doing (1 Samuel 2:29). Why was he indulging them?

Hophni and Phinehas had not had a one-time slip. Their sins had built up over a long period of time. And part of the responsibility lay with their father. Eli had indulged them, repeatedly, privately, and now publicly. And in indulging them, he had made them a higher priority than his obedience to God. The consequences were dire; the man who had led Israel for forty years would die, along with his sons. His legacy was in ruins. Instead of Eli's family serving as priests for generations to come, God would choose another, Samuel, and start over.

We indulge the people we lead for all sorts of reasons. For one thing, confrontation can be pretty disagreeable. Indulging just seems easier at the moment. We don't want to stir up public division, and we don't have the emotional energy to deal with it anyway. Spouses indulge each other to keep the peace. It seems easier than going around that marital loop once again. Men fail to take responsibility and their wives carry inappropriate burdens. Parents indulge their children for similar reasons. They may back off of discipline and boundaries because it seems easier at the moment; they have taken their eyes off the long-term vision of raising an independent, responsible adult. Consistency is difficult to maintain.

When our daughter Libby was in her early teens, she came home from a lock-in because other girls were making fun of her. She wanted to stay in the safety of her family. However, Sally and I knew this was an important moment for Libby. She had been so excited to go to the lock-in, but now she never wanted to leave the house again. She felt vulnerable and wondered if she had any friends

at all. After listening to Libby, I took her back to the lock-in. I told her she could call again, and she could come home. But we really thought she needed to give it another try. Libby was nervous, but she went for it. She stayed the whole night. When she came home in the morning, she was tired but happy, having gone through the difficult time and come out on the other side.

The second danger is indulging ourselves. We become so entangled in everything that the learner is going through that it's difficult to step back and look at the situation from the outside. In my observation, women are more likely to dive in too deep, while men are more likely to detach too quickly. Somewhere in between is the right amount of connection, a connection that creates a personal bond with the learner without erasing the leader's vision and objectivity.

We might indulge ourselves by not sacrificing the time the learner needs, or trying to give a quick fix instead of walking through the deep stuff. We may ignore that urge that says we ought to challenge an attitude because we want to keep the peace. If we indulge ourselves in these ways, we may think the trade-off is worth it, because we have gained friendship – with children, spouses, coworkers. It seems easier just to hang on and hope that things will work themselves out through some way other than involved leadership.

Stage 2 is the testing point of any leader, even if you're just leading one other person. During this time, clear your schedule and spend time down in the pit with the individual or team going through Stage 2. If you're potty training, be ready to spend a lot of time in the bathroom with your toddler clapping enthusiastically at every sign of cooperation. If you're teaching geometry, be ready to draw the segments and shapes over and over, answering the same questions each time. If you're mentoring a disciple, be ready to answer questions and explain as much as necessary.

Called by Grace

* The Stage 2 leader will talk through, in detail, the idea of grace, the fact that learners can only do what they've been called to do by grace. We humans are a stubborn bunch; we continually insist it's all up to us and we have to pull it off. If we can't pull it off, then we aren't worth anything. It takes an incredible investment of time for a person to really hear in their heart that God is going to do it. It's God's work; we're just coworkers. It's amazing the effect a leader's time can have on a struggling learner. L2 leaders convey the grace of God.

I am particularly struck by the concept of horse whispering, a technique many horse trainers have used over the years. Monty Roberts drew attention to horse whispering in his fascinating book, *The Real Horse Whisperer*. Horse trainers who watch the animals closely see that they have a sort of body language. Roberts explains that the lead mares had a particular way of communicating with the other horses, particularly the young, and those horses on the edges of the herd, such as lone animals separated from their own herds and seeking

refuge in a new one. The mare would offer a rhythmic pattern of challenge and invitation, which led to a deep connection between the mare and the other horse. The mare offered challenge by looking directly at the other horse, sometimes in an aggressive stance. This challenge led the other horse to halt and to seek closer relationship by bowing its head and pawing the ground and opening its mouth in a foal-like show of submission. In response to this, the mare would offer her flank, the most vulnerable part of a horse's body, inviting the other horse to come closer. But again, before it got too close, the mare would offer the language of challenge. The cycle would repeat until the two horses were physically touching.

This process of challenge and invitation communicating through body language formed the basis of Monty Roberts's amazing career as a horse trainer. He and others have used it as a model for building relationships between people, including his forty-seven foster children – and three of his own!

* I notice that the relationships Jesus built often revealed the same rhythmic pattern of challenge and invitation. We can see this in incidents like the one between Jesus and Peter at Caesarea Philippi. Jesus praises Peter for his God-given insight that Jesus is the Messiah, then challenges Peter and the other disciples to sacrificially take up their own crosses and follow him. When the disciples do not immediately accept the challenge, Jesus doesn't remove it – he intensifies it. He tells Peter to get away from him because he is no longer bringing the words of God, but the words of Satan. Yet clearly in the midst of this challenge, Jesus continues to invite the disciples into a deeper relationship with him.

Leaders must go to the cross. When Jesus went to the cross, he denied himself and did what the Father had called him to do. Rather than indulging ourselves, we also must deny ourselves. We must set aside our own desires, goals, and agendas to do things God's way. The cross can be a desperate and lonely place. You are vulnerable before God and isolated from other people. But that is where you let go of false confidence in yourself and accept the job that God has called you to do, however unpopular it makes you.

Real relationships can only be fashioned out of recognition of sacrifice. It's impossible to build deep and long-lasting relationships unless we accept the challenge of sacrifice that these relationships inevitably will lead to. Those who lead should be those who serve, thereby modeling the sacrifices needed to build relationships.

* In the pit of D2/L2, you make a discovery – you become friends. You spend time together and get to know each other, paving the way to a better future. The person caught in the snares of D2 often doesn't realize that. Then he or she begins to turn the corner and walk toward Stage 3, where things really start to look up.

Now that you have a better understanding of the pitfalls of Stage 2, do you recognize mistakes you've made at this stage in the past? Is there someone

looking to you right now who might just need your time invested in them to achieve their goal? Perhaps you'll be inspired as we investigate another Biblical hero and her journey around the Square.

Chapter 8 - The Girl Who Would Be Queen

They come and take her. She does not want to go.

“Mordecai!” Young Hadassah screams for the older cousin who has raised her since the death of her parents.

Even if he had been there, Mordecai could have done nothing to save Hadassah. Xerxes, the Persian king, had banished his own wife when she dared to defy him in the presence of a roomful of dignitaries. By the time Xerxes cooled off, he could not undo his own order. But he could look for a new queen. His assistants, anxious to please, suggest an empire-wide search for beautiful young virgins. Troops fan out over the expanse of the empire to bring the most beautiful young women they can find.

Thousands of young women, many just teenagers, are taken from their families and sent to live in the king’s harem. They don’t sign up to be chosen; they don’t enter a contest; they don’t have a chance to say, “Thanks, but no, I’m happy where I am.” They have no rights. Beautiful young women have to go to the harem. First comes six months of beauty treatment with oil of myrrh, followed by another six months of treatments with perfumes and cosmetics. The beautiful young women, made even more beautiful by these treatments, spend a year preparing for a single night with Xerxes. The following day they go to another harem for the king’s wives, where they’ll live the rest of their lives, perhaps never seeing the king again. If he remembers a woman’s name, he might summon her again, but the odds seem remote.

Hadassah, who comes to be known as Esther, is one of the thousands of young women taken to the harem. A guy named Hegel is in charge of preparing these women to meet the king – for the king’s pleasure, not for conversation. Hegai takes a special interest in Esther. He gives her special foods and assigns seven maids to look after her. As luxurious as that may sound, it is all against Esther’s will. She would much rather be home with Mordecai and dreaming of marriage to a nice Jewish boy.

Obviously Mordecai’s access to his young cousin is limited, but he manages to stay in touch. He is never too far away. Every day he walks near the harem courtyards to check up on her. Why? Because Esther is a Jewish girl, and while the Jews had been in the Persian empire for a hundred years, they were not popular with everyone. Mordecai knows Esther is way out of her league in the king’s harem, so he is clear on what she should and should not do. “Whatever else you do, do not tell anyone you are Jewish!” he warns her. So Esther keeps her heritage a secret.

When the king meets Esther, he is enthralled with her. His search for a queen ends right there. He puts a crown on her head and declares a public holiday. And of course there is the royal banquet. Esther has been plucked from obscurity and put in position as queen of one of the most powerful empires in history.

Meanwhile, Mordecai has a confrontation with the king's prime minister, Haman. Haman has quite a big head and demands undeserved respect from the underlings around him. They obediently bow in respect every time he passes by. Mordecai, however, will have none of it. As far as he is concerned, God is the only one worthy of worship. He refuses to bow to Haman, which of course makes Haman furious. He schemes for a way not just to get rid of Mordecai, but all of Mordecai's people, the Jews. Haman flatters the king and persuades the king to sign an irreversible order that would allow the Persians to slaughter the Jews on a particular day. Haman wants this so badly that he even offers to finance the operation from his personal funds. He'll put a tidy sum in the king's treasury in exchange for a simple royal seal. This sounds like a reasonable business arrangement to Xerxes, so he signs the order.

When this bit of information hits the evening news, the Jews are frantic. How are they going to get out of this one? Everyone knows the edict of a Persian king is irreversible. Even if the king changed his mind, he couldn't change his order. The whole thing looks hopeless. They're doomed. Jews all over the kingdom wail in hopelessness.

Mordecai goes into action. He knows of one glimmer of hope: Esther. He creates a commotion that attracts the attention of Esther's servants. When she hears that Mordecai is outside the gate wearing nothing more than sackcloth, she knows something is seriously wrong. So she sends Mordecai some decent clothes and tells her servant to find out what he is so upset about. Mordecai spills the beans. Esther's people are about to be wiped out; she has to do something about this. She has to go to the king and plead for the lives of her people.

That is easier said than done. Yes, Esther is the queen, but that only means the king likes her better than he likes most people, but it doesn't really give her much to work with. The queen is more or less a trophy wife with no real power. While the palace staff treats her with deference and she has a servant for every conceivable need, she has no real security in her relationship with the king. She faces the same risk everyone else does: if she approaches the king without being summoned, her life could be on the line. If he doesn't extend his golden scepter when he sees her, it's all over. "Besides," she tells Mordecai, "I haven't even seen the king in a month." All the initial fuss over crowning the new queen was long past. The holidays were over, the banquets cleared up. Sure, she lived in the palace instead of a harem, but Xerxes didn't pay all that much attention to her. Esther didn't see how she could do anything. If the king hadn't wanted to see her for a month, why should she think he'd want to see her now just because she popped into the throne room unannounced? So she sends Mordecai a message. "There's nothing I can do," she says. "I hope you understand."

What Mordecai understands is that Esther needs a bigger vision. She needs to see the big picture. He shoots a message right back to her. "Esther, you're fooling yourself if you think you're going to escape this slaughter just

because you are queen. If you don't do this, you're dead anyway. What's more, has it occurred to you that this is exactly why God wanted you to be queen? You have a job to do. Are you going to do it or not?"

From that moment, Esther takes on the role she was called to. She tells Mordecai to gather the Jews to fast with her for three days. Then she would go see the king. Esther is starting to get some confidence back. But she knows she can't do this in her own strength, so she spends three days in deep prayer.

After three days, Esther takes a deep breath and approaches the king. When he welcomes her warmly, she lets her breath out. It's time to put the plan into action. She invites the king and Haman to a banquet. Then she invites them to a second banquet. By this time, she's ready to do what she knows she has to do. She doesn't need Mordecai whispering in her ear any longer. Esther tells her husband that she is Jewish, and that Haman has planned the genocide of her people. Xerxes deals with Haman swiftly enough, but what about the irreversible decree? Esther hasn't forgotten. She proposes to Xerxes a second decree that allows the Jews to protect themselves, even to go on the offensive. The Jews turn out to be better fighters than anyone had imagined, and the day of victory is one they will not soon forget. Esther herself declares an annual celebration of these events as the holiday of Purim.

"I can't." "Yes, you can."

Did you see the change in Esther as she went around the Square? At the beginning of the story, she is under the care of her cousin, Mordecai. He takes care of her. He gives her advice, and she does what she is told. She keeps her family background a secret. Mordecai is being an L1 leader – directive, specific, assertive. "This is what you must do."

Then Haman's evil schemes come into play, and Mordecai proposes something to Esther that she cannot imagine doing. "I just can't do it," is the classic D2 response. She'd had such high hopes when she became queen, but things were not working out quite the way she had imagined. She seemed to have faded into just another of the women that Xerxes could choose at will. Esther is distraught, powerless, hopeless. She could get herself killed, and for what? Her people would still be slaughtered. No, she doesn't want anything to do with it.

Mordecai responds to Esther's D2 misery with bold L2 leadership. He gives her the bigger picture. This particular job at this particular time in history is why she is queen in the first place. This is not about Esther and her private fears. It's about her people; it's about stepping up to the plate in the bottom of the ninth inning to do a job no one else is in a position to do.

Mordecai's challenge was exactly what Esther needed to hear. She had a purpose beyond being the most beautiful of all the young women. She had focused on feeling rejected and despondent, but Mordecai's coaching helped her see clearly for the first time in quite a while. She knew that saving the Jews did

not depend on her. Mordecai had reminded her that deliverance would come with or without her help, because it was God who would deliver. Yet she could see that this was the reason for her royal position. She was not just a trophy queen or even a popular queen. She had a job to do.

Esther comes out of the other side of the D2 tunnel with vision for the future. She works with Mordecai to come up with a plan to help her people (Stage 3). She is more confident and begins to take initiative, but she still needs Mordecai's counsel. By the end of the story, Esther uses her own authority to declare the holiday of Purim (Stage 4). She has come around the Square and transformed from learner to leader.

Shifting Emotions

Esther's story illustrates well the emotional shift that happens in Stage 2. In D1, you feel invulnerable; you can change the world. During D2, you wonder if you can even stand up straight. But by the end of D2, you have learned that you can't do anything without God, a fundamental lesson we all learn again and again. Instead of feeling useless, you feel safe. Esther entered Stage 2 convinced that she could do nothing to save her people. She left Stage 2 knowing that whatever happened, she was in God's care and so were her people. By the end of D2, the learner knows that you are standing on a solid rock higher than your own head, and the waters of challenge cannot reach you. Many psalms chart the journey into D2 and the wealth we find there. Tuck these away for the next time you find yourself deep in D2.

*I cry out to God Most High,
to God, who fulfills his purpose for me.
He sends from heaven and saves me,
rebuking those who hotly pursue me;
God sends his love and his faithfulness.*
— Psalm 57:2–3

*Therefore let everyone who is godly pray to you
while you may be found;
surely when the mighty waters rise,
they will not reach him.
You are my hiding place;
you will protect me from trouble
and surround me with songs of deliverance.
Selah
I will instruct you and teach you in the way you should go;
I will counsel you and watch over you.
Do not be like the horse or the mule,
which have no understanding*

*but must be controlled by bit and bridle
or they will not come to you.
Many are the woes of the wicked,
but the LORD's unfailing love
surrounds the man who trusts in him.*
—Psalm 32:6-10

Chapter 9 - "This is Not What I Signed Up For!"

For the learner, Stage 1 is such a fun time that, when we hit Stage 2, there's a huge temptation to turn around and go back to Stage 1. Stage 2 just doesn't feel good. Something must be wrong, right? Maybe if we go back and try it again, we'll get it right. The Israelites give us a great picture of that urge. When Moses released them from slavery in Egypt and led them toward the promised land, they were ready for a new adventure. They couldn't have been more excited. They couldn't have been more enthusiastic. They couldn't have been more confident. Freedom lay ahead!

But the Israelites had been in Egypt for hundreds of years – when they left, they had lived their whole lives as slaves. They had no experience with freedom, none whatsoever. So when things started to get difficult, in spite of all that God had done for them, the people moaned and groaned. "Why did we ever leave Egypt? At least there we knew what we were going to eat." Once again God provides – manna and quail in the wilderness. That's still not good enough. While Moses was up on the mountain meeting with God, the Israelites pressured Aaron to provide them with a new god, one that they could feel more certain of. "We don't even know what happened to Moses," they said. "He's been gone more than a month. Let's face it, he's not coming back." A new god would take them back to the excitement of the first stage of their adventure.

It's tempting for all of us when we reach D2 to try to find a new D1. Work is difficult; what we need is a new job. Church doesn't have the same quality of teaching it used to; let's find a new church. Sometimes these changes are the right thing to do – but not when we simply are trying to avoid going through the pain of D2.

Marriage Hits D2

Patrick and Stephanie spent three great years together as husband and wife. By then the cracks in their relationship were starting to show. This selfless love thing was getting tiring for both of them. Patrick was sure he gave more to the relationship than Stephanie. Funny, but Stephanie thought she gave more, and Patrick just didn't understand her. The smiles became brittle, acts of kindness were less spontaneous and more conditional. Discussions erupted into full-blown arguments. Tension grew. It was as though they couldn't resolve the conflicts any longer. Instead they patched them over with a gift, a vacation, sex, the pressures of work. Eventually they got to the point where they couldn't do even that anymore.

Stage 2 is not easy for anyone. A D2 stage of marriage presents a tremendous temptation to just end the relationship. It seems too hard to try to repair it. However, most of us take marriage more seriously than that, so we don't do something that blatant – we choose to opt out emotionally. Instead of

working through our problems, we seek emotional support somewhere else – friends, work, activities, the Internet. Suddenly we're very busy; we barely have time to breathe, much less work out relationship stresses.

When Patrick and Stephanie's mask of the perfect marriage fell off, they had a major reality check. Three years of D1 were swiftly followed by three years of D2. Frustrations mounted; they seemed to have such trouble making each other happy. Every word they spoke was misinterpreted as they walked on eggshells around one another. Marriage was looking quite different from what they had always imagined, but Patrick and Stephanie still had a glimmer of what they hoped their marriage would be. They went on a marriage enrichment retreat, taking the time to be together and start working things out. The retreat reminded them of God's vision for marriage, and that God was bigger than any of the difficulties they faced. He would carry them through. But the retreat also challenged them to look at themselves and what they each had brought into the marriage. Patrick realized that he was domineering and tended to view women in a negative light. Stephanie had taken on the role of a submissive martyr and was manipulative. They compared their relationship to a deadly cocktail – they had married each other for all the wrong reasons. They stared reality right in the face. The retreat showed them the depth of the trouble they were in. It was even worse than they thought, but they both wanted God to reach in and pull them out. The retreat experience, while making them face harsh reality, also offered a vision of what their relationship could be and the grace to focus on the vision. Together they joined a program at their church for people dealing with issues of the past and began the slow but steady walk out of the dark and into freedom.

I once did something foolish - it's too long to go into here, and what I did isn't the point. The point is, I ended up with severe burns on my legs. I had to stay in the hospital for six weeks, in isolation, not even able to hold my baby daughter. Even before the burn episode, I was despairing about the future of my ministry. It just seemed to go from bad to worse. And now here I was in the hospital, completely removed from everything. Even if I had wanted to try to control things, I couldn't.

By God's grace, Sally was there for me and stepped into the L2 role I so badly needed. Clearly I was under attack. Sally spent boatloads of time with me, steadily reminding me of the vision God had given us for ministry. "Let's go back to why we are here," she would say. "What did God call us here for? Don't lose heart!" She pointed me back to the truths of Scripture and God's promises. When I needed directness, she gave it to me. When I needed vision, she gave it to me. When I needed grace, she reminded that God never runs out.

D2 is a lonely, difficult place. But it is an opportunity for revelation, a clearer picture of God, of you, and of the way ahead.

Stop the Bouncing

Vanessa was in her twenties and having a fabulous time. That is, as long as no one brought up the subject of men. It seemed that any involvement she had with a man turned catastrophic. Bouncing between D1 and D2 was a regular ride. During D1, she knew a man liked her. She could flirt and enjoy it. But somehow things didn't progress, and the next thing she knew, the same man was going out with her best friend. And soon after that, she'd be making a toast at their wedding. Or D2 might occur when the man said, "I see you like a sister." Or, "I don't feel right about going out with anyone right now" – although by the end of the week he seemed to feel fine about going out with someone else.

Vanessa had a friend, Sandy, who was there for her every time she hit D2. Sandy gave Vanessa enormous amounts of time. They met for coffee. They went out for lunch. Sandy invited Vanessa home for dinner with her family. They talked for hours and hours. But Sandy was not just a listening ear, ready to offer sympathy and unflagging agreement with everything Vanessa said. Sometimes Sandy challenged Vanessa's perceptions about relationships, and how she responded in various situations. Vanessa had to look again, think again, accept some responsibility for her reactions. Other times, Vanessa thought she might as well give up and surrender to singleness, even though she didn't think that was for her. Sandy wiped Vanessa's tears and held her hand, and encouraged her . But she also she stood her up again and reminded her that God's promise of life in all its fullness did not revolve around getting married. Vanessa had to embrace the life she had, armed with Sandy's reminders of God's grace and faithfulness. God would take care of Vanessa, including giving her a lasting relationship when the time was right. Even though it was not what Vanessa wanted to hear, it was exactly what she needed to get through D2. And Vanessa did get through D2. She began to make plans for her future. She took hold of her life and went on mission trips around the world. She spent time with both her single and married friends and enjoyed them all. A few years later she met her future husband on a mission trip.

Vanessa learned that L2 leaders are not always nice to you. They are challenging, and sometimes say the opposite of what you want to hear. Conversation can be painful. However she discovered that they are always there for you.

By the end of D2, what Vanessa remembered most clearly was the time and relationship Sandy offered that led her through the dark moments.

Parents in the Pit

D2 is a tough time for parents. If you've potty trained a toddler, you know what D2 looks like up close – both for the parent and the child. You've read all the books and think you have the techniques down pat. But they just aren't working with your child. Your friend tells you how Janey was potty trained in fifteen minutes and you feel utterly useless; you're well into your eighth month of this stuff. You're convinced your child will never be out of diapers.

In every stage of parenting you hit a wall and realize you have no answers or skills for the situation you face. You've tried everything you can think of, but the problem or behavior or attitude persists. Parents often get particularly tired when adolescence kicks in. They hang on until their kids are in their teens, but by then they just have no grip left. Besides, the kids look like they don't need you – or want you – so why not just be done with it and start getting your own life back together? Anything has to be better than feeling this exhausted all the time. The truth is, as your adolescent kids test the waters of independence and encounter their own D2 experiences, they'll need you more than ever.

Parents respond to the stresses of D2 in a variety of ways. We may opt out by choosing this time to go back to work. We may bring up the inadequate parenting we ourselves received and offer that as a reason why we can't do it ourselves. We buy our kids stuff to compensate for not being there or for not understanding them. Or we retreat into silence, our own hobbies, or our own commitments outside the home. We just jump off the square of leadership and leave our kids to figure things out for themselves.

If you have teenagers, I guarantee they are going through D2. If you don't give them your time, you're not being an L2 leader to their D2 discipleship. They may say by all their verbal and nonverbal communication that they don't want to spend any time with you, but they need your time. Have no doubt about it. Girls need the affirmation of their fathers as they grow to womanhood. Boys need affirmation as they become men. And that takes time. You can't just do it in a fleeting moment and figure you're done. We have to build into our schedules the flexibility to be the leaders that our kids need.

We all know teenagers are not the most communicative species on the face of the earth. Actually, no one in the throes of D2 is all that communicative. Teens are increasingly independent, but that doesn't mean they don't need their parents. They do. We underestimate the amount of time our kids still need during the teen years. Even as children go off to college, they'll have D2 periods in new seasons of life. The phone rings, and your son has just been dumped by some girl he thought was the love of his life. This is not a one-conversation problem. You know that he wants and needs time with you. Or your daughter gets turned down by her first choice college and has a hard time settling for choice number two. You point out what the second school has to offer that she might have missed out on at the first school. Parenting doesn't end when kids turn eighteen. In D2 times, they still need your time, direction and example.

Revelation at Work

For years Leah, a publicist, dreamed of working from home. When she had small children, she wanted to be at home with them and work around their needs. Just when she discovered that she was pregnant with her first child, an opportunity to work from home seemed to fall into her lap. The timing was perfect. This was going to be great! She organized an office, got her supplies together, bought a fax machine and upgraded to a high-speed Internet connection. Leah was ready!

At first things seemed to go well. She had several major projects laid out for the next few months, and that was encouraging. She knew she would have sufficient work to generate the income she needed. When she was sick during the early weeks of pregnancy, she could arrange a flexible schedule that would let her work during the hours she felt well and rest when she didn't.

Some extra projects came along, which encouraged her further. Now, of course, she had to be stricter about her work hours or she wouldn't get everything done. Leah turned in a major project a week before she gave birth; breathing a sigh of relief that she would have a break for a few weeks.

Then the project came back. It wasn't that she had done an inadequate job, but the client realized they needed a few more elements and wanted Leah to add them. And they said she should include these elements in the upcoming projects she was doing for them. Also, they were going to have to crunch the schedule a little bit and hoped she would accommodate that.

The baby, of course, had no awareness of night or day. He slept when he wanted to, always at odd hours and not always for very long. He was constantly hungry, but he seemed to take a long time to eat. Leah loved to hold him and feed him, but the home office seemed to stare her in the face at all hours. As soon as he dropped off, she hurried to the home office for a few minutes of work. Laundry piled up. The dishes never seemed to be washed. She hadn't been to her Bible study group in a month and she missed her friends. Leah's husband Phil was very supportive, but worked long hours to support the family. He simply couldn't be as "hands on" as he wanted to. Leah felt very alone. She was never going to be able to do all of this. Why had she ever thought she should even try? This was not the way she pictured it. Not at all.

Sitting in the dark one night with her son in her arms, Leah realized she didn't have to. She didn't have to do it all. Yes, she still wanted to work at home so she could be home with her children. But she had wanted to work at home so she could be with her baby, not so she could stare at the computer screen and wonder when in the world she would have time and energy to work? All she really wanted at that moment was a decent night's sleep. In a moment of revelation, she realized she didn't have to do it all, and that was okay. Now she could see clearly what she could do, and she could be happy with that, rather

than unhappy about all that she couldn't do. And her son would have a happy mother instead of a fretful one.

Business on the Grow

Doug couldn't wait to get started on expanding his business. And now he was in the middle of doing just that. So why did he feel so crummy? He had always loved his job, but now he wasn't so sure. Growing his enterprise meant financial stress; he had to think about every dime he was spending. Anxiety invaded his sleep, and he felt on edge most of the time. The hardest thing was that he noticed his relationships with his staff had changed. He used to be part of the team, sharing jokes, having a laugh. Now he was leading the team through a challenging time, and he wasn't sure he was doing such a good job. Everyone treated him differently now.

Doug was tired, disillusioned. Perhaps he should call off the expansion and cut his losses. But he knew that was not what God wanted him to do. God had given him the vision to expand his work and cleared the way in the early days. As Doug prayed, God challenged him about his time management and his tendency to take on more responsibility than he needed to. Perhaps he was making things harder than they had to be. That's because he was trying to do it Doug's way, rather than God's way. Once Doug saw what he was doing, he could let go, step back, and see what God would do. God provided new staff, extra funding, unexpected resources – everything Doug's business needed to succeed. Doug learned to stand on God's grace, not his own ability.

Steve's Story

"Dear Steve," the letter began, "I am writing representing the women's board." I groaned inwardly. This opening sentence had all the hallmarks of a complaint about my ministry. Sure enough, women in the congregation were uncomfortable with the path worship was taking – too much clapping, too much noise. One woman even suggested that her friends visit another church where things were more traditional, rather than risk her friends visiting the church I pastored and being offended by the tone of the service.

Disappointment. Discouragement. Disillusionment. The testing point for every leader.

Ten years earlier, I would have been rattled. Now, as a leader who had been around the Square, I had a different response. I knew that the women needed to be pointed back to the vision of the church that had brought recent changes, and they needed access to me, their leader. Over the next few weeks, I had a series of meetings with the women's board. Again and again I returned to the vision. Together we talked through the discouragement, not avoiding the hard stuff. In the midst of our conversations, we rediscovered the freedom that

comes when we let go of our own striving and instead embrace the sense of purpose and direction that come from God.

I knew they had turned the corner when the next letter said, "I can't tell you how much we appreciated your time and spirit...We all left with much more understanding of where you're coming from. It was delightful to get to know you better."

When we try to short-circuit D2, we miss out on the chance to grow and learn from God. Learning and leadership both have their difficult moments, and there is no way around them. We can't just skip across the Square to the parts we like better. But in our relationships, in our families, in our work, in our ministry, God is there with vision and grace. If we dare to go into the heart of D2, we'll come out on the other side with a confidence based in experience and enthusiasm based in understanding. This experience and understanding will leave us better equipped to face the challenges that inevitably come with all spheres of leadership. We'll be ready for the rewards of Stage 3.

The main purpose of undertaking a study of the LifeShapes Square is not so much a call to change or restoration, as with previous shapes. Rather, it is a call to forge ahead, even when the burden is extremely heavy and fun is a memory. The lesson of the Square is to keep going, for the blessings are soon to follow.

Chapter 10 - Friend to Friend

The Square goes where you go. So when Sally and I and our children moved to Sheffield to begin ministry at St. Thomas' Church, the Square went with us. Of course in Stage 1, everything was brand-new. A world of possibilities spread itself before us. I was excited to be in this new place and certain of the vision God had given me. The congregation was poised for something new as well. The church took some time to adjust to changes in leadership and style, and through that phase, my leadership had to be steady and directive.

Then we turned the corner to Stage 2. I had my own seasons of doubt, and Sally led me through them by reminding me God was the one doing the work. Leaders in the church had periods of D2 as they tried their hand at new ideas and ran into trouble spots that had escaped the radar during D1. It was my turn to make myself available to them, to spend time together, to build relationships, to show them the grace of God. Gradually the tunnel widened and lightened.

At last we turned the next corner and tumbled into Stage 3. Ah. Finally. When we finally get there, we all recognize Stage 3 as the place we had hoped to start. It feels right. Good things are happening. We enjoy the people we're working with. We're starting to see results from our labor. Only now do we realize we could not have been ready for this phase without having gone through the first two stages.

Most of the congregation at St. Thomas' were young adults of the age span labeled Generation X. It wasn't that way when we began our ministry there, but ministering to that generation was the job God gave us to do. They seemed to come from everywhere, and were soon the fastest growing and most prominent segment of the congregation. Many of these young adults came from painful, broken backgrounds. Dysfunctional family dynamics had left their mark.

Growing up as latchkey kids had taken its toll. Even the individuals who had not suffered personal trauma were shaped by the effect of cultural changes. Some were disillusioned by institutions of any sort, and especially the church. Yet they hungered for God. They thirsted for a place to belong. They longed for a place to heal. With a message of grace, St. Thomas' became that place for more and more of this generation. Older members of the church became mentors to the younger ones, witnesses to the grace of God.

As the ministry grew, so did the staff and volunteer teams. By and large, these new leaders were under the age of thirty. Here they were, young by the standards of the traditional church, and in charge of the children's ministry, the youth ministry, the college ministry; they were leading morning and evening services, running conferences for young adults, training worship teams. Over time, the seeds of vision and grace planted during Stage 2 sprouted. The staff team grew more confident. They knew what they were doing and how to do it. They fostered a strong emphasis on teamwork, community, and interdependence. No one was in this alone. The team functioned as a group of

friends who understood each other and supported each other, both personally and in the ministry they shared. When leaders of other churches and ministries visited St. Thomas', they consistently commented on the team relationships and often asked if we were as close as it looked like we were. How close were we, they wanted to know, and how did we find the time to build those relationships?

No one had to twist my arm to become friends with the staff. I enjoyed playing golf with them, going out for meals, hanging out together, following the drama of a weekly television program, sharing the adventure of mission trips and so on. During that era, most of the staff team got married and started families. They were all part of each other's weddings – musicians, groomsmen, bridesmaids, officiating. The staff set aside time for monthly social gatherings with their spouses and arranged family activities to enjoy with their kids. We did some serious crying together and some serious laughing together. Building community was no afterthought. It was the stuff leadership development was made of.

This comfortable friend-to-friend stage of ministry was not limited to staff meetings and outings. I enjoyed modeling friendship from the front of the church. Do you realize how many bad jokes out there can make a congregation moan? And how much they hope you'll tell another one next week anyway? Once I stretched an e-mail joke out over several weeks, ending each segment with a cliffhanger during the announcements. Each week I heard a huge groan from the congregation as they realized they would have to wait another week for the rest of the story – and perhaps still not get it all then!

Throughout the church we grew a living, healthy, vibrant community. I loved the idea of developing young people through relationships with me. Sally and I were happy to give access to our home and our lives. This was a lot more fruitful than taking young leaders through some sort of ministry leader development manual. Young developing leaders need to see more experienced leaders in action – living life together. We took young people on mission trips and used the opportunity for a bit of matchmaking – usually with good results. Our front door was always open. People came to our home on Sunday nights after church to eat bacon sandwiches and watch television. During the week it was not unusual for young adults to show up in the afternoon and stretch out their visit until Sally said, "Would you like to stay for dinner?" Of course Sally knew all along it would come to that. Even the dog got used to this commotion. Some of the people were such regular at drop-ins that she barely reacted to the presence of someone outside the family.

Community life happened throughout the church body, across generations. If ever a time was warm and fuzzy, it was this season of Stage 3, and we loved it. I was no longer being directive about every step of ministry. My co-laborers had great ideas, a terrific grasp of the vision. We were figuring it out together, hearing and responding to God together. We didn't always see the path

clearly right from the start, but we were sure it was there because we knew God had cleared it for us. Occasionally we experienced a hiccup, but nothing serious. We worked things out together, friend to friend. The relational base we'd formed meant we also bonded in the work. No one was power-hungry; we worked side by side, friend with friend.

After getting a vision for the kingdom of God and receiving his grace, we enjoyed the close, covenant relationships of Stage 3. I was certain that one day Generation X young adults would carry the vision forward themselves as leaders, spouses, parents and friends. Arriving at Stage 3 is a glorious time after the struggles of Stage 2. But how do you know you're there? And, more importantly, can it last forever?

Chapter 11 - "You Do, I Help."

Learner	Leader
• Increasing enthusiasm	• Lower direction
• Growing experience	• Higher consensus
• Intermittent confidence	• High discussion
• Growing competence	• High accessibility

Ray and Sarah married right out of college. Both were blessed with good jobs and they plunged into building a life together. First they needed a house. So they bought a house – a big one. The mortgage was going to stretch them a bit, but they both thought they'd be earning more money in another couple of years, and they wanted a house they could raise a family in. Then a house needs furniture. "Buy now, make no payments for eighteen months." Sounds like a good deal. In came the furniture from one of the better stores at the mall. They were no longer students and were eager to shed the appearance of being students, so the used cars they had lurched through college had to go. Instead they pulled an SUV into one side of the double garage and a sporty looking sedan into the other.

When they visited their parents, Ray and Sarah fit right in. They had the house, the furniture, the cars that said they had arrived at middle class before age 25. With a brief interlude in the college dorms, they picked up their comfortable lifestyle just where they left off at the end of high school. Life was good, and they expected it would stay that way.

The months flew by and before they knew it, they had to pay for the furniture in full or pay the considerable deferred interest charges from eighteen months' worth of postponed payments. About the same time, their adjustable rate mortgage adjusted *up* – not what they'd hoped for. Sarah's company moved to another state, and since she did not make the move, she was out of a job. Finding a new job turned out to be tougher than she expected. Unemployment benefits ran out. They started juggling payments; they couldn't afford the car payments and the furniture payment in the same month. No matter what they did, they always seemed to be several hundreds of dollars behind. Finally the notice from the bank came: catch up the mortgage or... Ray started Googling bankruptcy laws late at night.

Ray and Sarah hadn't stopped to think that their parents didn't always have a house and two cars. If they had perused the old family photographs, they would have recognized the furniture that had moved from Grandma's house to

their parents' homes when they themselves were still infants. They would have heard the stories of Uncle Ron selling Dad a used car. They would have heard the stories of the first garage apartment.

There didn't seem to be any way out, and they started blaming each other for being in such a mess. Ray blamed Sarah for wanting the house. Sarah blamed Ray for his sporty car. Ray thought Sarah had spent too much on her work wardrobe, which was now useless. Sarah thought Ray could skip the annual fishing trip with his friends.

In their enthusiasm, this young couple had tried to jump straight into Stage 3—the good life. Instead they found themselves in D2, overwhelmed and slammed with discouragement.

The pleasant breezes of Stage 3 do not blow without a price, and that price is the journey through Stages 1 and 2. A fruitful ministry doesn't happen simply because someone was enthusiastic and plunged in. It takes hard work, humility, and an experience of grace. It takes a vision strong enough to survive discouragement and a leader who stands by the learners as they admit their need for God's grace. Most enduring relationships can point back to times that were not so great, even moments of resignation and defeat—moments when old college friends or teammates or even spouses thought it was all over. We are ready for what Stage 3 brings us only because we have lived through the blind enthusiasm of Stage 1 and humble brokenness of Stage 2.

When we arrive at Stage 3—rather than trying to launch it ourselves—we come with the grace of knowing that God is in charge. We don't have to do it ourselves, because God has already done it. Now we can stop bouncing back and forth between D1 and D2 and begin to grow in our relationship with the Lord. We can sit at his feet to learn and share with others lessons that will encourage them. Humbly we ask for God's direction and encouragement, rather than pressing on as if we knew what we were doing, when clearly we didn't. The confidence that went out the window in D2 is returning gradually but steadily. We've had some actual experiences on which to base our confidence. We know what it's like to stay at a job when we would rather have quit. We know what it's like to keep talking until you understand each other. We know for ourselves that having kids is not the picnic we thought it would be. We've had the experience of seeing a new ministry struggle through the early days and then grow to full bloom. Stage 3 does not have a lot of highs and lows. It is a time of steady growth and growing intimacy.

* **Stage 3: Disciples have growing confidence.**

The disciples began following Jesus with enormous enthusiasm and very little understanding of what it all meant. But Jesus was a patient and direct leader—he led them into the experiences that would teach them what it meant to follow, then he stayed right there with them while they sorted everything out. Now they've reached the point of understanding that God is bringing the

kingdom, not them, so they're ready for Stage 3 of their discipleship. They know they need to be quiet and listen instead of out-talking their leader with their own grand ideas. They understand that things are a little more complicated than they thought, and it might be a good idea to ask some questions. Leader and learners enter a new phase, one of closeness, friendship, and intimacy.

*

Stage 3: Leaders are open to discussion.

Jesus responds by adjusting his leadership. He wants to talk, to discuss. After the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8), Jesus sets his face toward Jerusalem. He's just been talking about his departure with Elijah and Moses, while some of his disciples look on, hardly knowing what to think. His Father has just said, "This is my Son, with whom I am pleased." After this midpoint in Jesus' ministry, it's all downhill into the valley of the shadow of death. Jesus walks down from the Jordan rift valley, turns right at Jericho, and heads up to Jerusalem. Along the way he continues to teach and heal among the crowds, but he also spends increasingly more time with his inner circle of disciples. He befuddles the Twelve with predictions of his own death. He is infinitely patient with James and John when they try to outrank the other disciples. He explains mysterious parables and offers teaching just for the disciples' ears. At this point, relationships warm up. Jesus and the disciples are creating memories together. They love to be together, share in the workload, linger after the training sessions to discuss what they've been learning.

By the time Jesus arrives in Jerusalem, the crowds have welcomed him, still intent on making him king. Jesus offers direction when it's appropriate, telling the disciples to go to a certain place and bring back the colt they find there. He rides the colt into Jerusalem as a sign that he is the Son of David. The people had acclaimed one kind of king; Jesus knew he was another. Although the disciples do not yet fully understand the events, Jesus knows that this time of closeness is what they need so they can be prepared for kingdom work when he is no longer with them. A few days later, Jesus withdraws with the disciples to a private place where they will not be interrupted. John records for us the private teaching between Jesus and the disciples in the upper room in the hours before his arrest. Jesus begins with an act of humility – washing the feet of his disciples. Then he predicts that one of the disciples will betray him – a thought which most of them can hardly bear to hear. But one knows, and he leaves. As Jesus waits for the events of the night to play out, he uses every moment he has with his disciples to teach them something. He has one command he wants them to follow, one that acknowledges a shift in their relationship.

"My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command. I 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. You 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. This is my command: Love each other."

– John 15:12-17

The upper room retreat must have been unforgettable. Jesus promises that he is still going ahead of the disciples, he is still preparing the way for them, and they will be together again. On behalf of the whole group, Thomas expresses confusion, and Jesus answers by underscoring the closeness between the Father and Jesus, comparing it to Jesus and the disciples. Jesus tells his disciples they are his friends – his best friends. He loves them so much that he would lay down his life for them.

Imagine what it must have been like to hear those words from Jesus. The disciples know he's the Son of God. They know he's the Christ, the long-awaited Messiah. The crowds have greeted Jesus as the king of Israel, and now Jesus says, "You're not my servants, you're my friends." At the third stage of discipleship, relationships are key. Discussion becomes more common – with perhaps even consensus! Jesus is involved in an ongoing two-sided conversation with his disciples. By Stage 3, leader and learners are enjoying a relationship of trust. The disciples stop trusting their own abilities and begin trusting Jesus as their leader.

Notice that Jesus did not do this kind of intimate teaching during Stage 1. We have very little record in his early ministry of private times with the disciples or this kind of focus on community. It's not that Jesus did not love his disciples or foster a community of love. It's just that it wasn't his primary leadership style until Stage 3. And let's face it, the disciples would not have understood it until now. They needed the experiences of D1 and D2 to prepare them for D3. Now Jesus can say to them, "You joined me thinking you were going to do stuff for me. Actually we're going to do stuff together. I'm not treating you like a boss and employees, I'm treating you like friends. We really are friends. I am the vine and you are the branches. Together we're going to bear fruit. I want you to love each other the way that you know I love you."

This builds their confidence and refreshes their enthusiasm because they truly understand who Jesus is and what he wants to do with their lives. They have experience to back up their feelings of confidence and competence. Jesus is saying, "We're really connected. I'm the vine and you're the branches. We're together."

Jesus also begins saying things like, "In a little while I'll be gone."

"What?" the disciples say. "What do you mean? You just said we were your friends. Why would you leave now?"

"Well, I'll be gone, but I'll send someone else to look after you."

"Oh."

You can almost see their faces drop as anxiety sets in. The disciples are flirting with the feelings of D2 again. They're happy with the way things are and don't want anything to change. After all, haven't they already been through the hard times – squaring off against the Pharisees and all that? Why does Jesus have to say thing like that and spoil the moment? And what's a little while – a few weeks? A few months? A few minutes?

Jesus knows the disciples are unsettled and says, "But don't be anxious or afraid. Everything is going to be okay. I'm leaving you with my peace. And the One I am sending to you is exactly like me. He's another counselor."

"Yes, but we like you. We don't want someone else."

"Yes, I understand that. But he really is just like me. He and I are one just like the Father and I are one.

"Oh. Well, okay, I guess."

The disciples are still not too sure.

Time for Consensus

Strong friendships are at the root of Stage 3. The availability of the leader to the learners during Stage 2 bears fruit in Stage 3. The leader has changed considerably in approach from the Stage 1 days. Leaders who try to start out with consensus and democracy discover quickly that it doesn't work in Stage 1. But by Stage 3, the team has the experience to contribute to the discussion in constructive ways. They've learned not only by watching, but by doing. Leader and learners trust each other. In the upper room, the disciples are free to ask questions. Peter has a dialogue with Jesus about what it means that Jesus washes his feet. Jesus patiently explains until Peter gets it. When Jesus predicts his betrayal, everyone wants to know more about what he means. When they don't understand what Jesus means by going to prepare the way, Thomas asks outright. And when they don't understand what Jesus means by "in a little while," their feelings are evident, not masked.

All the time the leader and learners spend together leads to a pastoral model of leadership in Stage 3. Jesus is incredibly committed to pastoral care, to what management consultants might call the human relations approach. He continues to spend intensive time with the disciples, retreating to be alone with them away from the crowds. He offers them pastoral care to build relationship and consensus. Everyone is drawn in. These are friends talking together, working together, serving together.

The Joy of the Game

A little league team qualified for the national playoffs. A season of hard work had paid off as the team came together and became stronger than the sum of their individual parts. However, just before the first game of the playoffs, the

team learned that their star pitcher couldn't make the trip with them. The boys were devastated, but decided to play anyway. As you might imagine, they lost their first game and were dropped out of the winner's bracket. They were guaranteed five games, though, so they still had four to play, even though they knew they couldn't win the playoffs.

During the second game, out of necessity, several boys played out of their usual positions. Joey, who had never pitched, was called to duty. After a handful of pitches, Joey called a team meeting on the mound. "This is harder than it looks," he said. "I don't know how y'all did this all year." Laughter broke out. The boys returned to their positions, but something had broken out in that moment. Baseball had become fun again. They began to cheer for one another, encourage one another. It was a game again. For the remainder of the tournament, each boy had the opportunity to play any position he wanted to. They didn't win much, but they rediscovered the joy of the game and the meaning of teamwork.

* If there's any drawback at all to this stage, it's that Stage 3 is a place that few people want to leave. You can get really settled in here. Small groups that have been together for years enjoy Stage 3, and they're hesitant to welcome any new members because they don't want to dilute the joy they have in each other. The danger is that a group of people who first came together to form authentic community now ignores newcomers and excludes them from community. This can also be a dangerous stage for leaders who have achieved through God's grace—it becomes easy to lose sight of that. There can be the risks of overconfidence and pride, which have been the downfall of more than a few leaders. Stage 3 is a comfortable place to be. It's relaxing and productive and relational—a just reward for the hard work of the earlier stages. However, it's important to continue to seek God's vision and will for your group, and not to get lost in the celebration of forging special relationships or achieving goals.

Stage 3 is not the end of the Square. It may feel like a relief to finally get to Stage 3 after the discouragement of Stage 2, but the journey is not finished. We must be prepared to leave this warm, fuzzy stage to finish the job we've been called to do. The following chapter is a unique illustration of what it means to experience the sheer joy of belonging in Stage 3.

Chapter 12 - Psalm 23

At the end of the day, Woolliam and Ewesie meet each other at the north end of the pasture. Woolliam has the feeling he has seen Ewesie hanging around before, as if she had gotten separated from her own flock. They check each other out and notice that their earmarks are not the same. They are from different flocks that belong to different shepherds. As the sun sets and the flocks quiet down, Woolliam wants to know more about this stranger.

"So who is your shepherd?" Woolliam asks.

"Nathan, son of Jacob in Bethlehem," Ewesie answers with a heavy sigh as she lowers herself to the ground. "Who is yours?"

"The Lord is my shepherd." Woolliam lifts his head slightly.

"The Lord? I don't know that shepherd. Who's the Lord?" Ewesie scratches the ground beneath her hoof.

"He's the Lord, of course." Woolliam says.

"Ohhhh," Ewesie says, nodding her head. But she doesn't actually understand. Maybe some more information will help. "So, what's it like to follow your shepherd?"

Woolliam gives a contented sigh. "He's an easy shepherd to follow. I've had others, but no one else is like this shepherd."

"What do you mean?" Ewesie didn't find her own shepherd easy to follow at all.

"First of all, he provides everything that I need. You might think every shepherd does that, but I know they don't. My shepherd is a great shepherd."

"Yes, that sounds wonderful," Ewesie acknowledges, remembering that she hasn't seen her own shepherd for several days now. "Good grass, eh?"

"The best. My shepherd, the Lord, makes me lie down in the greenest, lushest pastures you could imagine."

"You mean in the summer, right?" Ewesie says. "When the grass is growing well?"

Woolliam swings his head back and forth emphatically. "No, I mean the green winter pastures. You know, the ones on the broad plains in the wide valleys."

"He *makes* you go there?" Ewesie can hardly believe what she is hearing.

"Absolutely. He knows it's the best place. The winter rains mean there's enough rich green grass for all the sheep in our flock."

"Don't you ever have to butt another sheep out of the way so you can get something to eat?" Ewesie pretends to shove another sheep aside.

Woolliam shakes his head again. "Nope. Never. He always provides for all of us."

"What about water? Surely you fight over water."

"Nope. We have plenty of water."

“He probably makes you go through those rushing streams that we all hate.” Ewesie wrinkles her nose as she thinks about how frightened she gets every time her shepherd makes her go through one of those frigid, fast-running streams.

“You’ve got a lot of strange ideas,” Woolliam observes, wondering what Ewesie’s shepherd must be like if she doesn’t know about winter pastures and good water. Why would any loving shepherd want to frighten the sheep? “My shepherd leads me to the still water, not the rushing, gushy rivers. It’s a place where I feel safe and calm, not wild and frightened.”

I wish my shepherd would do that, Ewesie thinks. But she’s not going to let Woolliam know that. “I don’t know, Woolliam. He makes you do this, he leads you to that – where’s the freedom to roam? He sounds like a dictator to me.”

“That’s just another of your strange ideas. He leads us along, all right. But he’s always right there with us. He keeps us together, so nobody can drift off. We all get to know each other and start to look out for each other. We know which ewes are about to lamb, and which rams tend to fall asleep in the middle of the afternoon.”

“Sounds like you know each other well.”

“We do. And the shepherd, of course. He’s always there.”

“Wait a minute,” Ewesie says, interrupting Woolliam’s nostalgic account. “Your shepherd is always right there with you? You mean he sends a hired hand to check on you once in a while, right?”

“If I’d meant that, I would have said that.”

“So he’s really always right there with you?”

“Absolutely. We have a relationship.”

“A relationship?” Ewesie twitches her nose nervously. This sounds too good to be true. “I’m not sure I believe that.”

“Why not?”

“You’re a sheep. He’s a shepherd. He’s got hundreds of sheep, doesn’t he? He can’t possibly have time for a relationship with every one of you.”

“You just don’t get this, do you? He *makes* time for us.”

“He makes time?”

“Yes, he makes time for us.” Woolliam starts to wonder if Ewesie is a little hard of hearing.

“Why would he do that?”

“Why do you think? He likes spending time with us.”

“I suppose you’re going to tell me that if you roll over on your back and you can’t get up, he’s there lickety-split.”

“Pretty much. He knows we would die if he left us alone like that.”

“Don’t you ever get tired of all this attention? I mean, sometimes I just want to snooze and have everyone leave me alone, or wander off and be left to my own thoughts. Having all the other sheep around constantly can get on my nerves.”

"It's not like that with the Lord," Woolliam insists. "Like I said, we have a relationship. We all like spending time together. Besides, you know that it's better when sheep are on the move. If you stay on your own too long, you might stay in one place and just wear out the land."

"Well, I have to admit, that has happened from time to time. My shepherd doesn't always get around as much as he needs to. When the grass is gone, we just start digging up the roots."

"That's not good for you or the land. You wouldn't have to do that if your shepherd guided you to the right places. It's his job to know where the good pastures and fresh water are. That's not your job. He's the shepherd."

"I do love a new pasture," Ewesie admits. "I've been known to kick up my heels a few times when the gate finally swings open and I see all that lush green grass ready for the munching."

"Then you know what I mean."

"I guess I do. My great-uncle once refused to leave the old pasture. He didn't like where that crazy shepherd of his was going, so he wouldn't follow. He ended up a bag of bones in a pile of dirt."

"I never have to worry about that," Woolliam says. "I can depend on the Lord to guide me along the paths that take me to good places."

"Back to this relationship business," Ewesie says, tucking her legs underneath her belly. "Do you actually talk to your shepherd?"

"Sure, I do. That's what you do when you're in a relationship. You spend time together and talk."

"What do you say?"

Woolliam looks out across the plains and begins talking. It's as if the shepherd is standing right there.

"Lord, you've been good to me. You are always there with me. Even when I go through the valleys on the way to the mountaintop where the good pastures are, you are with me. It's dark along those valleys. And we all know that a lion or a bear or a wolf could jump out at any time and attack us. But you're there with us, so we're not afraid. When the sun is low in the sky, the shadows on the rocks look terrifying. We sheep get really nervous. Sometimes we run away and end up hurting ourselves. But I've learned that I don't need to be scared even then. You're there. You use your rod to let us know you're still there and still in charge. And how many times have you gotten me out of a sticky situation with that shepherd's crook you always have with you? You're there for the hard times."

Woolliam stops talking, enjoying the peaceful picture in his mind.

"Do you have other stuff to tell me about?" Ewesie asks. She wants to prod Woolliam to keep talking before he drifts off into dreaming about winter pastures with the shepherd.

“Well, sure,” Woolliam acknowledges. “I could tell you about the table and the anointing.”

“Well, then, do it.”

“When we come out of the shadows of those awful valleys, the view on the mountaintop is incredible. Winter’s just about over. Spring is just around the corner. Every color flower you could imagine sprouts up.”

“Sounds beautiful.”

Woolliam gets that drifting look in his eyes again.

“Keep going,” Ewesie says. “I get the feeling there’s a lot more where that came from. For instance, what do you do up there on the mountain?”

“That’s the best part,” Woolliam answers. “We get to spend all kinds of time with the shepherd. We get all the personal attention a sheep could want.” “But what about the poisonous plants up there? A bite of the wrong thing will kill a sheep, you know.”

“Yes, so I’ve heard. But that doesn’t happen in our flock. The shepherd goes ahead of us and gets things ready. He makes sure everything is safe for us and that we’ll have everything we need. So we eat to our heart’s content – it’s a great feast! Up high in those winter pastures, we all grow strong and healthy. The lambs put on weight like you wouldn’t believe.”

“But spring doesn’t last forever. What happens when it gets hot in the summer? I positively hate those nasty flies that get up my nose and all over my face.”

“That’s where the anointing comes in,” Woolliam explains. “My shepherd rubs our heads every day with that smelly oil.”

“Sounds nasty.”

“It’s better than having flies lay eggs in your nose. You know what happens when those eggs hatch, don’t you?”

Ewesie nods, “It can make you crazy, absolutely crazy. In our flock, we end up banging our heads against the trees to get rid of them.”

“With the oil, you don’t have to worry about that. The flies never get in, so you don’t have to hurt yourself trying to get rid of them.” Woolliam sighs deeply, “You wouldn’t believe the water up there. The shepherd dams up the clear springs and makes little pools for us to drink from. It’s like a cup of water that just keeps getting fuller until it’s overflowing. “

Ewesie gets thirsty just thinking about it. If only her shepherd would take her to places like that. “You can’t stay up on the mountain forever,” she finally says. “I mean, the shepherd has to go home once in a while, doesn’t he?”

“Yes, at the end of the summer, it’s time to leave the mountain. We can see the view all the way down into the valley that will lead us home. We know where we’re going now. The valley is still not the easiest place to be, but the Lord is behind us. He doesn’t stop caring about us, not ever. He chases us all the way home – his home. It’s where I belong, at my shepherd’s house.”

Woolliam pauses and looks kindly at Ewesie. "Your shepherd is probably wondering where you are."

Ewesie shakes her head sadly. "I doubt it. He hasn't even noticed that I wandered off, and now I'm too far away to hear his voice, even if he did call." She looks at Woolliam hopefully.

Woolliam nods. "Yes, there's room in our flock for one more. We'll be getting settled in the fold for the night soon. Let me help you go in through the gate so the shepherd will take care of you, too."

This interpretation of Psalm 23 owes its insights to Phillip Keller, author of *A Shepherd Looks at Psalm 23* (Zondervan).

Chapter 13 - Let the Good Times Roll

Remember Patrick and Stephanie, the young married couple who started out with the excitement of D1, but soon found themselves in the depths of D2? During the D2 phase of their relationship, Stephanie and Patrick learned a lot about themselves. It was not all pretty. Marriage was not the lovey-dovey Caribbean cruise they had imagined it would be. In many ways, it would have been easier to admit defeat and go their separate ways than to go through the tunnel of D2. But the marriage retreat was a turning point, and they chose to stay together and work on their marriage.

Following the marriage retreat, they attended an ongoing class that targeted personal issues of all sorts. Facing their pasts began to pay off. They saw things in themselves that they had never faced before, experiences and attitudes that colored their relationships with each other. They began to understand themselves and each other. Their love and friendship was rekindled, but this time things were different. Instead of wearing masks for each other and for the sake of the people around them, they grew comfortable with who they *really* were. They understood and accepted that they were both works in progress and that in Christ they would always grow and change. They had turned the corner into D3.

Married couples get busy. They have jobs and church responsibilities. Tending to the needs of the kids takes a lot of time and energy. Something around the house always needs fixing. It's easy to get to the point where you're not paying much attention to each other. At first you might miss your time together. After a while, though, it's swallowed up in the busy household schedule, and trying to reclaim it demands more energy than you have. Many couples neglect making time for each other and being accessible to each other. You can't talk to someone who is not there, physically or emotionally. The D3 stage of marriage requires time, and lots of it. You need each other for decisions and encouragement, for affirmation and vision. Don't take each other for granted. Keep talking. Keep doing the things you enjoy doing together. Keep encouraging each other through the tough times. Keep building connection between the two of you. Keep taking adventures with each other.

If you have a few years of experience in marriage, you've no doubt been through some difficult times together – the death of a parent, unemployment and career change, a challenging child. You've worked out how to juggle the in-laws at Christmas, what your financial priorities are together, how you're going to discipline the children. You have some confidence because your perspective on issues like these is based on personal experience. You know what happened last year when Aunt Elsa died and a rift opened up in the family. You know what happened when you accepted a new job you weren't sure you could handle.

You've been through some hard times and learned a greater measure of grace for yourself and for others.

But many things could still happen – an affair, a child who becomes seriously ill – an act of nature that shatters your home – and life as you know it. When you imagine things on that scale happening to someone else, you jump in looking for a way to help. But if it should happen to you, you're not at all sure how you would respond. So confidence comes and goes, but generally it grows every year because every year you've worked out that much more together. With each marital moment, each parenting pitfall, each financial fit, you learn something that you take forward with you.

Talk and Listen

In the big picture of parenting, the late adolescent years are when your kids enter Stage 3, so they call for you to respond with appropriate leadership. Older teens are fixing their sights on college, and they have more angst than they want to admit sometimes.

What if I don't like it when I get there?

What if I don't make any friends?

What if I'm a junior and I still can't decide on a major?

What if I get homesick?

What life will be like after college is even more terrifying! But these near-adult kids do have some experiences of their own that can help them remain confident. They have the basic skills of handling money, holding a part-time job, driving and so on. If you leave them alone in the house for the weekend, they may not clean up the kitchen, but they won't starve. You might not approve of every choice they make, but for the most part they can look after themselves.

But they do have their momentary lapses and moments of lostness. And the closer they get to adulthood, the smarter you seem to them. Make yourself available. Now that they've had a taste of the real world, they might actually want your help in adjusting to independence. Don't assume your kids don't need you simply because of their age. They've grown to a stage where they need to make their own decisions, but they may well want to talk about the options with you first. Create opportunities for discussion by creating time together. Go shopping. Catch a ball game. Stay up late watching movies. Be where they are without being an overbearing presence.

On a smaller scale, kids of all ages hit snags. The seven year old who fell off his bike doesn't want to get back on. The sixteen year old who had an accident doesn't want to get behind the wheel. The ninth grader who struggled with algebra doesn't want to face geometry. The fourteen year old who didn't get invited to the party never wants to go back to school. But as kids get older, they realize for themselves that they have to get back on the bike or behind the wheel, face college chemistry, or find their own identities in social situations. They've

done it before, so they know they can do it again. They're not sure, though, that they can sustain the effort. They need your encouragement and reminders of the experiences they've had in the past that make them ready for whatever the next stage is.

Look for opportunities to affirm good choices they make. Remind them of the successes they've had – the award for the yearbook layout they worked on, sticking with Spanish when they were thoroughly lost, tutoring a second grader who was having so much trouble learning to read, the new skills they mastered for that first part-time job. Make sure they recognize the experience they've had that can spur their confidence.

Be available to talk. In fact, don't wait to be invited – take the initiative for important conversations. Continue to build family time into the calendar. Create settings where conversations can happen naturally, in non-threatening ways, just don't make it a lecture. Don't say, "You have to do it this way." Have an actual discussion about whether the job or the school or the boyfriend is a good choice. Listen to the thoughts of your son or daughter and don't be quick to dismiss. This is not the time for you to hand out the answers. Through time and discussion, help kids discover for themselves the reasons why a particular choice may or may not be good for them. Share your view, but focus on communicating "the decision is yours." And then step back and mean that.

In the late teen years, it's especially important to remind our children of their own stories with God. Soon they'll be out of the house. They need strong faith to carry them. One mom casually suggested to her eleventh grade son that he might want to consider a particular college. He seemed to resist and she didn't push. Then one day he volunteered the information that he was uncertain about that school because it was a Christian college and he was afraid he wasn't a good enough Christian for a school like that. His mom remembered his confirmation day and the moving, heartfelt testimony he had given to the entire congregation. She said, "Remember when you were in ninth grade? Remember when you felt like God was talking right to you and you knew that God who began a good work in you would carry it to completion? Maybe this is part of that process." A few months later, that same school had moved to the top of his list.

In D3 we weave the faith journey into the lives of our kids, reminding them of God's faithfulness during a difficult time, or the mission trip that gave them a bigger vision of God's work. We remind them of the faith history that our families have built over the years and how they've been part of that. In our homes, we live the faith journey before them and with them. They must see in us what we hope someday to see in them. Sharing stories of our own faith journey helps create a climate of discussion and learning. We don't expect them to have the equivalent of a theological degree by the time they leave home. They're going to have questions; they're going to have areas of spiritual development yet ahead of them. But we're available, we're ready to discuss, we're ready to share the faith journey together.

Business Grows

Doug was overwhelmed with the expansion of his business during Stage 2. He was out of sync with his staff and stretched in every direction. He couldn't keep up this pace, and he hated feeling isolated from the people he worked with. Something had to change. Doug hired someone to take on some of the managerial and day-to-day responsibilities, which freed Doug up to pay more attention to the bigger picture, to the vision that had led him to expand in the first place.

Relationships with the staff improved enormously. A new dynamic erupted as the team – including new employees – became friends. Cakes appeared in the break room. Co-workers turned to each other for help with challenging tasks, as well as with personal burdens. Doug had time to spend with the team. Humor returned to the workplace. Social outings appeared on the calendar. Everyone began to relax and enjoy the process of expanding the business.

And the risk they'd all taken when they began the expansion paid off. They added new clients to their accounts every week. They were busier than they had imagined they could be. Finances solidified once again. Doug started to live in the moment and enjoy the ride. They were in a groove that no one was eager to leave. Not only was this new venture working, but it was starting to look like fun!

Steve's Story

As I read the profile of a church that I was soon to become pastor of, one ministry stood out – the teaching ministry of "Rick." After a lifetime of serving on a variety of church staffs, Rick and his wife had retired to the area. By the time I arrived at the church, Rick had been on staff for ten years. He had come out of retirement to develop what seemed to be a thriving discipleship program at the church.

I arrived in the late spring, just as ministries were winding down for the summer. We kicked off the new ministry year in September. Rick's class, as usual, was over-subscribed. More people registered than the program could really accommodate. Rick was indeed a gifted teacher. The leadership board that helped oversee the ministry had been together for several years and enjoyed a sense of camaraderie. Their confidence was high and their enthusiasm contagious. In fact, it was the enthusiasm of this leadership group that helped draw so many into the class. This was the pattern every year.

Against this backdrop, I eventually observed three troubling things. First, for all of Rick's success in terms of drawing a crowd, there wasn't much leadership being developed and released into ministry. No one was sharing the teaching.

All eyes were on Rick for that role. Secondly, the operating concept of discipleship was the active impartation of knowledge to a passive group of listeners. Information, rather than experience, seemed to be the main thing, and the program asked very little out of the participants in terms of life change. Lastly, people in the church spoke in terms of “Rick’s ministry.” They commented on how blessed we were that we had someone with such gifting. The board was committed to Rick’s success, which they defined by numbers. We had been blessed to have Rick, but no one was planning for the eventual day when Rick would not be there.

These issues came to a head as both Rick and his wife began to have health problems. Increasingly, he was unable to maintain his teaching schedule. He and his wife began talking about retiring – again – and moving back to their childhood hometown where several remaining siblings still lived. Because he recognized his physical limitation and the desire to relocate, Rick tried to work with the board to develop new teachers. They wouldn’t hear of it—they only wanted Rick to teach. To make his life easier, the board offered to do more of the organizing work and even help out around Rick’s house – anything to keep Rick teaching. However, this did not change the reality that Rick needed to move on to the next stage of his own life.

In a painful conversation, Rick revealed to me that he was worried that his thirteen years on staff had been a waste. His board had no confidence that they could study the Bible for themselves, much less take on the role of teaching others. They were anxious about how and where they would find another teacher as gifted as Rick. Nevertheless, Rick retired and relocated, and within a year, his board had disbanded. The ministry effectively ended with Rick’s departure. What had happened?

Rick had excelled at identifying and investing in his leadership team. However, he failed to involve them in anything beyond maintenance issues, and thus, he failed to transition them through Stage 3. Despite being involved with Rick for several years, they had no solid experiences on which to build their own competence. It was feared that offering those experiences might put the people’s steady enthusiasm at risk.

L3 means job security to someone in ministry. Success measured primarily by participation numbers creates a mindset that only you, the leader, can carry out the ministry. If no one else can do the job, they’ll always need you. You’ll always have a safe place. You’ll always be affirmed for your gifts. Soon the ministry becomes inseparable from you. Often, lurking below the surface is the fear of expendability. “What will I do if I turn this over to new leaders?”

“I’ve been doing this so long, it’s the only thing I know how to do.”

The thought of starting over can be overwhelming. Facing a brand-new side of the Square is intimidating. Plus, L3 just feels good, so why would you want it to end? After the hard season of L2, now you are affirmed and loved. The team has gelled. Friendships have deepened. Everyone is having a good time.

But you can stay too long. If the danger of L2 is burnout, the danger of L3 is rust-out. God calls us to make disciples. And then those disciples are called to make disciples. How can they do that if they never grow beyond Stage 3 themselves? Stage 3 is tough to leave, but the rewards of moving on to Stage 4 are abundant. How do you know when it's time to enter that final stage? Do you suspect you're overstaying your bounds anywhere in your own life? Just how do you motivate yourself to move on when everything is finally clicking? Let's take a look at some real-life experiences to find out.

Chapter 14 - Stepping Off the Platform

A colleague from another part of the country visited St. Thomas' and I was giving him a tour of our facilities. Our mission work had been in several locations around the city before we had a central base. With that location, the ministry of St. Thomas' Church reached deeply into the community, and we were seeing fruit for the kingdom. It was an exciting time to be at St. Thomas'. The leadership team had matured and grown competent enough to work with very little direction. They had grasped the vision for themselves and ably carried it forward. Now they were investing their lives in people younger than they were.

My colleague turned to me and said, "You do know that every clergyman in the Church of England wants your job."

Ten years earlier the Lord had called me to lead a church in Sheffield, England. He called me to raise up a new generation in that church, a generation of young adults. God made it absolutely clear that my job was to disciple those young adults so that the leaders among them one day would lead the church. I knew from the beginning that I would someday work myself out of a job. It wasn't always easy. Various team members had gone through plenty of dark tunnels when it seemed easier to just give it all up. We had seasons of great discouragement. But we had come through them and had a great team in place. Colleagues in ministry advised me that my work at St. Thomas' was my platform, and now after years of hard work, I could enjoy it. I had invested ten years building up this ministry. St. Thomas' had two centers, one in Crookes, on one of Sheffield's seven hills, and the other in Philadelphia, in a valley closer to the city center. And we had launched The Order of Mission, a community committed to each other for the purpose of mission. The Order of Mission was made up of missionary leaders across denominations from all walks of life — school teachers, stay-at-home moms, college students, business professionals — who all looked at ways to pioneer new expressions of the church for our day and culture.

The work had been rich and rewarding, But God had not called me to stand on a platform. He had given me a specific job to do, and now the job was done. It was time to leave.

We had our team meetings every Monday. During this time we talked about how the various ministries were going. Sometimes visitors from other churches would sit in on our staff meetings as part of their exploration of our work, but that didn't change anything. We carried on as usual: we bantered, spoke candidly, looked deeply at issues — whatever we needed to do to sort out the needs of the week and move ahead with ministry. This particular Monday was no exception. A pastor from Phoenix named Walt Kallestad and his wife Mary were passing through looking at churches that worked with young adults, so they joined us at staff meeting time.

On this Monday, I wanted to talk. I knew this day would be a key shift in our experience of the Square. I told the core staff of the church that God had shown me that my job was done at St. Thomas'. He had raised up the leaders who would carry on the work, and it was time for them to step forward. Mick would lead one ministry location and Paul would lead the other. That was very clear to me, and I had no doubt that they were ready to take on those roles. My presence had been primarily an encouragement for some time already. So it was clear I should step aside and Mick and Paul should step forward.

What was not at all clear to me was where I would go next. Sally and I had no firm arrangement about the next season of our ministry. I had talked with Sally and the kids and with other leaders around the country. Everyone confirmed what I sensed. It was time to go. I just didn't know where. I told the staff that day that I thought I would be going to the United States, but I didn't have a specific place. Anything might happen.

This bunch of people was a noisy bunch, a gang of extroverts who couldn't keep their tongues from wagging. Normally during staff meetings they talked and laughed and we had a lot of interaction. On that Monday, you could have heard the proverbial pin drop. The staff knew my decision was the right one. At some point I had to move on and they had to step it up to the next level. I knew it and they knew it. We all understood what the fourth stage of leadership development was. Still, it was the end of an era, and it would never be the same again.

"I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds.

—John 12:24

It was time for the kernel at St. Thomas' to fall to the ground and die, so that it could produce many seeds. And while it took some adjusting to picture what the next stage would be like, the whole team was excited to be sprouting seeds. Walt Kallestad listened to all of this. He had attended the service the night before and seen all the young adults who came regularly and knew that God was speaking to him. When he met with me later during his visit, he extended the invitation to come and work with his ministry in Phoenix, Community of Joy. And I did end up going to Phoenix. I also have had the opportunity to work on writing and publishing the LifeShapes materials I had been developing for twenty years and to work with Fuller Theological Seminary in California teaching LifeShapes and other classes. The Order of Mission has missionary communities around the world, and I love to visit and encourage the leaders. One seed died, but many others came up, both for St. Thomas' and for me. I hear often from friends at St. Thomas'. If they face a decision they want to discuss with me, I'm happy to do that. I don't tell them what to decide, but our

relationship is there as a foundation, and I'm always delighted to hear from them. I love to keep up with the manifestations of God's power through the ministry of that congregation.

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This is Stage 4 leadership – knowing it's time to let go and then actually letting go. Not saying you're going to let go and then holding a long leash in your hand. Not saying you're going to let go and then looking over the shoulders of the new leaders. Not talking about letting go for a protracted period of time without showing any signs of letting go. We have to let go.

Without this stage, we wouldn't have a Square. We wouldn't close the final side and begin the process again with another set of leaders. Instead, we'd be in a perpetual, open-ended Stage 3. Remember, Stage 3 is a comfortable place to be for many of us. We don't have to force ourselves to enter Stage 3, but we must take firm steps when it's time to leave Stage 3. Leadership development means that when the time comes that a particular leader can no longer be at the helm, the ministry will not go into a spin and perhaps not come out of it. With a closed Square, however, we can be confident the ministry will continue.

Leaders must remember that Stage 3 learners are being prepared to move on. The new trainees at work eventually will learn the job and not need you nearby. Your kids will grow up and move out. One young woman enrolled at the local community college against her will because her mother made it clear she would be lost without her daughter around. The daughter was ready to move on, to go into Stage 4. Her mother was comfortable in Stage 3 and didn't want anything to change. We can't do that. Leaders must recognize when learners are competent and give them the opportunity to begin the Square again in an entirely different role.

Leaders who don't want to close the Square run into several problems. The individuals who began as leaders are perpetually burdened with the responsibility. These few horses get very tired of pulling the wagon. People feel incredibly frustrated, because they are treated as children and not allowed to grow into spiritual adults. They're never free to spread their wings and take responsibility. And if they are given responsibility, it's often without any training—invariably they will fail.

Delegating earlier in the Square leads to disaster, because the learners are not yet ready. But once they are ready, the good leader has no other choice – give it away and watch it fly.

The original disciples went through all the stages of the Square with Jesus, and then began the Square again, this time as the leaders teaching and equipping a new generation of believers. After Jesus' return to heaven, the original disciples faced the task of organizing and leading the swell of belief surging under their feet. Jesus had sent the Holy Spirit, so he had not said, "Go for it" and left them on their own. But he had spent three years preparing them for this job, and it was time to set them free to do it.

The objective at the core of a leader's calling is to "give it away." Does this mean that we lose something? No. Rather, the work is even more fruitful, multiplying in every direction.

Look at the disciples. Peter preaches to the masses at Pentecost and three thousand people come into the kingdom. The disciples organize three thousand people into a sustainable community so that it keeps growing in the city of Jerusalem. Can you imagine the level of leadership needed to do that? It's mind-boggling. The average church in the United States has less than a hundred members, roughly equivalent to the 120 believers who gathered on the Day of Pentecost. It was a small enough group that they were together in one place. Imagine if three thousand people showed up at a service and stayed afterward to say, "Organize us. Tell us what to do." It would take your breath away. And these guys didn't have MBAs or letters behind their names or certificates from leadership seminars or even a diploma from a rabbinical school. But they had been around the Square with the Master, so they knew how to lead. Any time you lead well, you do the Square, and when you do the Square, you end up at Stage 4 ready to delegate and let go – really let go.

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Chapter 15 - You Do, I Watch

Learner

- High enthusiasm
- High confidence
- High experience
- High competence

Leader

- Low direction
- High consensus
- Low example
- High explanation

I do, you watch.

I do, you help.

You do, I help.

You do, I watch.

The Square is about to latch shut at the corner and be complete. Get ready to hear it snap into place. Stage 3 has been a warm, relational time of positive experiences of fruitful ministry. The tough times of Stage 2 are behind you, and things are moving along nicely now. Learners are running higher and higher on both confidence and competence. They've had the humbling experiences that help them understand the grace of God, the continuous need for an experience of the grace of God. They understand they cannot carry out their work in their own strength, but only in God's strength. Self-confidence is shattered, but confidence in God soars. It's a good time, a really good time.

It's time to delegate. It's time for the wise leader to move on and begin a new Square. It's time for the learners to begin Squares as leaders themselves.

Steve's Story

"Dad, there're guys sleeping all over the hallways."

So began my first phone conversation with my son after his first night in the dorm at college.

"They're drunk, they're sick, and they're sleeping in the same clothes they were wearing last night."

Aaron hadn't expected this.

"It's the first time many of them have been unsupervised in their lives," Aaron observed. "Dad, thanks for teaching me how to handle freedom by giving me so many responsibilities this last year."

Nineteen years earlier, my wife and I began to prepare for the day Aaron would leave home. We didn't have to identify who our disciple would be; he was presented to us. There he was, this little creature in our arms, and we were responsible for him. But we had to invest in Aaron's life. As we grew in our parenting abilities, we learned nothing else substitutes for time and availability. We were involved with our children in as many areas as possible: mission trips,

family holidays, sporting events and family chores. We invested in them by spending time with them.

Each stage of development brings both increasing responsibility and a corresponding level of freedom. Responsibility and privilege grow side by side. By the time Aaron left for college, we had observed him in numerous situations that required him to use good judgment. We had seen how he handled himself. It was no great surprise that he had not participated in the dorm events that first night. In fact, it would have been a shock if he had. We were proud of him. We knew Aaron was going to be fine away from home, being responsible for himself. He had taken a successful first step in the next phase of his development.

Stage 4: Disciples are confident and competent.

If you ask someone to reorganize the files and then hover over every stack of blue or pink copies asking what the person plans to do, have you delegated? Our filing friend would certainly not think so.

If you ask your son to tutor your daughter in geometry and then stand around the corner listening and calling out corrections to his explanations, have you delegated? Chances are your son won't come back to that job,

If you ask someone to arrange the children's Christmas program and then override all the decisions during the final rehearsal, have you delegated?

Delegating means letting go.

The Stage 4 leader knows it's time to delegate authority and responsibility. Good leaders always get people ready to accept delegated responsibility. Delegating prematurely leads to disaster, but delegating at a point of readiness leads to fruitfulness. It may sound strange, but as leaders, we should look to give our jobs away!

Delegating doesn't mean turning your back and walking away, calling "Sink or swim" over your shoulder as you go. But it does mean intentionally disengaging from the hands-on work. We don't stop being friends – the warmth of Stage 3 still characterizes the relationship. How many times have you seen an old friend you haven't spoken with in years, and it feels as if you picked up right where you left off? That's what Stage 4 is like. Closeness is not defined by the amount of time you spend together, but by an openness to one another, even at a distance or over a period of time.

Stage 4: Leaders give low direction, low examples.

*

Jesus begins to disengage from the disciples. For three years they had been with him constantly. In the hours before his arrest, he spends intensive time with them, explaining his kingdom work and answering their questions. Still they don't fully understand, and the events of Thursday and Friday of his last week leave them wondering how to carry on. After the crucifixion and resurrection, he turns up every so often, and they don't even know to expect him. The disciples

have all the doors and windows locked, trying to figure things out for themselves. Without Jesus there to lead them, they retreat together, worried for their own safety. And all of a sudden Jesus is there with a word of peace (John 20:19). Thomas is missing, however, so a week later Jesus appears again to let Thomas see for himself that he is alive (John 20:26). The disciples go fishing, and they see a figure on the beach getting a fire ready for breakfast; it turns out to be Jesus (John 21:7). There on the beach Jesus has a conversation with Peter that restores Peter's vision for the work God has given him to do. Later Jesus meets the disciples in Galilee (Matthew 28:16) for some last instructions. Jesus is preparing his disciples to spend less time with him. He's reducing his hours of contact because now he is delegating authority. He's giving them the job he has been doing – bringing the kingdom. And finally he says, "It's your turn now. I'm turning it over to you."

"Then Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I commanded you. And surely I am with you always to the very end of the age.'"

– Matthew 28:18-20

"But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

– Acts 2:8

Most churches believe in the ministry of Jesus. But most churches have put the ministry of Jesus into the hands of professionals. Jesus says to his first disciples, "Everything I have taught you, teach them." Everybody heals the sick. Everybody casts out demons. Everybody raises the dead. This has nothing to do with charismatic theology; this is just Jesus. Everybody reaches out to the lost. Everybody changes society. Everybody brings in the kingdom. We need to recover this model in our churches. We can't get stuck in Stage 1 with enthusiastic worship, or get bogged down in Stage 2 with discouraging committee meetings. And we can't stop in Stage 3 when everything feels good. Only the complete Square launches the next generation of leaders to live the kingdom life before the world.

The Stage 4 leader no longer needs to direct, because the direction comes from within the disciples. They know where they should go. They're confident and competent, enthusiastic and experienced. They have their own sense of momentum, a gift from God during Stage 2, the most important stage of discipleship and learning. The beginning is not the most important. The end is not the most important. What's critical is the hard time in the middle. The way

that we come through the hard time sets up everything else and gets us ready to close one Square and open several new ones.

Learning to Let Go

The disciples thought they had arrived. The meal in the upper room was as intimate and warm as it can get. This is Passover, the zenith of the aspirations of the Jewish people, and the disciples are celebrating it privately with Jesus. He washes their feet and shares with them intimately. If only this could go on forever.

Churches can get to this point. The pastor and leaders are meshing well, various ministries are yielding fruit, attendance is up, giving is up, fellowship is warm, Wednesday night dinners are sold out. Members are convinced that this is the way church should be done, and they're glad to be part of it. A church like this is in danger of never achieving anything. Because it's such a comfortable stage to be in, no one wants to change anything.

The D4 learner enjoys the safety of someone overseeing the work or learning process. There's some security in knowing that someone you trust is watching and can keep you from ruining everything with a false move. The baby learning to walk hangs on to fingers for balance longer than she needs to; it's just nice to know someone is there. At the same time the D4 learner has the feeling of being ready for the next step – to try out independence. This stage is an odd mixture of nerves and excitement. The child on a bicycle wants to ride but also wants to know that Dad is trotting alongside to keep the bicycle upright. It's that kind of feeling.

At the same time, the Stage 4 leader has trouble letting go. We get used to the role of authority, of being the one who knows the answers. If we've been in this role long enough, we have a hard time picturing what else we might do – or where? We think, "If I let go, then what am I going to do next?" The leader finds security in the familiarity of the role, compared to the anxiety of the unknown. Because we don't know what lies ahead, we opt for the security of what we have rather than walking by faith with God to the next unknown destination. Just as the disciples are thinking how great this stage is, Jesus begins to disengage. He lets them know this is not the end. There is more, and they are going to get out and do what he has taught them to do. He's not abandoning them. "Surely I am with you always." "You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you." But the shift is happening.

I do, you watch.

I do, you help.

You do, I help.

You do, I watch.

We have seen the change in discipleship. In the first stage, Jesus says, "Come, follow." In the last stage he says, "Go, do." Jesus has taken his disciples

through the process of development to equip them for the task of taking the Gospel into the world.

As a leader, you have to recognize that your ministry is not your “baby.” Even your baby is not your baby! The time comes when you let your grown child go out on his or her own. The time comes when the people working in ministry alongside you are ready to be the leaders. The time comes even in the workplace when you know you have trained someone to do everything you’ve been doing. As a leader in any situation, you give away your job.

We need to get out of the culture of excellence that besets the church and that messes up our opportunity to grow people. “If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing well.” Or, “This is for God, so we must give him our best.”

Wrong.

If it’s worth doing, it’s worth doing badly, because unless you do it badly, you’ll never do it well. It means you’re not giving people the opportunity to engage and grow. People can’t just come into something brand-new and be masters of the process immediately. That’s impossible.

Visitors to St. Thomas’ might think, “What on earth is going on here?” The place looks like chaos a lot of the time. Things need fixing and cleaning up. I had to learn to leave it. Just leave it. Walk away. My job was not to make a bright shiny culture of excellence. My job was to disciple people.

At the Cross

As with every stage, some leaders handle Stage 4 and its unique challenges better than others. It requires discerning God’s will. Returning to the original vision to see if it has been achieved. Spending time in prayer to ascertain the next step God has for you, sometimes stepping out in faith. Some want to drop the thing and run—even if it’s really too early. Others cling for dear life and risk suffocating the person or ministry that they care so much about.

It’s time to go to the cross once again. At the cross, Jesus laid aside his own will and cried out for the grace to do the Father’s will. Self-sacrifice is not meant to be painless, and it is lonely. Jesus reminds us in John 15 that he lays down his life willingly, not because anyone forced him to. At the cross we willingly lay down the pride that makes us want to hang on to our leadership. We lay down the belief that we are the only ones who can do this work. We lay down the insecurity that makes us hesitant to put it down even when we know we should. We lay down the uncertainty of what comes next.

Jesus is the greatest leader the world has ever seen. He continues, by his Spirit, to operate in precisely the same way. He said, “I’ll send you another Counselor, and he will be like me to you, and he’ll continue to lead you.” Today, Jesus leads us by his Spirit in the four phases of discipleship and leadership. As he teaches us in these four phases, he teaches us how to teach others. We cannot improve on the greatest leader of the world.

Chapter 16 - On Jordan's Banks

Joshua sighed and looked out at the river flowing before him. The Jordan River, all that stood between the Israelite people and the promised land. He had been waiting years for this moment – decades. Four decades. Forty years. Of all the Israelites, Joshua and his friend Caleb were the only people who had been adults forty years ago and had a clear memory of everything that had happened to bring them to this place, to the banks of the Jordan.

Forty years earlier, Moses had led the Israelites out of slavery in Egypt. Joshua had been born a slave and had grown up a slave. Then Moses had risen from among the Hebrew people and challenged Pharaoh, the ruler of Egypt. Moses was Hebrew, but Pharaoh's daughter had adopted him when he was just a few months old. He had grown up in the palace accustomed to wealth and power. But the day had come when Moses reclaimed his Hebrew identity and stood before Pharaoh demanding the freedom of his people. God promised to give his people their own land and victory over anyone there.

Forty years ago, Pharaoh relented in the middle of the night and gave the nation's slaves their freedom. The Hebrews wasted no time. They took precious little with them. They snatched up bread dough without any yeast – they didn't have time for bread to rise – and rummaged through the belongings of their Egyptian masters for what they needed – gold, silver, clothing. There was no time for a strategy meeting or an explanation about what would happen next. None of them really knew. They had never done anything like this before, but the taste of freedom was on their lips. Moses said it was time to go, so they went. Over six hundred thousand men, plus women and children, marched out of Egypt. Freedom! They were on the way to the promised land.

And forty years ago, Pharaoh changed his mind, and hundreds of chariots thundered after the Hebrews. The early celebration crashed into reality as the Hebrews realized they had no place to hide. How could they hide two million people anyway? They simply had to get away from the pursuing Egyptians. But the Red Sea – how could they get across? If the Egyptians caught them now, life would be infinitely harder than it ever had been. Rejoicing melted into regret. As he moved through the camps, Joshua heard the people muttering: "What has Moses done, bringing us out here to die? We didn't want to come. We said just leave us alone. It would be better for us to serve the Egyptians than to die in the wilderness."

No doubt various people had their own ideas about what to do in this crisis, but Joshua knew Moses was the man to listen to. Moses was the one God would speak to. And he did. God told Moses to raise his staff and stretch out his hand over the sea. When he did, a fierce wind blew, rolling the water back and leaving dry land. With a wall of water on the left and a wall of water on the right, the Hebrews crossed the Red Sea without getting wet. As soon as the last person was

safely across, the waters crashed down again, swallowing up the Egyptian chariots.

Forty years ago, they saw the danger of the Egyptian armies removed. No one could stop them now. But then it took three days to find water, and when they found some, they spat it out. It was too bitter to swallow. And they were running out of food to eat. Even after the miracle of leaving Egypt and the miracle of walking across the Red Sea, the people started grumbling again. They weren't thinking about the promised land. They weren't thinking about God's power to get them there. They only wanted food and water.

God provided food and water, but even still, the people complained. When were they going to go to the promised land?

Forty years ago, Joshua was one of the twelve spies Moses sent out to explore Canaan and bring a report back about the promised land. They spent forty days investigating the land God had promised to them. Joshua and his friend Caleb returned full of faith and confidence for the future. It was a rich land flowing with milk and honey, and they would have a good life there. But the other ten spies spread the word that it couldn't be done. They would never be able to conquer the land. The people who already lived there were too big and powerful. Gossip spread through the camp like wildfire, getting worse and worse with each retelling. Joshua could not believe some of the things he was hearing! The Israelites were actually conspiring to depose Moses, make someone else their leader, and go back to Egypt.

This couldn't happen! Joshua and Caleb ripped their clothes in grief and frustration to show everyone how strongly they felt. The Lord had promised them this land. The Lord was on their side. With the power of God on their side, they couldn't fail. How could the people have any doubt about what God was doing for them? They would take the land and live in it, just as God had promised. "Those people have nothing," Joshua and Caleb said. "We have the Lord. Don't rebel, and don't be afraid. God is going to do this for us."

But Joshua and Caleb might as well have been spitting in the wind. It was no good. It wasn't long before Joshua was hearing rumors that the people wanted to stone Caleb and him. God saved their lives, but the people paid for their willfulness and doubt. No one over twenty years of age would see the promised land. They would wander in the desert until the whole generation was dead.

Forty years. Of that generation, only Caleb and Joshua would enter the new land. This was Joshua's lowest hour. If only the people had believed. If only they had recognized that the Lord would keep his promise, that he would turn the impossible into reality. But they didn't. So they wandered around the desert for forty years, never knowing the richness of the land God wanted to give them. One by one the unbelieving adults died, until only Moses and Joshua and Caleb were left with a generation of people who had grown up – or been born – in the desert.

During those forty years of wandering, Joshua became Moses' assistant and learned everything he could from Moses. When the Amalekites attacked the Israelites, Moses told Joshua to choose some men and go out to fight. Moses would do his part by standing on top of the hill with the staff of God in his hands. When Moses went up to Mount Sinai, leaving the people camped at the bottom of the mountain, he took Joshua with him part of the way. When Moses left the Tent of Meeting, after being with God face to face, Joshua stayed with the tent while Moses returned to the camp. In later years, Moses gave Joshua the responsibility of making sure the tribes of Gad and Reuben would keep their promise to fight in the new land with the other tribes. When Moses knew that he himself would soon die, he commissioned Joshua to lead the people. He knew Joshua would take the people into the promised land. God would be with Joshua, just as he had always been with Moses.

Moses wasn't just giving Joshua busy work. He wasn't just assigning tasks that he himself did not want to do or did not have time for. He was grooming Joshua for leadership. Moses' era would come to an end, and Joshua would take things from there. Moses gathered the Israelites together and introduced them to their new leader, reminding them that this was the man God had chosen to lead them into the next phase. "I'm not going to lead you across the Jordan," Moses said, "but Joshua will. Don't be afraid. The Lord your God is going with you, and he is never going to leave you. Pay attention to Joshua now. He is the leader God wants you to follow now."

Moses was direct and clear with Joshua – his job now was to lead the people, and God would be with him. Moses was direct and clear with the people: "follow Joshua; he's your leader now." The Lord gave Moses a final song to teach the Israelites, a song that celebrated the greatness of God and reminded the people of their special connection to God. The vision of the promised land was not changing simply because Joshua was their leader instead of Moses.

For Joshua, the time passed too quickly. Moses shared the song, blessed the people and went to Mount Nebo. Joshua never saw him again. Now Joshua was in charge – it was his time to lead the people and give this new generation a fresh vision for the future. He had the comfort of God's presence: "*No one will be able to stand up against you all the days of your life. As I was with Moses, so I will be with you; I will never leave you nor forsake you*" (Joshua 1:5).

So there he stood, looking out over the Jordan River and knowing that his first act as the new leader would be to take the people across the river. This called for a clear and specific plan, and Joshua was ready to lead in a clear and direct way. Officers fanned out through the camp telling the people exactly what to do. Priests would carry the ark of the covenant to the middle of the river. "When you see the ark of the covenant, move out and follow it." Joshua told the people, "*Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow the LORD will do amazing things among you*" (Joshua 3:5).

CHAPTER 16 - ON JORDAN'S BANKS

Having heard from the Lord what to do, Joshua gave directions to the Israelites. "Follow the ark of the covenant. It will go out into the river ahead of you. The water is going to stop flowing. That's when you walk across on dry ground." And when the whole nation had crossed the Jordan, Joshua listened to God again and sent twelve men back to the dry riverbed to gather stones to build a memorial. Finally God told Joshua the priests holding the ark of the covenant in the middle of the river could come out. The waters crashed back into the riverbed.

Before long, Joshua faced his first battle. His job was to take the city of Jericho, and after Jericho the rest of the promised land. Moses' Square of leadership was complete. Joshua's was just beginning.

Chapter 17 - The Last Leg of Learning and Leading

Patrick and Stephanie made it through the tough D2 years. They enjoyed the closeness of their D3 years. Eventually they were ready for a new role. They were ready to give away what they had been learning in their own lives over the years. Other couples would hit the D2 rocks and fight to resist the undercurrent that had the power to sweep them away. Patrick and Stephanie wanted to help others see that Stage 2 was not the end of the line. Giving up was not the only option. They counseled couples about marriage, disciplined young adults starting out, led small groups and got involved in various ministries of the church. Wherever they went, they shared all that they had learned. With their own story and vulnerability, they prepared others to persevere through the dark times and come out into the light once again. The healing they had experienced overflowed to bring healing to other lives.

Marriage is not one big Square, though. Married couples have new lessons to learn no matter how many years they've been together. With each issue, they go through the four stages of learning and open themselves up to the four stages of leadership. They may face decisions about school for their kids; conflict about how consuming their individual hobbies become; relationships with extended family; the impact of a job change on everyone in the family; how to relate to adult children; retirement planning. Each life stage, and each issue within each stage, brings a new Square, and married couples learn to see themselves on the Square as learners and leaders for each other. By the end of each Square, the two individuals have come to a common understanding, a common decision, a common course of action. But they know it's not the last time they'll go through the process. (This is similar to the LifeShapes Learning Circle process, which will be entered over and over throughout one's life journey, resembling a Slinky. For a review, see *Choosing to Learn from Life*.)

Marriage and family often flow together around the Square. Because of their strengthened marital relationship, Patrick and Stephanie were able to raise their children from a position of strength, rather than the brokenness of hiding behind the smiles and masks of their first years together. Their own experience helped them to recognize the various stages of the Square in the development of their children and to respond with leadership appropriate to each stage.

Parenting at the L4 stage usually means relating to your children as young adults. You've spent twenty years or more living as an example before them. Now is the time to step back. If they ask questions, be ready to answer them. If they ask you about buying a house or making an investment, they're inviting you in and you can freely discuss – but leave the decision to them. Don't shake your head at what they decide in the end.

Young adults in Stage 4 are not looking for a lot of specific direction. They will have made their choices about education, where to live, career choice, or

marriage partner. The parents' job at this stage is to let go, as hard as that may be. You've finished the job and equipped them to be on their own. If you've been a strong and involved leader through Stage 3, your adult kids will still enjoy your company and look for ways to spend time with you. But the relationship is now adult-to-adult, both equally competent to make decisions.

Think of all the milestones you've reached with your children. Potty training did work after all. They learned how to read. They stopped falling off their bikes. Frantic splashing finally evolved to strong swimming. Teenagers learned how to drive – and perhaps now you prefer to let them drive when you travel together. They graduated from high school. They launched into a full-time job or went off to college where you couldn't monitor their every move. Each time you reach a milestone, you reach Stage 4. When your kids are on their own as young adults, you've hit another milestone.

Stage 4 Fruit

Rachel was overseeing the children's ministry at a morning celebration service. She was responsible for two groups and had been developing two team leaders, one for each group. Now the team leaders were beginning to take the reins. The vision she'd had for the group was to see the children grow as radical disciples and to feel invested in belonging to church for themselves, not simply because their parents brought them every week. She realized she was seeing this fulfilled: the kids were praying fervently, bringing non-churched friends, helping with welcome, set-up, and clean-up for each meeting, praying for each other and the adult congregation, and even leading worship. The teams Rachel had developed were taking responsibility, looking to her for very little. They didn't need direction, but she was happy to be there to offer encouragement.

Rachel knew the time had come to hand over her "baby," and the thought grieved her. God reminded her of Hannah, who gave her long-awaited child Samuel to the Lord. She had to surrender this ministry that had been so close to her heart and let God do with it what he wanted to do.

A few weeks later, the church lost its meeting place. The congregation decided to divide into several smaller cluster communities. The children were scattered along with their families. But they were able to take the things they had learned to do under Rachel's ministry and keep the ministry multiplying. Having the mindset and goal of preparing to let go, and then actually letting go, resulted in several strong, sustained ministries rather than one that might have been lost when the church lost its meeting place.

Doug's Finished Square

Doug's business really took off. Expansion gave the staff the space they needed to develop their own areas of competency and to feel more confident about what they were doing. Doug was so successful at training his staff that he almost wasn't needed. His role changed. This was his business, so he wasn't

abandoning it, but he no longer had to be there every day to be a part of every minute decision, or even the larger ones. His staff was well qualified to run the business; they weren't going to run it into the ground just because he wasn't looking over their shoulders. Doug was a Type A personality, so stepping back and letting go was not easy for him. But he knew it was time. As new business opportunities opened up for him to pursue, he knew he would have to let go of the original business.

Doug had always wanted to set up a photography studio and try his hand at making a living doing what he loved to do – take creative, artistic pictures. Knowing that his staff could handle the original graphics business, Doug closed that Square and began a new one. He had a lot to learn about a new business. He was starting back at Stage 1, knowing that the tough times of Stage 2 were coming. But his vision for the graphics business was fulfilled, and now God had given him a new vision.

Steve's Story

"I think we've accomplished our mission." That was my final statement at a strategic planning session with our senior staff and an outside consultant. Smiling, the consultant placed on the table our vision statement with a check mark and completed date written next to each goal.

"I'm glad to hear you say that, Steve," the consultant said. "Because if you had not come to that conclusion, then you would be the problem."

Over the course of five years, we had seen the church more than double in membership. At the same time, we saw leaders emerge throughout the congregation. New staff had come on board, and each one of them had begun to develop a functional, reproducing team of leaders. The strategy was working. The teams were ready for more. It was time to increase the role and responsibility of the team I'd assembled.

"What do I do now?" the Stage 4 leader wonders. This is why we had asked a consultant to help us sort through the next steps for the church and articulate a new vision.

The Job Is Done

Matthew 28 records for us Jesus' transition through Stage 4 of leadership. Gathering his disciples, who are competent and confident based on experience and teaching, Jesus releases them into a new phase of ministry. They have the responsibility for the continuing work of the newly established community of believers. It's a big job, but he knows they're ready to do it.

It's always difficult to let go. "My baby" is the phrase most leaders use to describe their vision and work. This is something that God put in their hearts and minds. They've gotten used to it being there. They've become attached. The vision is part of them. The vision has been the motivation behind their next steps

for so long, it's hard to imagine working toward anything else. Moving on is not easy.

But it is necessary. The job is done. We've come around the Square.

The new staff at work is trained and fully capable.

The kids are living on their own.

Your third grade students are ready for fourth grade.

Your teenager has a license to drive.

The home remodeling project is finished.

The athletes you coach are ready for the big-league scouts.

Your six year old doesn't need you to walk her to school any more.

Your son doesn't need your help to change the brake pads on his car.

The small group you were leading has divided into two groups – with two new leaders.

Your eighth grader can put together a research paper on her own.

Your spouse has made the big decision to go to law school.

The children's ministry that used to eat up your time and energy practically runs itself.

The questions you expect during committee meetings don't come. Instead, you hear people suggesting action steps.

The Square goes everywhere. It lives with you. It goes to school with you. It goes to soccer practice with you. It goes to work with you. It goes to church with you. It goes grocery shopping with you. It goes on a date with your spouse with you. The Square is there when you're setting an example for your kids. It's there when you're discouraged. It's there when you see the light at the end of the tunnel. It's there in the warmth of relationships. It's there when you step back and watch someone you love succeed without you.

We're all learners, and when we've learned one lesson, God is ready with the next one. He always has more for us to learn.

We're all leaders, and the time comes to recognize – and celebrate – that the job is done. But God is ready with the next job. He always has more for us to do.

Jesus gave his job away. And while it took the disciples a while to realize he was giving it to them, they embraced it and carried forward. May we be humble enough to do the same – to give away our jobs, and to embrace the new ones we receive – so that we can go to all nations and make disciples of the kingdom.

Chapter 18 - Sally Learns to Ski

Recently Sally said to me that she might be ready to overcome her allergy to skiing. After I recovered from a shock-induced fainting spell, my mind raced back to our very first vacation together. It was in the Italian Alps. Very picturesque, but not nearly as much fun as you might think. I had to walk all the way down the mountain with her skis, which meant Sally was never going to hit the slopes ever again. She did après ski all week! While I was off skiing, she was off getting a tan.

So now she's telling me she wants to ski. I thought, *I'm not doing that again.* I raised an eyebrow, but she was serious.

So we went up to Flagstaff. We got on the slope and it was the most gentle nursery slope in Christendom, which as you know is where most of the skiing in the world is done. It was a half-mile wide and from the top to the bottom it's about a mile long. It was a gentle, gentle slope from the top to the bottom, the most fantastic nursery slope you've ever seen.

So we got up there and Sally looked off the edge of the lift and said, "Ooh, its high, isn't it?"

"You'll be all right, especially when you get up there."

She wasn't feeling very good about this at all; she had the whole vertigo thing going.

"You're not going to leave me, are you?" she asked.

"No, I'm not going to leave you! What are you talking about?"

"Well, you're not going to ski away?"

"No, I promise. I am not going to ski away."

I said to Sally, "Just put your skis inside of my skis, and we'll ski down the slope."

She knew I was trying to teach her to ski, so she had to be prepared for the direction that I would give. "Put your skis inside my skis, and hold me, not too tight now, hold me around the waist." Sally had no poles, and she wasn't too keen about that, but I simply said, "Hold me around the waist, and we'll snowplow together."

When you snowplow, you push out with your feet and you look like an idiot because your knees are going in and your bottom is sticking out.

"Hold on there, everything all right back there?"

"Yes, very good." She didn't sound all that convincing.

And then we put some weight on one side and we went that way. And then we put some weight on the other side and we went that way. At this point Sally started to scream, because she looked up and remembered that she was afraid of heights.

So, she grabbed hold of me.

I say, "Whoa! Whoa, whoa, whoa, whoa! Now wait a minute. Are we all right?"

"No! We're not all right!"

And I said, "Well, what's the matter? We're okay. It's flat, virtually."

"I can't do it."

I said, "Sally, I think you've got to. We've got to get down the hill." Visions of the Alps filled my mind – my carrying Sally's skis. Maybe even carrying Sally.

"Sally, I'm not carrying the skis down again. We've got to do this. Let's do snow-plow."

We set off at about quarter of a mile an hour. Just very, very gradually.

I was thinking, I know it's only ten in the morning, but it is going to be dark before we get down.

Suddenly, Sally cried out, "Don't go left!"

"If we don't go left we go straight down, Sally."

"Let's go left, then! Go left!"

We go left.

"Don't go right! Don't go right!"

"Well, if we don't we're going to hit that tree, Sally."

"Go right! Go right!"

We got up to half a mile an hour. Children were zipping past us. A glacier nearly overtook us. We're going gradually, carefully.

Sally was holding onto me for dear life, and her eyes were closed.

"Sally, if you open your eyes and look, you might find it easier."

"I don't want to look!"

"Just try it."

"I'll look over your shoulder."

Of course she can't look over my shoulder because I'm much taller than she is. So she looked round me. Slowly her grip began to loosen. We gathered pace, reaching speeds of maybe a mile and a half an hour. As we finally passed the tree and took a turn to go downhill the other way, she saw the vista open up. At this point, Sally lost all sense. Now, from the ski slopes at Flagstaff you can see at least a hundred miles on a clear day. You could see the Grand Canyon. And for some reason, although it was sixty miles away, she thought she was going to fall in it.

"Aaagghh!!"

"Sally, it's fine."

"But we're really high up!"

"Yes, but it's flat! We'll be fine."

"It's slidey and we're going to go downhill and I'm going to fall in there!"

"Sally! It's sixty miles away. You're not going to fall in!"

"No!" and she started hiding behind me again.

"Okay, we'll slow down." The glacier passed us right about then. Coal was forming around us quicker than we are getting down this slope.

Well, we got through the D2s, and the only way we could have got through the D2s was my spending time with Sally's arms tight around my waist. It would

have done no good for me to say, "Well, see you later. You'll be okay!" Apart from everything else, I think I would be a single man today. (Or a married man with only one limb.) So we had to go through D2, and I had to talk her out of this panic thing that she had going on. But Sally slowly began to loosen her grip. I said, "Now, I'm not going to leave. I'm going to really spend time, and we're going to work it through, and we can go any direction down the mountain you want."

And she said, "Well, I want to go through the trees because I don't like looking down there."

So we went through the trees and it took us ages to get down. Ages and ages. But by the time we got to the bottom, we were friends!

Then Sally said, "I think you can leave me to just go and do my own little thing, pattering around, because I think I'm at D4."

Well, we'd spent the whole morning getting down one slope. Literally the whole morning. I mean, who knows how many hours it took us to do those few yards. But by the end of the morning, she was saying, "I'm ready. You can delegate this to me now."

And I said, "Now you're not going to kill anybody? You're not going to go straight off down there or anything like that?"

"Nope."

By the end of the day, she was skiing alone. Although Sally will never be a downhill skier in any Olympic sense, she is able to do it by herself.

More than any other shape, the Square universally applies to the relationships that we hold most precious in life – our marriage, home, community, work, church. For many people, it is a challenge to realize that God wants to shape, change and mature them through a process of development. It may be a bigger challenge still to believe that God is calling them to disciple and lead others. But once we grasp these foundational principles of the Christian life, then these tools for development and stages of leadership can be nearly universally applied. At Stage 4 the followers are going to go off and do it for themselves. They will become the leaders, and if they have learned anything in this process, they will know that being an effective leader means knowing when and how to adapt the four main styles of leadership.

I do it; you watch.

I do it; you help.

You do it; I help.

You do it; I watch.

You're a learner, and you know what your Square is. You're probably in the midst of several learning Squares in different dimensions of your life. As you

think through descriptions of the various learning stages, you should now be able to recognize your stage. Are you ready for the next stage?

You're a leader, and you know what your Square is, or what your several Squares are. As you think through the descriptions of the various leadership stages, you should now be able to recognize your stage – with your spouse, with your kids, with your job, with your ministry. Are you ready for the next stage and to bring others where they need to be?

Most important of all, keep your eyes on Jesus. Be the kind of learner he wants you to be. Be the kind of leader he wants you to be. Whether you more comfortably see yourself as a sheep from the front or a shepherd from the back, remember that Jesus is the master teacher, and he's with you in every step you take.