

## **values/attitudes of a missional leader**

Just as the culture we live in is changing so too is the type of leadership that is needed within that. There is no 'one size fits all' leader approach as how we lead depends on knowing ourselves and understanding the context in which we lead. However there are a number of attitudes that we can all identify with. Attitudes are contagious and can build either a positive atmosphere or a negative one of mistrust and suspicion whether that's in a small group, team or church. We want to be people who build confidence and foster long-haul commitment in others as we go about our mission of being and sharing the good news to a world that doesn't know Jesus.

### **Passion: commitment to the faith community and its mission**

A passion for our mission of being good news, of advancing the kingdom underlies everything. This passion is palpable, contagious and attractive and new people will be attracted to our communities because of this enthusiasm, joy and overflow of the 'life to the full' that Jesus brings. Passionate leaders influence through their energy and inspiration, but this must be done carefully. Our passion must be for people as well as our mission so empowering others and pulling together instead of just controlling so others do what we want them to do.

### **Independence: resisting the pressures to conform**

God's church is to be one of diversity recognising the dignity of individuals and their unique contributions. We must avoid the temptation to make people conform to one way of being/doing things/thinking, and of conforming to the way of the culture around us (Romans 12.1-2). Our goal is never to make clones (although it may be easier!). Jesus developed the potential in his disciples and allowed them to express themselves very differently. If we are to reach our generation we must encourage diversity and empower diverse people. We live in a complex world with a complex and richly diverse tradition and as God's people nothing could be a more powerful witness in a multicultural world than a church demonstrating unity amidst diversity.

### **Creativity: exploring innovative approaches**

As we move into a post-Christian and rapidly changing culture, we need creativity and innovation, which can only come from an environment which is a safe place where people are given permission to be who God is creating them to be (and not a clone). Innovation is scary and risky, and innovators are often restless people. Venturing into the unknown is always a steep learning curve and we are always going to make mistakes as we do that. Our approaches will constantly evolve and this requires courage and the ability to not take ourselves too seriously. We need to be prepared to 'give things a lash' for the sake of the gospel and not play it safe.

### **Curiosity: insatiable appetite for knowledge and understanding**

Being innovators in a quickly changing world means we have to be always learning. The days of the leader knowing everything are gone. We constantly need to be gaining fresh insights and new skills – asking 'why?' and 'so what?' to establish how we should respond. Curious leaders are open to new ideas and have a genuine interest in what other people think. This means constantly growing in understanding and experience of both God and the culture we are reaching into, which allows us to move forward. Curious people can be easily distracted and unfocused so must be highly focused on feeding all this into the big picture of our role in God's mission in the world. We must be careful not to confuse the creativity and curiosity of faith with the anxiety of unbelief (becoming workaholics of the kingdom rather than disciples of the King).

### **Hope: sustained by faith in a God-assured future**

Curiosity and innovation requires courage as well as faith in God's guidance and provision and is motivated by hope. 'Faith is being sure what we hope for and certain of what we do not see (Hebrews 11.1). Hope is grounded on the promise that Jesus will build his church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it (Matt 16.18). Hope can be easily sucked out by



## **values/attitudes of a missional leader**

pessimism and unbelief in others. So faith, hope and love need to be nurtured, we need to be growing ourselves and making sure we are abiding in Jesus. Those who abide will be fruitful (which may not be the same as successful) but life will involve painful pruning. The hope borne out of being rooted in Christ and the reality of pain is a hope that endures.

### **Inclusion: constantly seeking the participation of the total membership**

Leaders are not just connected to and responsible for one group but the entire faith community. We believe people are made in the image of God and leaders are called to be shepherds of the entire flock so we are called to ensure their spiritual (and holistic) well-being. We don't tell people what they are to do – we model it and include them, recognising their worth and contribution that excels ours in various areas. We don't want to create 'consumer or spectator Christians' but rediscover the priesthood of all believers and ever-member ministry. Inclusion and participation is easier in small groups, however we need to create environments where people can discover and develop their talents and gifts in relationship with people they know and trust. Inclusion is hampered by people feeling they aren't as gifted as others and excluding themselves, and by being made to feel insignificant by leaders who reject the contribution of others (see 1 Corinthians) We need to guard against these attitudes – encouraging those who feel inferior and deflating those who have an inflated opinion of themselves.

### **Interdependence: building authentic relationships**

Including people involves appreciating them, wanting the best for others, and desiring to see them become Christ-like in character. Good leaders see the potential in people, not just the problems. They are therefore not threatened by the abilities of others instead build relationships and harness those abilities. Fellowship and ministry flow from relationships which must be carefully built and maintained. This means leaders need to model the values and behaviour we want to see in others and be prepared to depend on others – we can't encourage trust and interdependence if we aren't prepared to lead the way.

### **Forgiveness: a positive response to failure**

We are all forgiven sinners. People stumble and fall and constantly need to be picked up and dusted off. We need to be about restoration as well as salvation. We all constantly are in need of God's grace as we seek to follow Jesus. We must avoid the idealism that says believe in Jesus and everything will be fine. We must create a culture of exercising forgiveness and holding each other accountable as we seek to grow in Christ-like character. We need to remember we are all works in progress and so help each other when we fall (James 5.20). God's church does not restrict membership and that diversity (evidence of the reconciling power of the gospel) produces tensions. Inclusion is not achieved by conformity but by patiently and generously understanding each other and working together. Tension needs to be creative and not destructive which will be a powerful witness to a watching world.

### **Humility: demonstrated before God and the community they serve**

All of this means leaders need to be acutely aware of their dependence on God. Living a risky faith means that we are dependant on God's leading and resourcing. Being innovative and creative, creating diversity, creating a culture of forgiveness and restoration involve a vulnerability which keeps us humble before God. The lifestyle of a leader should be characterised by humility and simplicity – following in the way of Jesus, working with people and not over them, resisting the temptation of separating themselves from those they lead by means of status. Leaders belong to God and to their followers – they are servants aware of the responsibility placed on them by God who will equip, and following Jesus who did not come to be served but to serve.

