

## LEADING LIKE JESUS 2

### THE CALLING OF A LEADER

#### EXERCISE

Reflect back on your reading of 2 Timothy over the last four weeks.

- What were the most significant things you learned from it?
- What steps are you attempting to take in order to apply what you have learned to your own life and ministry?
- Spend some time praying for one another that God would bring to fruition the things he has put on our hearts

Effective leaders know that they are called by God: called primarily to belong to him and then called to serve him by influencing others. It is this sense of being called which gives us the only adequate basis for effective ministry, the true experience of identity, security and significance which we need. This was the precise foundation upon which Jesus' own ministry rested.

**Mark 1:11** 'You are my beloved son, with you I am well pleased' (cf. **Ps 2:7, Isaiah 42:1**)

- Identity - You are my son
- Security - I am pleased with you
- Significance - you have an important job to do (the texts alluded to here are Messianic texts)

Jesus' ministered **from** this experience of identity, security and significance. His confidence came from a clear knowledge of his call (cf. **John 13:3**)

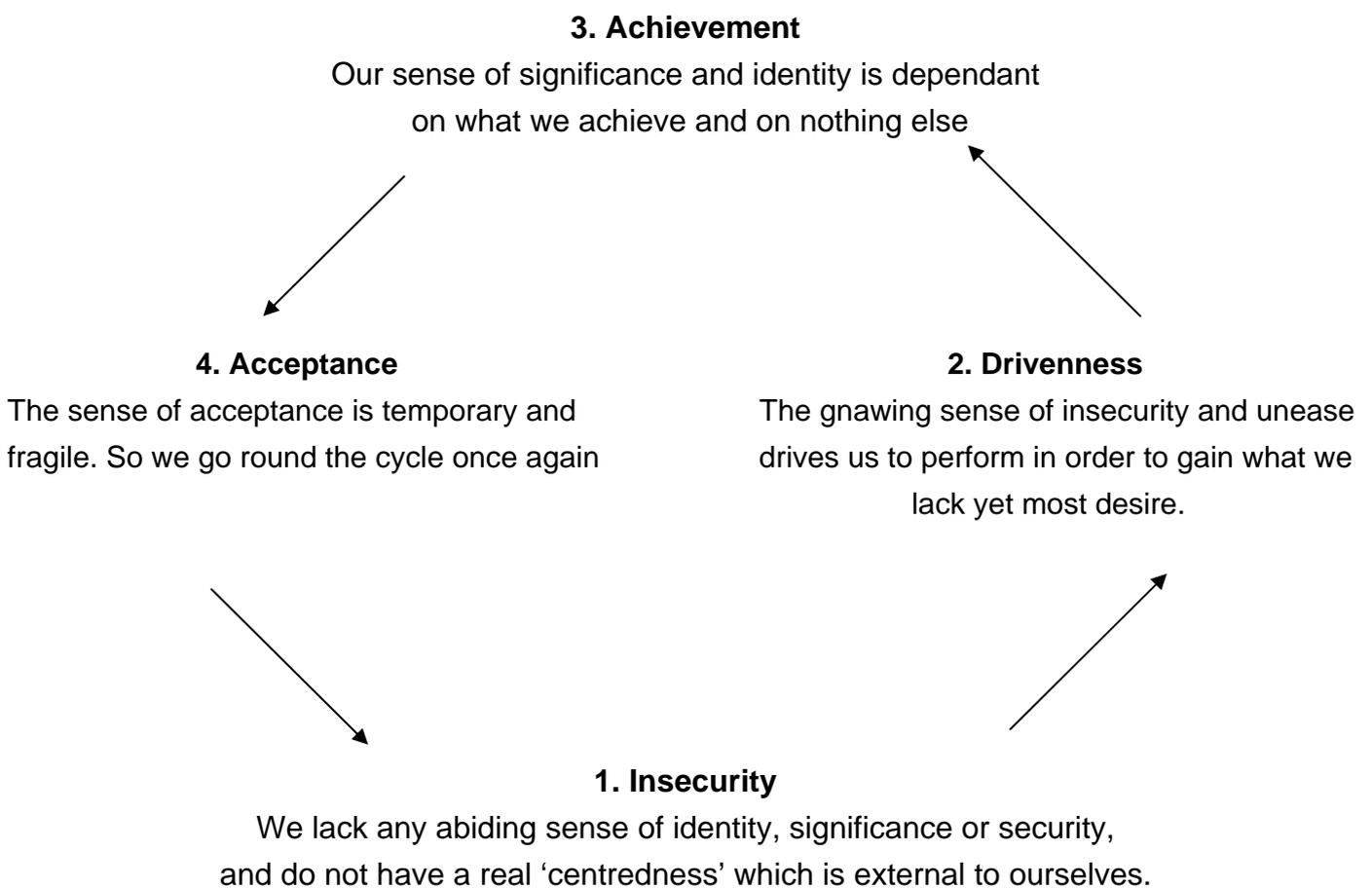
'Calling is the truth that God calls us to himself so decisively that everything we are, everything we do, and everything we have is invested with a special devotion and dynamism lived out as response to his summons' (*Os Guinness - The Call*)

Ministering without this sense of identity, security and significance that comes from God's acceptance can be very dangerous. People's sense of inadequacy can drive them to compensate for the insecurity by working hard to be successful. We must replace the deep-seated insecurity with a deep-set trust in God and with joy over the fact that he has adopted them and called them to his service. (*Ajith Fernando - Jesus Driven Ministry*)

It seems to me that what I need to be free as a leader is to be loved. My problem is that I am insecure; I have unmet needs; needs for approval, status, affirmation, success. As long as I have these unmet needs, I will use people around me, including those I lead, to meet my needs. How can I be set free? The answer lies in being secured by a loving, unconditional, gracious and yet directional relationship in which my needs are met. (*Simon Walker – Subversive Leadership*)

We need to work out whether we are caught up in the cycle of **grace** or the cycle of **grief**.

## THE CYCLE OF GRIEF



Various different factors may serve to immerse us in the cycle of grief. We are often 'driven' by strong inner urges which we have picked up during formative times in our lives. These may include e.g.

- Only the perfect is good enough; you could always do better.
- What others think of you is the most important thing; always try to please others.
- Don't ever admit to any weakness; always act as if everything was fine and as if you are well able to cope.
- Don't admit to any failure; only those who succeed matter to God and to others.
- Other people are better than you.

The key feature of life in this cycle is that we are ministering for acceptance/approval rather than from it. God, and other people, (and we ourselves) will only approve of us if we do a good job.

We can become jealous and resentful of others who appear (to us) to be doing a better job.

Our identity is somehow tied up with our performance; criticism strikes at the root of our sense of self-worth.

We are self-reliant and self-centred and lose any real sense of perspective.

Our spiritual life is often crippled by life in this cycle.

Furthermore, living in the Cycle of Grief can have a catastrophic impact upon our effectiveness as leaders.

- Our judgment can become clouded and our reactions in different situations affected more by a compulsion to have our own needs met and sustained rather than by a dispassionate concern for the Kingdom of God and the bigger picture.
- We have a wrong attachment to our role/position/function of leadership such that, although we are serving ostensibly for no personal gain, we find it impossible or, at least, difficult to give up our role when called to. The priority of service does not allow us to serve others freely.
- We are slaves to affirmation or approval and we pander to those who will offer this to us.
- We find it hard to receive from others
- We can adopt a kind of 'martyr' complex and become resentful and grudging over how much we do.

'Being free to receive is the fundamental orientation of a human person' (Simon Walker)

Maintaining a clear sense of who we are in Christ is the first priority for Christian leaders. Anything less will place us in a dangerous position as a leader. The gap between the public image and the private reality grows. Publicly we become an increasingly unsafe person to follow, not only modelling unhealthy patterns of leadership, but also at risk of allowing our unresolved issues to seep out in destructive patterns of behaviour. There is an alternative.

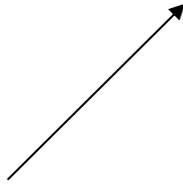
*(James Lawrence - Growing Leaders)*

# THE CYCLE OF GRACE

## 3. Sustenance

Our resources are continually being renewed as we abide in Christ and depend upon him.

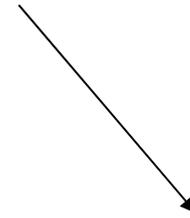
(John 15:4)



## 2. Identity

Acceptance leads to a settled sense of Identity, Security and Significance.

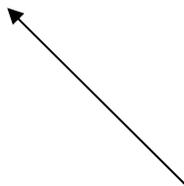
(Ephesians 2:6)



## 4. Achievement

We know what it is to be fruitful, but realise that our sense of self-worth does not depend upon performance or success.

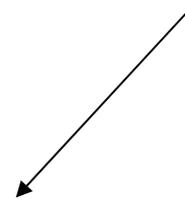
(Ephesians 2:10)



## 1. Acceptance

We find our true centre in the unconditional grace of God

(Ephesians 2:4-5)



In the cycle of grief we are starting from a position of achievement. In the cycle of grace our starting point is that of resting in the acceptance of God, knowing that this acceptance depends not on our own achievements but on the saving love of God himself. It is this acceptance which God wants to communicate to us. From this sense of acceptance comes our identity and our sense of significance. Fundamental to living in this way is a dynamic understanding of being called by God.

## The Nature of Our Calling (John 15:1-20)

### 1) Called to be with Jesus (v4)

Jesus' primary model for leadership is that of discipleship. Those whom he called to lead he first called to follow him and to enter into a lifelong learning relationship with him. In doing so he was inviting them to do nothing more than he himself was doing; Jesus learned from the father and did only what he saw his father doing. Every effective leader is also an obedient follower and never seeks to be anything else.

cf. Mark 1:17

## **2) Chosen by Jesus (v16)**

His choice of us predates any decision we have taken to be with him. He chooses us not because we have proved ourselves already nor because we are in any way impressive.

cf. Mark 2:13-17

## **3) Called to be friends of Jesus (vv14-15)**

Friendship implies intimacy, trust, affection and loyalty. We are not merely slaves, employees or associates. Rather we are let into the deepest secrets of the heart of Jesus. Jesus has poured out his love upon us and longs us to experience it (v9).

## **4) Called to Obey (v10)**

Following implies imitating. Discipleship is not a leisure activity. Christian service, including leadership, is not like any other voluntary service.

VOLUNTEER	MINISTER
A volunteer offers him/herself for service;	A minister responds to a call from God for service
A volunteer's service is an option at his/her convenience;	A minister's service is not an option, but is a matter of obedience to God.
A volunteer is master of his or her own life and time;	A minister acknowledges Jesus as Lord of his or her life and time.
A volunteer is accountable to the organisation and its leaders;	A minister is accountable first to God, then to the organisation and its leaders.
A volunteer is motivated by need and recognition;	A minister is motivated by the Spirit, the Christian community and need.
A volunteer reserves the right to choose what he or she will do;	A minister relinquishes the choice of what he or she will do to the higher principle of spiritual gifts and divine call.

Obedience involves loving others in a sacrificial and preferential way (vv12-13).

## **5) Called to be Fruitful (vv1-8)**

Fruitfulness is very different from success, and nowhere are we called to be successful. There is an expectation that all disciples will be fruitful (v8). Fruitfulness depends upon our remaining in the Vine. He is the only one who can ultimately produce fruit. This is completely liberating (cf. **2 Corinthians 4:1,7,16**).

Fruitfulness has far more to do with growth in our character than with growth in our effectiveness in serving/leading.

Are we becoming more like Christ, do we love people more, are we joyful despite outward circumstances, when under pressure are we known as a person of peace, is it becoming more difficult to lie? Do people feel valued in our presence not for what they have to contribute but for who they are as a person? Are all these things increasingly an attitude at the heart of who we are rather than action stuck on to our lives to make us look good? (*James Lawrence*)

### **6) Called to suffer (vv18-20)**

We must not be unsettled by the experience of hardship, difficulty or, indeed, outright opposition. Jesus was able to endure suffering and, indeed, to pray for those who executed him precisely because of his confidence in his calling, identity and destiny. Nothing will shake us if we are properly rooted in our sense of calling. (**2 Cor 4:16**)

**Growing leaders know that they are chosen; the heart of leadership is not in mastering the how to's but in being mastered by the grace of God** (*Lawrence*)

### **EXERCISE**

1. In which cycle do you live most of the time? Score yourself on the scale below where 1 is entirely in the grief cycle and 10 is entirely in the cycle of grace.

*Grief* 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10 *Grace*

2. Are you aware of any significant influences, events or experiences which tend to push you into the cycle of grief? e.g. values you imbibed at a formative time in life, painful experiences which shaped you negatively etc. List them below:

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3. Looking through the different elements of our call as described by Jesus in John 15, are there aspects of this call which you find it particularly hard to embrace or own for yourself?

Which particular truths would you most like God to impress upon you in a fuller way?

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4. In groups share briefly the most significant thing which God has shown you this evening. In our ministry time we are expecting God to deepen in us a sense of identity, security and significance, and to hear afresh his invitation to follow him in intimacy.

#### **PROJECT**

1. Spend some more time meditating on **John 15:1-20**, allowing God to speak to you through it and noting down the things He says to you. Allow the light of Scripture to penetrate the recesses of your own life.
2. Read the story of Gideon in **Judges 6 & 7**. What does this teach us about the nature of God's call, and the way in which the experience of being called by God equips and changes us?

*Ian Parkinson, Feb. 07*