

Developing Transformational Leaders

Carl Lahr

The central ministry focus identifies what we believe we need to do every day to see progress toward our vision.

We desire to see gospel movements among every least-reached people group. Gospel movements encompass a lot of good work — evangelism, discipleship, church planting, compassion, etc.

It would be very easy to become engaged in a lot of good ministry activity that does not lead to a gospel movement. While gospel movements are always a work of God, we know that leaders who are passionate about seeing individuals and communities transformed by the gospel are a key component. Each initiative, team and global worker must ensure that their daily ministry activity is connected to our central ministry focus.

Developing implies two significant concepts. ***First, our interest to come alongside leaders who are pursuing gospel transformation in their community.*** It is not a statement that we know everything they must do or that we are in control of the process.

Second, it presses us toward a discipleship posture. If we are humble, it also opens the door for the discipleship process to work both directions.

So, what is a transformational leader? I would like to propose a few “signposts” that will help guide our efforts in developing transformational leaders.

Signpost 1: *They are in a clear process of being transformed to be more like*

Jesus. They are keenly aware that they are in desperate need of God's work in their lives to shape their character, attitudes and activities to be more like that of Jesus. This is demonstrated by a spiritual vibrancy rooted in spiritual disciplines, while humbly living transparently in community.

Signpost 2: *They are committed to multiplication in ministry.* They follow the model of Jesus and the early church to work toward multiplying believers, disciples and kingdom communities that engage with their community for transformation. Leadership is a lifestyle that raises up others to do the work of ministry, not a position of power harnessing others to do our work.

Signpost 3: *They are in "touch with" and engaged in their community.* They understand the needs and challenges their community faces. Much more, they desire to work with the community to find solutions. They desire for the community to see that the church adds value to the community through its participation with the community. These leaders are always asking two questions: 1) What about this context needs to inform my practice? and 2) What about this context is yet to be redeemed by the gospel? They must also ask these questions of the influences they carry within themselves — church and popular.

Signpost 4: *They are zealous to see the church carry out its transformational purposes in their context.* They hold loosely to the forms, methodologies and traditions they have experienced and practiced. They constantly ask God, "What is it going to take to see gospel transformation here?" They are innovative. Innovation requires:

- Creatively thinking of new methods and strategies to overcome obstacles and engage in emerging opportunities.
- Prayerfully submitting those methods and strategies to God.
- Humbly inviting others into the shaping and formation of the methods and strategies.
- Boldly acting when God leads.

Obviously, each one of these signposts can be developed much further. Each of us must work through these signposts as we press forward in ministry. First, to

determine where we need to grow toward becoming a more transformational leader. Second, to see how we might be part of developing those God has placed in our sphere of influence as they journey into transformational leadership.

Carl Lahr is the Director of Global Leadership for Converge International Ministries. He has over 2 decades experience in cross-cultural ministry focusing on multiplying churches and developing leaders.

This article was written for the December 2024 issue of the Converge International Ministries Global Link.