

# THE 5Cs OF THE HEALTHY LEADER

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*by Malcolm Webber*



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An effective leader possesses a blend of three special elements:

1. Vision. In Christian circles, we could also call this "Calling."
2. Character.
3. Competence.

All three elements are found in the description of King David in Psalm 78:

*He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people Jacob, of Israel his inheritance. And David shepherded them with integrity of heart; with skillful hands he led them. (Ps. 78:70-72)*

Verses 70-71 reveal David's calling:

*He chose David his servant and took him from the sheep pens; from tending the sheep he brought him to be the shepherd of his people*

Verse 72a shows his character:

*David shepherded them with integrity of heart*

Verse 72b describes David's competencies:

*with skillful hands he led them.*

Just as a stool has three legs, there are three foundations of effective leadership. All three must be *present* and in *balance* for the leader to succeed. The three foundations are calling, character and competencies.

What would happen if one element were missing in the life of a leader?

1. If a leader possessed a strong *calling* and strong *character* but had weak *competencies*, he would produce a big mess! There would be lots of great ideas, good intentions, passion, zeal, sincerity and godliness, but nothing much actually accomplished by the organization.
2. If the leader had strong *character* and strong *competencies*, but was weak in the area of *calling* and vision, the organization would run like a well-oiled machine, but it would not accomplish anything of significant value.
3. To think of a leader with a strong *calling* and strong *competencies*, but who was weak in *character* is the very worst scenario! This combination would spell inevitable disaster for the leader and for everyone in the organization. In the words of Howard Hendricks, "The greatest crisis today is a crisis of leadership. And the greatest peril of leadership is a crisis of character. Think about it, to give a person management techniques and leadership skills without integrity is simply to enable him to become a better rip-off artist."

We need all three. Thus, the three necessary capacities of effective leadership are character, calling and competencies.

But is this sufficient? Is this model sufficient to describe a mature, balanced and effective Christian leader? Is there anything missing?

There are two elements missing in our model: Christ and Community. These are the two great commandments Jesus gave us:

*One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbor as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments." (Matt. 22:35-40)*

The leader must be in right relationship with God and with his brothers.

So, there are actually five elements that must be present in the life of a healthy Christian leader: Calling, Character, Competencies, Christ and Community.

Now, let's put these five in order. Which should come first? Of these five, which produces which?

Here is the order. Our model of the holistic Christian leader starts with his personal relationship with Jesus Christ. The leader must know God.

Christ *must* come first.

*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. (1 Cor. 3:11)*

*And he is the head of the body, the church; he is the beginning and the firstborn from among the dead, so that in everything he might have the supremacy. (Col. 1:18)*

*True leadership is not possible without Christ first! Without Christ first, the other*

four elements will not work – like a body without a head!

Without Christ first in the life of the leader, he will never get along in community with others:

*At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. (Tit. 3:3)*

Without Christ first, the leader's character will be sinful:

*So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking. They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. Having lost all sensitivity, they have given themselves over to sensuality so as to indulge in every kind of impurity, with a continual lust for more. (Eph. 4:17-19)*

Biblically, Christian leadership is not character-based; it is Christ-based. While character is vitally important in Christian leadership, it is not first. Christ is first!

In Christian leadership, everything does not proceed from character and values; everything proceeds from union with Christ. This is not mere semantics but it goes to the very heart of how we understand the Christian life and Christian leadership.

To make this distinction is not to undermine the importance of character and values. On the contrary, this actually establishes true character and values,

proceeding not from human effort but from the indwelling life of Christ!

*...If a man abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit... (John 15:5)*

*so that you may be... filled with the fruit of righteousness that comes through Jesus Christ – to the glory and praise of God. (Phil. 1:10-11)*

Without Christ first, the leader will have no calling other than hopelessness and futility:

*remember that at that time you were separate from Christ, excluded from citizenship in Israel and foreigners to the covenants of the promise, without hope and without God in the world. (Eph. 2:12)*

Sadly, many Christian leaders put their callings first and then try to use Christ to fulfill their own ambitious, self-centered visions. But He will not accept second place in anyone's life. We should not pray for power without first praying to know Christ. We should not use the Word of God for teaching, without first using His Word to know Him. Ministry must not be first; in all things, Christ must have the preeminence.

Finally, man's competencies are useless apart from Christ. Without Christ first, the leader is capable of nothing of any value in God's eyes:

*All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags... (Is. 64:6)*

*I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man abides in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. (John 15:5)*

True competencies come from Him:

*Not that we are competent in ourselves to claim anything for ourselves, but our competence comes from God. He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant... (2 Cor. 3:5-6)*

Christ must be first! The leader *must* know God. He must walk with God, and out of his relationship with Jesus will proceed every other aspect of his leadership.

This is not just the "best" way; it is the *only* way to true Christian leadership. Everything else is mere fleshly works.

Second, the leader's personal relationship with Jesus must be expressed and worked out in the daily life of his various communities: his family, his church community, the teams he is a part of, and the broader community of the world.

In this context of Christ and community, character will be formed in the life of the leader. The indwelling life of Christ expressed and worked out in community will develop godly character.

Since God now has someone with character, He can trust him with a calling. Once the leader has a calling he will need the competencies to fulfill that calling.

This is the logical progression of the elements in our model of healthy Christian leadership: Christ, Community, Character, Calling and Competencies.

Leaders with wrong priorities will never be satisfied and all they will ever produce will be like filthy rags in God's eyes (Is.

64:6), useless works of wood, hay and stubble:

*For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. (1 Cor. 3:11-13)*

The foundation must be right, and then the building on that foundation must be right. The four elements all come from Christ.

If men put community first, a shallow, humanistic social club will result. If character is put first, legalism and self-righteousness will result. If leaders put calling first, competition and gift-identification will result. If competencies are put first, self-reliance and mere human achievement will be the results; the leaders may outwardly succeed, but such success will be empty and transient.

Leaders with the wrong first priority will never be satisfied. Moreover, they will always be insecure in their leadership because only Christ brings true security. Insecure leaders, sadly, often become abusive leaders, using others to build their own value and meaning.

That is the logical progression of these elements of healthy Christian leadership. But we should not think that we must address each of these sequentially – as if a leader must first be mature in Christ before he begins to address his need for community, etc. The leader should grow in all five areas concurrently. Consequently, the following is a better

way to visualize the relationships of these five elements:



Christ and community are the *contexts* of the healthy leader: he needs to live in Christ and in community. Character, calling and competence are his *capacities*: they need to be in him.

Christ is the Source of character, calling and competencies. Christ is also the broader context of true community. Truly, He is the Center and Circumference of all things (Eph. 4:4-6)! In community, character is formed, vision is clarified and competencies are developed.