

# Societal Changes that Require the Transition to an Equipping Paradigm for Christian Leaders

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*“The leader’s calling is to help God’s people to fulfill their calling”*

*- Robert W. Kellerman*

## Abstract

*This article contends that major changes are taking place in society to such a degree that a revision of Christian leadership paradigms is necessary to respond effectively to these changes. The nature of the changes taking place in society and the extent to which these changes are taking place are rendering existing leadership paradigms ineffective to the point of rendering some approaches to leadership obsolete. The article proposes that the Church adopt an Equipping paradigm of Christian Leadership, and that the text of Ephesians 4:11-12 be used as the basis of this paradigm. Not only must the text be given greater precedence when constructing leadership paradigms in general, but the text also offers a new organising centre for a theology of Christian leadership. The article concludes with a brief examination of the possible implications of an Equipping paradigm for Ecclesiology, Leadership Practice, the Challenge of Transitioning to an Equipping Paradigm in Churches and for the Training of Leaders.*

## 1. Introduction

Leadership is a crucial factor that influences both the health of individual congregations as well as the expansion of the Church in the world Kuhl (2005:4). If the Church is to successfully carry out its mandate to reach the world and at the same time maintain its health and the integrity of gains already won, then the issue of its leadership continues to be an important issue that needs attention. McNeal maintains leaders play a formative role in shaping and guiding the Church:

Throughout church history, leaders have shaped the character of the Christian movement. At crucial moments, leaders like Augustine, Luther, and Calvin have *redefined* the church McNeal (1995:12).

However, leadership paradigms can be effective or ineffective. They can promote growth or inhibit growth, and can be empowering or inhibiting Ogden (2003:171, 175). David Watson mentions that the wrong kind of leadership “makes growth and maturity virtually impossible” (1989:246). Regarding the importance of the

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leadership paradigms employed in the Church, he says:

It is probably here, more than in any other area of the Church's life, that we need to look with fresh understanding and re-examine, critically and biblically the traditional patterns that have been passed down to us over the centuries Watson (1989:245).

In a similar vein, Eddie Gibbs says that the Church needs to re-examine its approach to leadership in the light of the extent and radical nature of global changes taking place in the twenty-first century (2005:41). He says:

Leadership styles must change in the light of fresh challenges the church faces ... What we need is not new leaders, but *different* kinds of leaders Gibbs (2005:41).

## **2. Major Changes Taking Place in Society that Require the Revision of Christian Leadership Paradigms**

Although leadership paradigms must always be changing to respond effectively to societal changes Pohlmann (2006:90), the nature and degree of societal change presently taking place requires *fundamental* changes to leadership paradigms. Moderate adjustments to leadership paradigms will not suffice. Eddie Gibbs says that these societal changes are of such "seismic" proportions that they require styles or models of leadership that supersede the stereotypical leadership paradigms (2005:41; also Gibbs & Coffey 2006:24; McLaren 2006:113; Roxburgh & Romanuk 2006:3). The changes require radically different kinds of leaders (Ogne & Roehl 2008:15; Gibbs & Bolger 2006:193) with new skills and new capacities Roxburgh & Romanuk (2006:10, 13).

### **2.1 The Extent of Change – "Discontinuous" Change**

The changes taking place in society are taking place on a global scale and have been described as being "Discontinuous Change" Roxburgh & Romanuk (2006:6). Roxburgh & Romanuk (2006:7) describe this type of change as follows:

Discontinuous change is dominant in periods of history that transform a culture forever, tipping it over into something new... Continuous change develops out of what has gone before and therefore can be expected, anticipated and managed... We can anticipate the stages and learn from those who have gone before us to navigate the changes. We have stock experience and resources to address this developmental change; it is continuous with the experience of many others. This kind of change involves such things as improvements on what is already taking place and whether the change can be managed with existing skills and expertise... Discontinuous change is disruptive and unanticipated; it creates situations that challenge our



assumptions. The skills we have learned aren't helpful in this kind of change (2006:7).

The nature and level at which discontinuous change is taking place in society requires the same degree of change in leadership paradigms. While attempts have been made to adjust stereotypical leadership paradigms in response to societal changes, most revised models of leadership use new language to “repackage” old paradigms Roxburgh & Romanuk (2006:4). The following assertions by Roxburgh & Romanuk (2006:10-11) reveal some of the ramifications of discontinuous change for Christian leadership paradigms:

The skills and capacities that shaped church leadership for much of the twentieth century were the right ones for that context. We are not critiquing these skills and capacities. Our point is that the world has changed. Discontinuous change means that many rules and assumptions about leadership now need to be reexamined and rewritten (2006:10).

The classic skills of pastoral leadership in which most pastors were trained were not wrong, but the level of discontinuous change renders many of them insufficient and unhelpful at this point.

## **2.2 The Shift from a Modern Worldview to a Post-Modern Worldview**

The transition in society from a modern worldview to a postmodern worldview is another major change taking place, and is illustrative of the phenomenon of discontinuous change. Cladis (1999:19) quotes Walter Truett Anderson as saying that Postmodernism “is a major transition in human history, a time of rebuilding all the foundations of civilization, and the world is going to be occupied with it for a long time to come”. As a term, “Postmodernism” is one that is “virtually indefinable” (Crane 2003:49), and is used to cover an emergent, comprehensive worldview embracing philosophy, the arts, culture, politics and certain branches of science, theology and popular culture Gibbs & Coffey (2006:28). It is characterised by among other things: a rejection of propositional truth and certainty Gibbs & Coffey (2006:29); the rejection of hierarchy; a suspicion of institutions and distrust of authority figures; McLaren (2006:169); Moynagh (2003:31).

The effect of postmodernism on the Church is that the Church has been increasingly marginalized to the fringes of society's cultural center Gibbs & Coffey (2006:31). The trend of the marginalization of the Church started with modernism's emphasis on the secularization of life into public and private spheres Gibbs & Coffey (2006:25, 27). The same marginalisation is happening to many church leaders. McLaren contends that there was a period in time when Christian leaders were once viewed as pedagogues, professionals or civic leaders and when pastors functioned at the cultural centre of a community McLaren (2006:9); Moynagh (2001:96). In addition to serving in churches, Christian leaders served as village

priests or as civic community leaders Gibbs & Bolger (2005:17). As a result, the church as an institution, as well as Christian leaders have also been marginalised to the periphery of society. This marginalization can precipitate an identity crisis within leaders who will have to renegotiate their roles in society.

### **2.3 The Christian Demise of the West**

Another significant change directly impacting the Church is that the West is seen as having entered a “post-Christendom” period Gibbs (2005:75). Gibbs says that the West is in need of “re-evangelizing” as “one of the world’s most difficult missionary fields” (2005:148). However, many leadership models mistakenly function with a Constantinian Christian view of the world when the Church occupied a central position as a key social institution in Western societies Gibbs & Bolger (2006:17). Christian leadership paradigms and identities were formed against this backdrop. Churches focused on maintenance, and developed corresponding models of Christian leadership which focused on the tasks of the spiritual growth of believers and the management and administration of congregations. However, as society has entered a “post-Christendom” phase, the Church as an institution has lost its privileged position and increasingly occupies a place on the margins of society, alongside other recreational and non-profit organizations Gibbs & Bolger (2006:17). In post-Christendom and postmodern cultures, new leaders are needed Gibbs (2005:175). Previous assumptions about leadership that were cultivated for a different era and context need to be re-examined and rewritten Roxburgh & Romanuk (2006:10).

### **2.4 Post-Denominationalism, New Denominations and Networks**

Current trends towards fragmentation in society will accelerate the trend of the late twentieth-century for people to be less focused on traditional denominations Moynagh (2003:104). Moynagh contends that this fragmentation will result in a twofold decline in adherence to existing traditional denominations and a rise in the formation of a myriad of new “denominations”. New denominations will no longer be based on the particularities of doctrine, governmental or other church structures, allegiance to an influential founding leader, or on particular worship styles. Instead people will attach themselves to a “denomination” based on the common interests, similar needs, and passion for the same causes that they may share with others. Moynagh argues that people will probably belong to new, large networks in order to combine their efforts to accomplish larger objectives that require collaborative efforts or to experience ministry which the smaller group cannot afford Moynagh (2003:102, 106). Networking in this way is reminiscent of the clusters and networks around which churches in the New Testament were organised Gibbs (2005:86).

Leadership within conventional denominations functions in pyramid hierarchies with centralised authority and clear lines of command and control. Networks on the other hand are fluid, flexible and capable of creatively and intuitively adjusting



to diversity Gibbs (2005:91-92). They are neither centralised, nor decentralised, but polycentric which means that there are many centres of leadership which all interrelate Gibbs (2005:92). Leaders who have functioned in traditionally-styled denominations may find it difficult to adjust their skills to the new reality.

## **2.5 The Transition of the Word “Pastor” from a Noun to a Verb: The Pastoral Ministry of the Body of Christ**

Odom (2001:29) argues that in the future the word “pastor” may move in emphases from a noun to a verb. This means that “pastoring” will be done by the whole community rather than “pastoral” ministry being vested in an individual. Neufield also notes that most of the allusions to pastoring in the New Testament, even when applied to leaders, refer to the function or service that is rendered rather than an “office” which is to be occupied (cf. Ac 20:28; 1 Pt 5:2) (2002:180). As a spiritual gift and function this ministry responsibility is given to leaders, but is equally given to other members in the body of Christ as well Watson (1989:247, 257). For this reason the “solo ministry syndrome” or traditional “pastor” system is seen as a departure from the New Testament Stevens and Collins (1993:88). Jackson (2002) says that no one person can assume the role of pastoring an entire congregation. Getz (1984:115-116) also adds that it has never been God’s intention that either one leader, or a group of “several leaders ... do the work of ministry. He intended for the whole church to do this work”.

This change in emphasis of the word “pastor” from a noun to a verb will bring about several paradigm shifts. Firstly, it debunks the archetypal leadership paradigm of the leader as *the* shepherd of a congregation. It lifts the traditional and popularly perceived restriction of the pastoral ministry of a few individuals, and places this ministry in the hands of the entire church membership. The second change that this paradigm shift could bring about is in changing the theology and philosophy of ministry of the Church. When leaders understand that shepherding is the responsibility of the entire community of faith, they may be mobilised to assume the equipping function advocated in Ephesians 4:12 as a central and strategic leadership responsibility. This will require changes in their priorities, ministry goals and time allocation so that they train others to care Stevens and Collins (1993:90). The third change is a change in the way congregations are viewed and the way in which individual church members view themselves. Congregations will no longer be gathering places “where people come to receive religious goods and services” Roxburgh & Romanuk (2006:13). Instead they will be places where people offer each other the mutual care envisioned in the New Testament (cf. Jn 13:34-35; Rm 12:10-16; Col 3:16; 1 Th 5:11; Heb 10:24).

## **2.6 The Effect of These Changes: The Redundancy of Stereotypical Leadership Paradigms**

During the earlier periods of Christendom, when the Church as an institution and its leaders were afforded a privileged place in society, efforts to evangelize society were easier since society embraced a Judeo-Christian worldview. Roxburgh

& Romanuk (2006:8); Gibbs & Coffey (2001:96). Although several leadership paradigms emerged during this period, they all caused leaders to see their roles within the body of Christ as the primary purveyors of ministry Virgo (2003:111). These paradigms also created a dependency mentality in which the “laity” came to depend upon the professional clergy to minister to them or to minister on their behalf. Churches and Christian organizations also tended to be structured hierarchically with centralized authority vested in leadership personalities. Ministry initiatives that did not originate with individual leaders were stifled Snodgrass (1996:223). The cumulative effect of this was not only that members were “disenfranchised” from playing a significant role in ministry *within* the church, but their ministry outside in the secular world was also restricted Gibbs & Coffey (2006:89). This preoccupation with internal health resulted in the missional responsibilities of leaders and the Church to the world being ignored Gibbs & Coffey (2006:89).

However, the degree to which society in the West has shifted from its Christian moorings will inevitably render stereotypical leadership paradigms redundant. In post-Christian societies, Christian leaders trained in pastoral care and organizational management will have to acquire the skills to minister in a “post-Christian, neopagan, pluralistic context” as cross-cultural missionaries Gibbs & Coffey (2006:41). Gibbs & Coffey (2006:41) contend that “Unfortunately most pastors and church leaders have had no missionary training” and may not make the transition to a new leadership paradigm. In a post-Christian society leaders must learn to serve as cross-cultural missionaries who intentionally engage the secular culture or community in order to transform it Ogne & Roehl (2008:16); Gibbs (2005:12-13). Roxburgh & Romanuk (2006:3) mention that leaders must also adapt their leadership proficiencies in order to lead churches as *missional communities* in the new post-Christendom culture.

### **3. The Equipping Leadership Paradigm**

An Equipping paradigm of Christian leadership affords the Church an opportunity to reposition itself to engage the changes in society in a fresh way because one of the foundational principles of an Equipping paradigm of leadership is Missional engagement. Missional engagement starts with the premise that in the future the Church will find itself in a “post-Christian”, “secular” culture Hammett (2007). It understands that, “the Church is not a building or an institution but a community of witness, called into being and equipped by God, and sent into the world to testify to and participate in Christ’s work” Hooker (2008:1). Engagement requires that the Church moves from an “attractional” approach which focussed on attracting others to churches through “seeker—sensitive” services or need-orientated ministry Hirsch (2008); Morgenthaler (2007:49). Instead, Hirsch (2008) says that missional engagement requires that “Every disciple... be an agent of the kingdom of God, and every disciple is to carry the mission of God into every sphere of life. We are all missionaries sent into a non-Christian culture”.



“Missional engagement necessitates missional leadership” Hjalmarson (2011). The primary ministry or service of missional leaders is “to get God’s people ready for their ministries both in the world and in the church” Valleskey (1987:8). Leonard Hjalmarson argues that the gifts of Ephesians 4:12 provides the incentive for “the recovery of missional leadership” (2011).

### **3.1 The Equipping Leadership Paradigm Described**

An Equipping approach to leadership is one in which leaders understand that their main priority is the equipping of members for the ministry to which they have been called. The Asia-Pacific Institute of Biblical Studies maintains:

The role of the pastor-teacher is clearly taught in Ephesians 4:12 ... the pastor’s role is to equip and prepare the members ‘for the work of the ministry, for the building up of each member of the church.’ His main role is to help every member to discover his spiritual gifts, develop them to effectively serve with their gifts, deploy them to the ministry to which they are called and delegate authority to them in their ministry... The pastor is not a doer of ministries but is an equipper (2001).

Greg Ogden Ogden (2003:131-132) also accentuates the importance of a leader’s Equipping function when he says:

“I believe the closest thing to a job description that is given for the pastoral role is Ephesians 4:11-14 and it defines the fundamental posture and purpose for pastoral ministry... to equip the saints for the work of ministry.

### **3.2 Ephesians 4:11-12 - the Biblical Basis of an Equipping Paradigm**

Ephesians 4:11-12 forms the basis of an Equipping leadership paradigm. The way in which this text is interpreted makes a significant impact upon one’s theology of Christian leadership Stott (1989:166). The “Traditional” interpretation of the text applied the ministry described in the passage to the ministry of Christian leaders. It interpreted the prepositional phrases in Ephesians 4:12 - “for the equipment of the saints... for the work of ministry... for building up the body of Christ” (RSV) - as co-ordinate phrases which describe three separate functions, all of which apply to the “officers” listed in Ephesians 4:11 Davis (2000:168-169). The “the work of the ministry” mentioned in Ephesians 4:12 (KJV) is that of the leaders being spoken of in verse 11.

Leadership models based on this interpretation have served to endorse the notion of a special class of “officers” within the church, given by Christ to the church Schnackenburg (1991:182). These models have contributed to a “two-class system of priest and people, clergy and laity, professional and amateur”, one which has been “disastrous” in stifling the growth of the church Watson (1989:250).

The “Traditional” interpretation of Ephesians 4:11-12 limits the ministry envisioned in the text to being that of “preachers, pastors and teachers” Schnackenburg (1991:183). This resulted in mainly pastors and teachers being trained as leaders for congregations, while the other three roles – apostles, prophets and evangelists - faded away as being “unnecessary” Hirsch (2008).

An alternative interpretation of Ephesians 4:11-12, the “Revisionist” interpretation, assigns the leaders mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 the responsibility of equipping believers for ministry so that *believers* would engage in “works of service” (NIV) or “the work of ministry” (ESV). The trend towards a revision of the “Traditional” interpretation has gained momentum since 1946 Davis (2000:169). This “Revisionist” interpretation interprets the second prepositional phrase of Ephesians 4:12 as being dependent on the first one and the third one as being dependent on the two that preceded it. The result is that the leaders mentioned in Ephesians 4:11 are given a new mandate, and that is to equip the body of Christ for its ministry as mentioned in verse 12. The NIV translation brings this meaning to the fore:

It was he who gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare God’s people for works of service so that the body of Christ may be built up” (Eph 4:11-12, NIV)

Gene Getz (1984:115) also contends that leaders equipping believers for service is “the primary thrust” of Ephesians 4:11-12 (1984:115). William Yount (1996:15) maintains that although pastors may engage in several ministry tasks, the pastor’s most fundamental calling is to “equip the saints for works of service”. The implication here is that instead of doing all the ministry themselves, leaders need to create “a permission-giving atmosphere” where there is a “release of control of ministry” on their part Ogden (2003:100). The basis of this is the understanding that Christ, as the head of the church, can communicate his will directly to every member of his body, the church, thereby guiding them into their assigned ministry Ogden (2003:100).

Since the text does not specify where the service or ministry would take place, Church members are assigned the responsibility of ministering within churches and in society at large Davis (2000:167). This interpretation offers the Church an opportunity to respond effectively to major changes taking place in society. It envisages all believers, leaders and “non-leaders” alike, working alongside each other, both inside the Church and in the world. Gibbs & Coffey (2001:89) maintain that church leaders often fail to recognize that “the world” is the primary area of calling and ministry of the laity.



### **3.4 Ephesians 4:11-12 as a New Organizing Center for Christian Leaders**

Ephesians 4:11-12 can be used to construct a new leadership paradigm, with an Equipping function as its organizing center. Several commentators agree that Ephesians 4:11-12 is a key text that brings a unique understanding to the ministry of both Christian leaders and the rest of the body of Christ. For example, Snodgrass says that, “This passage offers a blueprint for redesigning the work of the church and its leaders” Snodgrass (1996:223). Markus Barth wrote that “Ephesians 4:11-13 is a locus classicus pointing out the coherence of the church’s origin, order, and destiny” Barth (1981:478). John Stott (1989:167) says that the expression about equipping God’s people in Ephesians 4:12 has “far-reaching significance for any true understanding of Christian ministry ... Here is incontrovertible evidence that the New Testament envisages ministry not as the prerogative of a clerical elite but as the privileged calling of all the people of God”.

An Equipping paradigm does not seek to replace all conventional leadership paradigms. Instead, it reinterprets existing leadership models primarily as leadership *functions*, roles or *responsibilities*. An Equipping paradigm also becomes the *organizing center* for leadership paradigms and functions. While leaders may continue to fulfill certain stereotypical leadership functions, but these functions must be reinterpreted in the light of an Equipping paradigm and the lens of Ephesians 4:11-12. The primary responsibility of Christian leaders must be preserved, and that is to equip members for the ministries to which they have been called.

For example, although pastoral care must continue, it must not be vested in a single individual, nor must the “pastorate” be interpreted in terms of a ministry office. Instead pastoral care is to be interpreted as a spiritual gift and as the mutual responsibility that every member has to each other. While some may be spiritually gifted to “pastor” more effectively, all believers can participate in caring for each other. Leaders have the responsibility to equip believers to help care and edify each other. Mutual ministry to each other strengthens relationships, develops interdependency and contributes to the unity, growth and development of the body of Christ envisioned in Ephesians 4:16:

From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, *as each part does its work* (Eph. 4:16, NIV).

### **4. Some Implication of An Equipping Paradigm for Leadership and Ministry**

The following are possible implications of an Equipping paradigm for Ecclesiology, Leadership Practice, the Process of Transitioning to an Equipping Paradigms in Churches, and for the Training of Leaders.

#### **4.1 Ephesians 4:11-12’s Bearing on Ecclesiology**

Ephesians 4:7-16 makes a unique contribution to ecclesiology and to an under-

standing of Christian leadership. While the passage cannot be seen as a comprehensive theological statement, “it does contribute much to a theology of ministry” Snodgrass (1996:212); Stott (1979:167). The emphasis on the doctrine of the church Foulkes (1980:16) and the functional relationships of believers within an organic unity is unique in Ephesians Richards & Hoeldtke (1980:36). Ephesians 4:11-12 introduces a new emphasis, one in which the church is seen as a missionary vehicle and as a “Bible Institute” in which all believers are equipped for ministry. Earlier in the same passage, Ephesians 4:7 also reveals that ministry has been given to every believer Snodgrass (1996:200). A correct interpretation of Ephesians 4:11 indicates that “the whole church is taken into Christ’s service and given missionary substance, purpose and structure” Barth (1981:479).

#### **4.2 An Equipping Paradigm’s Approach to Christian Leadership**

On the basis of Ephesians 4:11-12, equipping others for ministry is considered to have been a “primary” function of overseers in the New Testament Pohlman (2003:122); Virgo (2003:133); Yount (1996:18). Hendriksen (1976:198) says:

The meaning of Ephesians 4:11, 12 is ... that it is the task of the officers of the church to equip the church for these [ministry] tasks Neighbour (1990:47); Watson (1989:257).

This function requires that leaders change the way in which they view both themselves and other believers. Leaders in an Equipping paradigm must view all members as co-labourers and peers. Leaders are to enable others to themselves become ministers in their own right. Barth says that leaders are, as it were, “ministers to ministers” (1981:481). Leadership is to a large extent functional, not positional. Hierarchical structuring of the church and the clergy/laity divide must be dispensed. James Means (1990:47) contends that “Spiritual leaders were never intended to be authority figures to follow, but fellow workers, servants and colleagues in the work of the ministry”. Leaders must treat others as “contributing peers regardless of their scope of responsibility” and also as “creative equals” Wright (2003:134).

#### **4.3 Equipping and the “New Protestant Reformation”**

Greg Ogden contends that when the practical implications of the Reformation doctrine of the priesthood of all believers *are implemented*, it will bring about a “New Reformation”, one in which ministry is returned to the people of God Ogden (1990:25); Beckham (1995:9). Although it is an integral part of the theology of the priesthood of all believers, the *application* of an Equipping leadership paradigm in ministry has been lacking among Protestants Young (1988:54).

Although the Reformers espoused the priesthood of all believers, they continued to conceive of leadership as functioning in mediatorial and representative roles. These are roles in which the clergy ministered the word of God and the



sacraments to other believers Ogden (2003:52). The result was the creation of “a priesthood within a priesthood” Ogden (2003:52). The priesthood of all believers was therefore “affirmed in theory, but denied in practice” Ogden (2003:52). Virgo (2003:111) says:

“Evangelicals have rejected doctrines that represent the priest as mediator, but often the pastor is still regarded as the professional – he will lead our meeting, he is the employed, isolated man of God – instead of seeing that the goal of all ministries is to raise up a functioning, many-membered body”.

Ogden (1990:137) says, “For ministry to be returned to the people of God, we must have a bottom-up view of the church” (1990:54). Leaders must no longer view themselves as the Church’s primary conduits of ministry, nor must they view other believers as passive recipients and supporters of their ministry. Instead they should embrace their new identity as servant leaders who equip the body of Christ for their ministry Ogden.

#### **4.4 The Challenge of Transitioning to an Equipping Paradigm in Churches**

A challenge that will inevitably face leaders who wish to adopt an Equipping paradigm of leadership is the fact that many congregations have been taught and socialized to be passive recipients of ministry and may resist the change. Wright says, “Tradition is strong in churches and difficult to change” (2003:120). Resistance to change can in some way be explained by understanding the phenomenon of (corporate) culture. Every congregation and ministry has its own kind of culture Roxburgh & Romanuk (2006:21). Wright (2003:117) mentions that:

Every organization has a hidden culture that has developed over the years that controls what is done regardless of the values we espouse.

The reason that this is noted here is to help understand that the adoption of an Equipping approach to ministry will not ultimately depend only upon reasoned theses. A transition to an Equipping paradigm requires nothing less than a “cultural revolution” in churches, and changing the culture of a congregation is a complex process.

Change, however, must start somewhere. One place for it to start is with the group of people whom this article addresses directly – Christian leaders. Leaders are the “keeper[s] of the culture” Finzel (2000:149). “Leaders create and sustain culture in everything they do” Wright (2003:122). The implementation of an Equipping paradigm therefore falls partly upon the shoulders of the leaders in the Church. Leaders can start to explain the implications of an Equipping paradigm, based on Ephesians 4:11-12 in order for people to explore this paradigm as a new possibility for ministry. Leaders can also encourage believers to discern

the ministry needs around them in the places where they live, work, study and socialise. They can then help them to discern any way in which God may want them to minister in those areas and assist them by equipping them for ministry in that environment.

#### **4.5 The Curricula and Method of Equipping in An Equipping Paradigm**

The adoption of an Equipping paradigm also has implications for leadership training. Traditionally, seminaries and Bible colleges have been the training institutions of the Church. However, Cunningham (1996:64) says that the theological seminary continues to be viewed as an institution primarily for the training and accreditation of professional ministers. This has been criticised as being “self-serving, with the professionals accrediting themselves” Cunningham (1996:65). The challenge is that training leaders this way creates a multi-generational problem: “Clericalism is passed from generation to generation” Stevens and Collins (1993:139).

Cunningham (1996:67) therefore suggests that a priority for theological education is to interpret properly the term “minister” and then to adapt training accordingly. Leaders should not only be trained for their own ministry. They could also be trained to train the individuals in their congregations and ministries Morgan (1994:76). Cunningham (1996:65) therefore says that the “task of theological education is to equip clergy to recognize their role as equippers, and to train laypersons to recognize and discharge their role as our ‘real ministers’”. Cunningham (1996:68-69) says that ideally the priority for theological education is to design a curriculum for the “direct training” of the “laity”. In other words, seminaries should no longer equip the laity *through* the clergy, but seminaries should equip the laity *directly*. Morgan (1994:75) says that the most profound change within American seminaries is “the emerging shift from a ‘clerical paradigm’ (preparation of clergy) to a ‘community of faith paradigm’ (a multi-purposed nurturing of knowledge and understanding of a faith community)”.

A further consideration is that, despite its merits, theological training should neither be the only, nor the primary method of equipping. On the contrary, in some instances “Formal theological training has a negative correlation to both church growth and overall quality of churches” Schwarz (1996:23). As important as theological education is, more is required to adequately prepare for ministry. Young (1988:52) says that, “A seminary degree is not a work permit”. Theological education could be complemented with mentorship relationships. Mentoring relationships provide a secure, relationship-based platform in which character can be developed under the guidance of a seasoned leader. Mentoring relationships help bypass the cookie-cutter curricula of mass education and allows for personal grooming. Mentorship helps cultivate the individual gifts people have without projecting onto them stereotypical roles. More credence can also be giv-



en to practical, “hands-on” training too, and more places in a training programme could be devoted to this.

## **5. Conclusion**

McNeal (1995:12) draws attention to the importance and urgency of developing fresh approaches to leadership in order to resolve the dilemmas precipitated by global changes:

Hardly anyone would deny that we are in a pivotal moment in church history. The directions that church leaders take in the next few years will shape not only the practice of Christian ministry, but the character of the church’s mission expression, into the beginning of the third millennium.

An Equipping paradigm offers the Church an approach to leadership that will prepare it to engage these changes. An Equipping paradigm positions the church to adopt an approach of missional engagement within the culture in which it finds itself. However before the church is able to transition to this new approach, there must of necessity first be a change in its approach to leadership and ministry. Leaders must no longer view themselves as the primary purveyors of ministry. Instead they must see themselves as enablers who assist the whole Church to engage in service through the vital work of Equipping believers for their ministry.

## **6. Notes**

This article is a partial condensation of a recently completed PhD thesis entitled “Redefining The Christian Leader’s Role based on Ephesians 4:11-12: The Leader as Equipper”. The bibliographic details of the thesis lists Prof J Muller as Supervisor, University of Pretoria, and Dr. Linzay Rinquist as Co-Supervisor, Cape Town Baptist Seminary.

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