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## CHAPTER 4: INTRODUCTION TO THE FOUR RELATIONAL IDENTITIES OF EQUIPPING LEADERS

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*“Relationships are the key to leadership effectiveness. Because leadership is inherently relational, it is perhaps redundant to use the term relational leadership. There is, however, strength in the affirmation of repetition”*

– Tim McMahon

*“Leaders touch a heart before they ask for a hand” – John Maxwell”*

### **Introduction:**

Every leadership paradigm has its own innate representative identities and images. Through these, the complex interplay of all the roles, functions, and leadership purposes contained within the paradigm are expressed. This chapter is an introduction to four main Identities for leaders who function in an Equipping paradigm. The four chapters that follow this chapter are devoted to exploring each Identity in more depth. The chapters develop the roles, functions, and leadership purposes contained in each of the four Identities of Equipping leadership paradigms.

#### **4.1. Introduction to the Concept of “Relational Identities”**

“Leaders don’t function in isolation” from others (Gibbs 2005:22). Leadership by its very nature describes someone who is always “in-relationship” with others. Spiritual leaders in particular, cannot escape the relational emphases of their calling (Tidball 1999:9). Many recent definitions of spiritual leadership communicate this *social* nature of leadership. These definitions do not centre on the leader per se, but on the

leader being “in-relationship” to others (Gibbs 2005:20). This is illustrated by the following brief list of definitions of leadership:

- “A Christian leader is a person with a God-given capacity and the God-given responsibility to influence a specific group of God’s people towards God’s purpose for the group” (J. Robert Clinton in Gibbs 2005:19)
- “Leadership is a relationship between a leader and a follower – ideally a relationship of shared vision, shared responsibility and shared leadership” (Wright 2000:xi)
- “Leadership is a relationship – a relationship in which one person seeks to influence the thoughts, behaviours, beliefs or values of another person” (Wright 2000:2).
- “Spiritual leadership is moving God’s people on to God’s agenda” (Blackaby 2001:20).
- Leaders are “relational empowerers” (Ogne and Roehl 2008:61).
- “Those who are powerful in leadership understand that one of the key tasks [of leadership] is to find ways to grow people” (Maxwell 2001:71).

Because of the social nature of leadership, the identity of spiritual leaders will always be shaped by the nature of their relationship to those among whom they serve as leaders. In addition, a leader’s personal identity and significance can never be understood by the leader simply taking an introspective look within themselves. A leader is one who is “made whole and healthy within a community and shares in that community’s identity” (Gibbs 2005:29). Leaders learn to define who they are as they take their place amongst others (Miller 1995:4). Notwithstanding the leader’s sense of identity derived from his or her relationship with God, Calvin Miller says, “The only real way to find out who we are is through relationships” (1995:26). It is for this reason that Equipping identities are *relational* identities. Equipping leaders do not focus on their persona or their place and function in the organization in order to discover their identities. Rather, these identities emerge as leaders fulfil their leadership function in the midst of the people of God.

## 4.2. The Four Relational Equipping Identities

This thesis proposes that there are four relational identities which, when taken together, form a holistic Equipping leadership paradigm. The four identities are the “Out-Front”-, “Towards”-, “Over”-, and “Alongside”-Relational Identities of leaders. The identities describe various Equipping leadership functions and the attitudinal postures which undergird the functions. At any given time, Equipping leaders will find themselves functioning in, and relating to others through one or more of the following four identities:

### 4.2.1. The “Out-Front” Relational Identities of Equipping Leaders

The first of the relational identities through which leaders relate to others when equipping them is an “Out-Front” relational identity. The relationship is “Out-Front” in the sense that in this function, leaders model ministry and equip by being a personal, visible example to others. Leaders are “Out-Front”, modelling ministry for others to observe. Leaders show those being trained how things are done in practice. Their personal example is itself edifying and serves as a point of reference for practical ministerial theory. Since equipping paradigms recognise the validity of modelling as a form of equipping, modelling ministry skills may even precede the teaching of ministry theory. Ideally however, it is complemented with the teaching of sound theology and a discussion of ministry theory.

An “Out-Front” leadership posture is perhaps the most enduring of relational leadership identities. This is because it is here that leaders provide leadership through personally embracing the vision and ministry that they are calling others to engage in. They do not espouse ministry theory from the sterility and vagueness of a classroom, but equip “on the ground”. In this identity leaders may appear to be actively engaged in ministry while being passively involved in equipping functions. However, exemplifying ministry is an integral equipping function since the existence

of having examples to follow is critical to the development of others (Guy 1995:545).

Apart from modelling ministry, this identity also sees leaders as “Ministry Pioneers” who initiate new forms of ministry in order to keep pace with the changing demands of ministry. This also enables leaders to keep abreast of the changes in ministry landscapes and the shifts in societal culture. Another role inherent in this identity sees leaders as “Ministry Prototypes” who serve as the archetypes of what ministry will look like in new paradigms (Hybells 2002:38).

#### 4.2.2. The “Toward” Relational Identities of Equipping Leaders

The second relational identity is a “Toward” relational identity. This describes the leadership function of having to empower others for the ministry to which God has called them. Here leaders may spend a lot of their energy imparting knowledge, giving direct input and engaging in other functions that directly facilitate the growth and development of others. Although others will assist leaders with developing the ministry skills of those being equipped, it is in this aspect of equipping that leaders will be most personally involved in providing the input.

This relational identity is regarded as a “Toward” Equipping identity because it is this identity that sees the most direct, interpersonal activity between leaders and others. Leaders will be actively engaged as “Teachers”, “Coaches”, “Empowerers”, and “Encouragers” in the training of others. They will spend a lot of time equipping others “face-to-face”.

#### 4.2.3. The “Over” Relational Identities of Equipping Leaders

The third relational identity of Equipping leaders is the “Over” relational identity. Here leaders serve as “Mentors”, “Spiritual Directors” and “Spiritual Parents” when preparing others for ministry. This identity requires the most wisdom, experience and personal maturity from leaders. This is because the functions associated with this identity require that

leaders first acquire the necessary reserves of knowledge, leadership skills, ministry experience, maturity of character and proven success in ministry in order to carry out the equipping responsibilities associated with this identity. For example, Frank Damazio says:

“The heart of a spiritual father normally appears only in older people. Both years and experience are required to develop its characteristics” (1988:81).

It is here that leaders will execute equipping functions that enable the development of new leaders, the multiplication of ministry, and the mentoring of successors. It is regarded as an “Over” leadership posture since their counsel and mentorship of others affords mature leaders influence “Over” others. However, the influence is not coercive or one of exercising authority over others. Rather the term “Over” recognizes the influential role that leaders who have built up good reputations as leaders have in the lives of others. Those whom they equip have voluntarily placed themselves “under” these leaders because of the contribution that the leaders have made to their lives, or because of who the leaders are and what they represent (Maxwell 1993b:13).

#### 4.2.4. The “Alongside” Relational Identities of Equipping Leaders

The fourth relational identity of equipping leaders is the “Alongside” identity. Here leaders minister alongside others who are regarded as colleagues in ministry. Ministry is seen as a partnership and leaders participate as facilitators of ministry. Their approach to equipping will be to contribute to ministry through participative relationships, consultative processes and networked activities. The identities associated with this facet of equipping sees leaders regarding themselves as “Peers” and “Partners” in ministry with others. It dissolves any semblance of the equipping activities of leaders as being patronising. In this identity, an element of “cross-pollenization” is introduced as leaders allow themselves to receive input from others that will help their own development.

### 4.3. Equipping Leadership Identities as “Matrixed” Leadership Identities

None of the four equipping leadership identities are independent, stand-alone identities. Instead, they are composite identities formed from a “matrix” of the variegated functions leaders engage in when equipping people for ministry. A “matrix” is an arrangement of interconnected parts (Microsoft Encarta Dictionary 2007:no page numbers).

Just as no one form of equipping can be used to the exclusion of others when developing people, so Equipping identities cannot be reduced to a singular leadership image or encapsulated in one metaphor. Robert Raines says, “Leadership is a moving target” (Robert A. Raines in Miller 1995:ix). Similarly Cormack says, “Leadership is ... complex ... It cannot be defined in one short sentence. Leadership is situational and contextual” (1988:32; also Hybells 2002:140). Leadership “takes on different forms in diverse situations in which individuals demonstrate contrasting leadership traits” (Gibbs 2005:18). The complexity of the demands placed on leaders today requires that leaders fulfil a wide variety of roles (Gibbs and Coffey 2001:109; Hybells 2002:141). Culture, personal spiritual gifts and personality also influence how leadership is exercised (McClung 2008: 72).

Considering the complexity of the demands placed on leaders in any given environment and the broad scope of leadership functions, it is to be expected that leaders who function in Equipping paradigms will also be called upon to accomplish a wide variety of roles. It is for this reason that the identity of equipping leaders has been broken down into four major relational identities, each of which has correspondent functions. A singular identity would not be able to encapsulate the breadth and diversity of all that Equipping leaders are called upon to be and do.

The four relational identities inherent in an Equipping paradigm form a matrix which allows for fluid transitions between leadership identities

and leadership functions. Equipping leaders may be expected to assume any singular identity or any matrix of identities and their related functions, depending on the task at hand at the time. Different situations require different sets of skills and different behaviours from leaders (Cormack 1988:32).