

## **“Leading The 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church” by James Burn**

### **Summary of the book:**

The church, particularly in the UK is in a crisis. Central to this is a crisis of leadership. Where once the world looked to Christians for moral guidance and leadership, at the start of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, the church now finds itself consigned to the fringes of society, ignored by the majority of the public and policy-makers alike. Is it possible for the church to regain her position of leadership in society? This book argues that it can, but, before it seeks to speak to and lead society, it must learn once again to lead itself. This crisis of leadership shows itself in a loss of trust in leaders in general, both secular and spiritual, and a loss of confident vision among church leaders. The local church needs to experience a leadership development revolution.

The revolution this entails can be summed up as the need to develop a Leadership Culture in the life of each local church. Such a culture recognises, nurtures, develops and releases the gift of leadership in every area of church life. Rather than the all-too-common approach to leadership of ‘find a leadership need and fill it with the first available and willing person’, a Leadership Culture takes a more proactive approach to leadership development. Within the setting of a Leadership Culture, a model for leadership development can be grown where the potential gift of leadership can be spotted and the character of the emerging leader can be developed as they are encouraged by mentors to grow through Defining Moments. The role of Emotional Intelligence, authority and accountability are all examined as pieces in the puzzle of the church once again becoming a producer of credible, trustworthy, spiritually-gifted leaders that Christians and non Christians alike would feel confident to follow. The book is divided into four sections.

**Section One** looks at the rationale for developing a Leadership Culture, and what that might look like.

**Section Two** addresses the issue of trust... at what has caused its demise in terms of spiritual leadership and what steps need to be taken to regain it.

**Section Three** addresses the issue of vision – the need for emerging leaders to develop and cast a vision for the future if the church is ever to be different from how it is now.

**In Section Four**, a Leadership Model is examined and practical steps are given to enable a local church to take the first steps towards growing a Leadership Culture.

**Unique aspect of this book:**

There are many books written on the subject of leadership. However, this book is written from the point of view of developing a leadership culture within the local church that encourages and enables the identification, training, maturing, commissioning and releasing of new leaders within the context of the local church. It looks at some of the key reasons why there is a lack of leadership development at local church level and at how that can be practically addressed.

This book is written by a church pastor with 16 years experience of church planting and growing leadership teams, both in this country and abroad. It comes out of personal experience and a passion to see the spiritual gift of leadership reclaimed and established at the heart of the church and society. Everything proposed in this book is already working at the local church level and follows on from the author's first book, "Fishing for the King" (pub. New Wine Press, ISBN: 1-874367-60-4).

**Style of book:**

This book draws on both secular and sacred insights to develop a strategy and structure for developing leadership. As such, it equates to John Maxwell's leadership books.

**Target Readership:**

Primarily pastors and leaders who wish to address the lack of a coherent leadership development strategy in their local church.

**Theological viewpoint:**

This book is coming from an evangelical perspective with a practical outlook. It comes from a belief that there are insights to be gained from the secular leadership world and that the church has a unique leadership role to offer to the world.

**Total word count of book: 32,754 words.**

### **Biography of author**

James Burn is the Senior Pastor of Kingfisher Church, a church planting initiative in the UK and Malawi, Africa. He was ordained into the Anglican church before branching out in 1993 to launch the first Kingfisher church (the story of this is told in *Fishing For The King*, James' first book). James is married to Jan, who is also a Pastor and the author of *I'm Still Standing*, published by BRF. They have three children, all now grown up... Katie, the eldest is the pastor of a newly-launched Kingfisher church, David is employed as the Operations Manager for the Kingfisher Network, and Hannah works in a childcare centre. James plays golf - badly - in his spare time.

### **Outline of "Leading the 21<sup>st</sup> Century Church"**

#### **Section One – "The need to develop a Leadership Culture"**

This section deals with the issues that arise when a local church lacks a strategy for developing new leaders. Leaders tend to be hard to find, under-equipped, over-burdened with unreal expectations and prone to lack motivation. The development of a leadership culture addresses these issues, providing an environment where people with the potential gift of leadership are spotted, nurtured, their character refined and grown, their unique leadership style identified and acknowledged, their emotional intelligence assessed and developed. A healthy Leadership Culture addresses the issues of authority and accountability and encourages servant-hearted leaders, which, in turn, encourages the growth of a culture of discipleship development.

#### **Section Two – "The need to address the issue of TRUST."**

This section looks at the reasons for the loss of trust in leadership in the local church in these postmodern times, and what needs to be done to regain it. How does church-based leadership development, as argued for in this book, aid in the growth of trust? What expectations do Christians have of their leaders? How can the development of a Leadership Model meet the legitimate expectations and develop leaders that followers trust and respect?

#### **Section Three – "The need to regain a sense of VISION"**

This section looks at the anatomy of vision... how it is gained. How it is developed, how it is cast and how it is maintained. Vision starts off as a 'holy discontent' within the heart of a potential leader. How is that 'holy

discontent' developed into a full-fledged vision that people will not merely follow, but share?

#### **Section Four – “An example of a Leadership Model”**

The Leadership model that has been developed and implemented in the Kingfisher Network of churches is outlined and examined. This section starts with a strategy for taking the first step of introducing a leadership culture to the local church and looks at how momentum can be gained before the implementation of a full-blown Leadership Model.

#### **Sample Chapter:**

##### **Section One (“The need to develop a Leadership Culture in the local church”), Chapter one.**

##### **“The strategic development of leaders in the local church”.**

How are leaders appointed in your church? If you are one of those leaders, how were you appointed? If it came about like it does in the majority of churches, then the chances are that a ministry needed leading and either you were judged to be the best person to fill that vacancy, or, maybe, you are one of that small core of people- generally estimated as being 20% - that end up doing at least 80% of the work in your church, and so, when the need arose, you, as usual, found yourself filling the gap. This is the scenario in the majority of churches, and it leads to a number of issues.

#### **A need does not constitute a calling.**

Just because there is a need, and just because you have spare capacity or a desire to see that need filled, does not mean that God is calling you to be the person to lead in that area. Neither does the application of guilt: ‘The children’s ministry has no one to lead it... can you imagine the disappointment on those little faces , the rejection, the sense of lack of worth that will be sown into them if *someone* doesn’t step up and run the Sunday

School?’ It would take a particularly hard-hearted person to withstand that guilt-trip for too long! Of course, the basic functions of the church need to happen, but the question is, are you the one God is calling to step in to enable that important function to happen? The apostles of the first church in Jerusalem hit the nail on the head when they realised that they had allowed a need to define their priorities... in this case, the need to organise and administrate the food distribution program. Was this distribution program a legitimate need? Absolutely! Was it their calling? Absolutely not! And yet, leaders will recognise the level of courage it took to say, “We apostles should spend our time preaching and teaching the word of God, not administering a food program.”<sup>1</sup> It took courage because if they didn’t do it, would anyone else step up and take the food program on? And if no one else did, the food program would not happen, and then people would get angry and start leaving the church! This is a very common fear among leaders, which leads many to end up servicing the needs rather than being free to pursue their God-given calling. This is a mistake I made early on in my ministry. Kingfisher church, which Jan and I launched in 1993, had been in existence for a couple of years and had grown to around 50 people. We were meeting at a local school, and I would get to the school an hour and a half before the service to try to get the boiler started, because it was too old to be on anything as sophisticated as a timer. After wrestling with this ancient piece of equipment, I would set out the chairs, set up the tables for tea and coffee and do whatever else was needed for the church to function. Volunteerism was at a fairly low ebb in those days! I clearly remember one Sunday having performed all these tasks, launching into the service and then realising that the person who was on the rota to serve teas and coffees had not turned up. I was fuming! I’d just gone ten rounds with the boiler, the place was cold, I was exhausted and fed up with having to do everything myself, and now, to cap it all, there was no one to even make the teas and coffees! I fumed my way through the service, and at the end said, with heavy sarcasm, ‘Well, thank you for coming! Having set the building up, led the service and delivered the sermon, I shall now serve you tea and coffee, as no one else seems to be willing to do it!’ I marched to the back of the hall and loudly turned the kettle on, all the while, if I’m honest, expecting at least someone to crack and repent in dust and ashes over their selfish, unreasonable behaviour. My sarcasm was completely wasted, as people came and got their teas and coffees as per normal, with barely a ‘thank you’! I sometimes wonder why I bother with sarcasm! At the end, as I was packing

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<sup>1</sup> Acts 6:2.

up, someone came up to me and said, ‘You know, if you wanted someone to step in and do the teas and coffees, you only had to ask!’ Not my finest hour!

### **A need is not a sufficient basis for establishing a ministry**

‘Find a need and fill it’ is a fine sentiment, but there are needs all around us and, as Proverbs 17:24 points out: ‘An intelligent person aims at wise action, but a fool starts off in many directions.’<sup>2</sup> There is a much more important question beyond the ‘can we do this?’, which is ‘*should* we do this?’ An important addition to this question is, ‘Should we do this *now*?’ Kingfisher church has a thriving youth ministry that is involved in some wonderful initiatives, such as a youth café, a music workshop ministry, a creative arts ministry and much more. But for many years we had no youth ministry, even though we had teenagers coming along to the church. Parents would say things such as: ‘It’s not that we want to leave the church, but the church down the road has got a wonderful youth ministry...’ Every pastoral bone in my body wanted me to say, ‘Don’t leave! We’ll have a youth ministry by next week!’ But the reason we didn’t do that, and that we didn’t have a youth ministry at that time was that God had not raised up the right person to lead that ministry. Either God had made a mistake and taken his eye off the ball, or he was saying that there were other priorities that we need to focus on at that stage. We chose to believe that the Lord knew what he was doing and that we could trust him, and to wait until he raised up the right person to lead this ministry, which he did in due course. Did we lose people as a result of this decision? Yes, more than a few. However, our fundamental belief about church is that each local church and each individual Christian, needs to be ‘God-shaped’... that is to say, the shape that God has intended at this point in time, not shaped by the things that God may have for another day, or shaped by people’s expectations. In terms of the local church, this can be determined by asking the question, ‘Who has God sent us?’ If God had wanted us to start a youth ministry at that point in time, he would have sent us a gifted youth leader who had also sensed God’s calling. As he hadn’t done that at that stage, we surmised that the time to launch a youth ministry had not arrived, and we chose to trust God that, even though people were leaving the church to go where there was a youth ministry, he would grow Kingfisher church as he saw fit and add a youth ministry at just the right time. It was a costly stand, but it has proven to have been right in abundance as we look back over the years and as we now rejoice in having a vibrant youth ministry with a gifted youth leader and many teenagers coming to

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<sup>2</sup> Good News Bible version.

know Christ as their Lord and Saviour. A need does not constitute a calling, and a need is not a sufficient basis for establishing a ministry.

**Appointing leaders on a need basis leads to a reactive approach to leadership.**

What does this mean? It means that, so far as finding and appointing leaders is concerned, the church is always playing ‘catch up’. We are constantly responding to a presenting need, which means that there is no scope for taking the time to properly identify potential leaders, allow them to mature as they are trained, coached and apprenticed, or take a more proactive view of where the Holy Spirit is leading the church. We cannot wait until there is a need to start wondering who we could possibly appoint as a leader to fill the gap. We have to be more proactive than this, and have a structure for training and developing leaders without the pressure to appoint them to a leadership position before they are ready. I know about this pressure personally. I became a Christian in 1981 at a David Watson event in the Royal Albert Hall in London. At the time, I was living in a Christian-run hostel in Waterloo, London, and, having become a Christian, I was keen to join the Bible study group that was meeting in the hostel. It was led by my room mate and I took to it with great enthusiasm – I was really hungry to learn, as I really knew nothing about the Bible, how to live as a Christian, how to pray... it was all very new to me and I knew I had a lot to learn. Six months after becoming a Christian, my room mate, the leader of this group, announced he was moving out. This, of course, meant that the group would need a new leader. I think he adopted the approach of ‘Who seems keenest?’, which, of course, was me. The fact that the reason I was so keen was because I didn’t know anything seemed not to register with him. He appointed me, and I was too naïve to realise that I should have turned it down. So now, I, who knew next-to-nothing, was the leader of a Bible study group of twenty five people, answerable to no one other than the God I had only met six months ago! What could possibly go wrong?

My first challenge involved what book of the Bible we should be studying. I took some advice on this from the church I had started attending, and was told ‘Well, so long as you don’t dive headfirst into the book of Revelation, you’ll be fine!’ The book of Revelation? That sounded interesting! And if I was interested, surely everyone else would be too. So, armed with a commentary that seemed unnecessarily complicated, I launched into what would surely be a really stimulating Bible study series. By week two I had

open revolt on my hands! Everyone seemed to have their own, deeply-entrenched ideas that didn't seem to coincide at all with what my commentary seemed to be saying. Suddenly, a cohesive, friendly, even placid group was in uproar, with everyone getting at everyone else and, worse, everyone getting at me! With my tail between my legs, I asked for help from one or two who had been Christians a lot longer than me, and was advised in no uncertain terms to abandon the path I had embarked upon and head for the book of Acts instead. This was a wise piece of advice and I am so glad I took it – peace was restored, the group began to pull together and I realised that, if you want to learn to swim, jumping into the middle of the Atlantic ocean is not the best way of going about it! Of course, if I had been part of a structure that developed new leaders, I would have been led to realise that long before I ever got the chance of unleashing my naivety on those I was trying to lead. I would also have experienced a more structured, less ad hoc procedure for getting feedback and wisdom. Far too many leaders in the local church today are the product of a similar lack of nurture and development, and are passing on their experiences to the next generation of leaders, waiting until there is a pressing need to begin looking for who could step into the breach, and then slotting them in with no training and minimal preparation, which just sets them up for failure.